



# **EUROPE IN CHANGES:**

## **The old continent at a new crossroads**

Edited by  
Katarina Zakić and Birgül Demirtaş





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# EUROPE IN CHANGES: THE OLD CONTINENT AT A NEW CROSSROADS

Katarina Zakić and Birgül Demirtaş (eds.)

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## CONTENTS

### EUROPEAN RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: TRENDS AND TRANSFORMATION

*Richard Sakwa*

NEW OR POST-ATLANTICISM EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE 21st CENTURY	15
--	----

*Miroslav Glišić, Branislav Đorđević, Dejan Stojković*

STRENGTHENING SECURITY AND DEFENCE – WHAT IS THE RELATIVE POWER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION VIS-À-VIS THE MEMBER STATES?	37
---	----

*Uroš Ćemalović*

SUPREMACY OF EU LAW OVER NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND SUPREME JURISDICTIONS OF THE MEMBER STATES – A QUEST FOR A NEW BALANCE	63
--	----

*Nevena Šekarić*

ENERGY SECURITY ISSUES: RESHAPING EUROPEAN REGIONAL SECURITY PATTERNS?	79
---	----

*Mihajlo Vučić*

EUROPEAN UNION'S QUEST FOR DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY: POLICY CONTINUATIONS AND STRATEGY INNOVATIONS	99
--	----

*Elena Ponomareva, Dušan Proroković*

NATO VS RUSSIA: IMPACT ON BALKAN REGIONAL SECURITY	117
---	-----

*Birgül Demirtaş*

STATE, RELIGION AND REFUGEES: THE CASE OF TURKEY AND DIYANET	139
---	-----



*Branko Krga*

THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR THE FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA	155
--	-----

**GLOBAL EUROPE:  
THE POSITION OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES  
IN WORLD POLITICS**

*Duško Lopandić, Jelica Gordanić*

THE EUROPEAN UNION BETWEEN ITS REGIONAL ROLE AND ITS GLOBAL AMBITIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	173
--	-----

*Iulia Monica Oehler-Şincai*

IN SEARCH OF A EUROPEAN UNION GRAND STRATEGY IN INDO-PACIFIC	187
---	-----

*Ana Jović Lazić, Ivona Lađevac*

REDEFINING RUSSIA-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS – IS IT POSSIBLE TO OVERCOME A DEEP CRISIS?	215
---	-----

*Marek Hrubec*

FRAGMENTING CHINAMERICA AND ITS IMPACTS IN EUROPE: MULTILATERAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE GLOBAL SYSTEM	237
---	-----

*Miloš Petrović*

POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES DURING THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY	267
---	-----

*Miro Haček*

SLOVENIAN DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLES AFTER THE EU ACCESSION	289
--	-----

*Vladimir Trapara*

THE BELARUSIAN ISSUE IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS	307
--	-----

## **TWO FACES OF EUROPE: UNITY OR DIVISION**

<i>Andrey Fursov</i>	
EUROPEAN (IN)SECURITY IN MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE OR SHORT HAPPY LIFE OF THE EU	325
<i>Stephen Baskerville</i>	
EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF GLOBAL IDEOLOGY	343
<i>Rastislav Kazansky</i>	
THE PROBLEM OF REGIONAL SEPARATISM AS A FACTOR OF DESTABILISATION IN SPAIN	361
<i>Anton Hrubon</i>	
HOAXES AND FAKE NEWS OF THE NEO-FASCISTS IN SLOVAKIA: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES, REFLECTIONS, IMPACT ON INTERNAL AND SECURITY POLITICS	383

## **NEW TRENDS ON THE ECONOMIC HORIZON IN EUROPE**

<i>Nataša Stanojević</i>	
THE RISE OF EUROPEAN PROTECTIONISM	407
<i>Sanja Jelisavac Trošić</i>	
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION?	425
<i>Katarina Zakić, Meixing Sun</i>	
THE RESULTS OF ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND CHINA AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	445
<i>Ivan Dujić</i>	
THE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES	465



## PREFACE

The global political, economic and security environment changed dramatically in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has put humankind in a difficult position. While fighting daily with this terrible disease, governments are doing their best, so their countries can survive the challenges ahead of them. One year after the pandemic started, it is obvious that the global political and economic situation is worse than it was before and that the divide between the East and the West is even wider. Escalation of problems at the political, economic, security and health level is decreasing the global stability. Protectionism, self-reliance, and even self-centredness are processes that are shaping today's global environment. We are witnessing discussions about the winners and losers of the pandemic, although, at the start of 2021, more than 2 million people worldwide died because of the pandemic. Because of that, we need to ask ourselves – where are we going and what are we going to change?

In these circumstances, the Institute of International Politics and Economics and the Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade, were persistent to keep their tradition and publish their yearly book with a thematic collection of papers. This is the fourth year in a row in which these two institutions are issuing a book. This year with a new current topic – *Europe in Changes: The Old Continent at a New Crossroads*.

Katarina Zakić, from the Institute of International Politics and Economics, Serbia and Birgül Demirtaş, from the Turkish-German University, Turkey, edited the Collection of Papers. The review board consists of the distinguishing scientists from Brazil, Russia, Austria, Italy, China, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia. Scientific papers were written by the authors from Serbia, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, Russia, Turkey, the US, China, Slovenia, Romania, and the Czech Republic.

While making plans for this book, we kept in mind the current changes in today's Europe, but at the same time, we also wanted to emphasise old problems that still exist. We also wanted to give the opportunity to the

authors from all over the world to share their ideas and views on the perspective and vision of old/new Europe.

According to the topics and research questions covered in this book, the papers were divided into four thematic units. The first one is named *European Relations and European Security in the 21st Century: Trend and Transformation*. The authors covered a variety of topics such as issues regarding national security versus EU security, national legal systems versus the EU laws, energy security, digital sovereignty, the refugee crisis and NATO role in European security.

The second part of the book is titled *Global Europe: the Position of European Countries in World Politics*. In this chapter, the authors shared their opinion on the European Union's present struggles and interest in international politics. The authors explained major issues and relations that are influencing the EU's foreign politics with the Indo-Pacific, Russia, the US and China. On the other hand, some papers were dedicated to the internal struggles within individual countries such as Germany, Slovenia and Belarus.

In the third part of the book, called *Two Faces of Europe: Unity or Division*, the papers are highlighting the problem of division within the EU, whether those problems are related to ideology, religion, separatism, or the problems regarding the escalation of right-wing parties in Europe.

In the end, the fourth part is named *New Trends on the Economic Horizon in Europe*. This chapter is dedicated to the economic issues within the EU, connected to protectionism, funding of the World Trade Organisation, economic cooperation with China during the pandemic and the EU cooperation with the Latin American countries.

In total, 23 papers written by 29 authors are indicating the main crossroads that Europe is facing. Some of them are old, and some are new. In that constant pursuit of the right road, it is difficult to say in advance whether it will be a good one or bad. It is, therefore, necessary to persistently analyse, learn and understand. We hope that this book will be a *road* to a better understanding of Europe for the readers.

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**I**  
**EUROPEAN RELATIONS**  
**AND EUROPEAN SECURITY**  
**IN THE 21ST CENTURY:**  
**TRENDS AND TRANSFORMATION**

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## NEW OR POST-ATLANTICISM: EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Richard SAKWA<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* Following the end of the Cold War in 1989-91, the Atlantic power system became the core of a unipolar pattern of world politics and at the same it radicalised. The Atlantic power system rebranded itself as the liberal world order with genuinely universal aspirations, claiming to be the only viable model of modernity. Liberal universalism undermined traditional patterns of sovereign internationalism and diplomacy. The New Atlanticism reinforced the link between democracy and security, norms and power, encouraging democracy promotion and regime change. As the Atlantic power system expanded, the realm of norms was reinforced by the empire of dominion. This rebranded liberal world order claimed to be synonymous with the international system established at Yalta-Potsdam in 1945, a substitution that was to have momentous consequences. This radicalised version of liberal hegemony was 'bound to fail', since its ambitions were so expansive as to classify as delusional, and which in the end provoked domestic and external resistance, notably by Russia. In Europe it meant the suppression of neo-Gaullist aspirations for continental autonomy, although elements of this are now being revived. Although it is still too early to talk about the emergence of a post-Atlantic world, long-term structural changes as well as some more contingent decisional factors are leading in this direction. The resurgence of aspirations for 'strategic autonomy' of a more 'geopolitical' European Union takes place at a time when it is increasingly marginalised geopolitically, and Europe as a whole is more fragmented. This paper examines the dynamics and evolution of post-Cold War Atlanticism, and assesses its future trajectory as the bond between the power system that bears its name and the liberal world order crumbles.

*Keywords:* Atlantic power system, liberal international order, liberal hegemony, Europe, Russia, Eurasia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Following the collapse of the Soviet challenge in 1989-91 the Atlantic power system (APS) emerged as the core of a unipolar world order. For the twenty-five years of the cold peace (1989-2014) the APS could claim to be truly universal. Post-communist Russia was in disarray, and in the early years aspired to join the system of which the APS was the core. China, meanwhile, was engaged in its 'quiet rise' as it gathered its economic power and social capacity. The medium powers mostly aligned with the APS, although at the margins some echoes of resistance could still be heard. This was an era of unprecedented Western triumphalism, which included the view that the 'historical West' was the 'winner' of the Cold War. If there were winners, then inevitably there were losers. This represented a radical repudiation of the Gorbachevian view that the end of the Cold War was a common victory establishing the framework for a new and inclusive peace order. Instead, the Atlantic order expanded and deepened, a process defined in this essay as the New Atlanticism (Sakwa, 2015). This combined the military power of the old Atlantic alliance, with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) at its core (dominium) with the normative values of the liberal international order (liberalism). The combination of power and ideology, of dominion and liberalism, represented a new and expansive model of world order, although one with deep roots in the liberal imperialism of the late nineteenth century.

In the cold peace era, the APS underwent a three-fold radicalisation. First, it underwent a name change, although the old name was also used. Thus, the APS rebranded itself as the liberal world order (LWO), also known as liberal hegemony. This included a radical version of globalisation, democracy promotion and regime change. The prohibition on the use of force except with the sanction of the United Nations was weakened, as the leading power in the APS and its allies arrogated the right to decide on the contingent factors allowing intervention. International law thus gave way to the 'rules-based' order, in which rules were interpreted to achieve the goals of the liberal hegemony. This represented a move away from sovereign internationalism towards the validation of humanitarian interventionism, formulated in 2005 as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Second, the 'exceptionalist' ideology of the post-Cold War version of the liberal order was accompanied by the politics of expansion rather than the logic of transformation. As the Atlantic power system expanded, the realm of norms was reinforced by the empire of dominion. Third, this rebranded liberal world order claimed to be synonymous with the international system established at Yalta-Potsdam in

1945 and amended at Helsinki in 1975. This substitution was to have momentous consequences. In Europe it meant the suppression of neo-Gaullist aspirations for continental autonomy, and globally it entailed claims to universal jurisdiction by a particular regional order.

This radicalised version of liberal hegemony was ‘bound to fail’ (Mearsheimer, 2019), since its ambitions were so expansive as to classify as delusional (Mearsheimer 2018). Although the intentions may have been good, the results were hubristic, often devastating and in the end provoked domestic and external resistance (Walt 2019). The traditional practices of Atlantic unity are eroding, although military institutionalisation remains firm. The resurgence of aspirations for ‘strategic autonomy’ of a more ‘geopolitical’ European Union takes place at a time when it is increasingly marginalised geopolitically, and Europe as a whole is more fragmented. The Trumpian disruption signalled a certain domestic dissatisfaction, although the Trump presidency was unable to deliver on its promise of a strategic rethinking of American foreign and domestic priorities. The election of Joseph Biden in 2020 signalled a return to ‘business as normal’, but the New Atlanticism was already being undermined. The French foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, made this explicit in a Europe1 Radio1 interview on 7 November 2020, arguing that there could be no return to a golden age of pre-Trumpian innocence:

We will not return to the status quo ante, to the good old days of the Trans-Atlantic relationship. The world has moved on after these four years. Europe has emerged from its naïveté. It is beginning to assert itself as a power (cited in Bhadrakumar, 2021).

The Atlantic power system and the liberal hegemony with which it is associated are being challenged by global trends, the emergence of the agenda of ‘strategic autonomy’ in Europe, as well by an array of fundamental changes, including the emergence of multipolarity (Sakwa, 2017).

This paper examines the dynamics and evolution of post-Cold War Atlanticism, and assesses its future trajectory as the bond between the power system that bears its name and the liberal world order crumbles. Elements of post-Atlanticism are beginning to emerge, although it is too soon to claim that the post-war Atlantic system is in terminal decline.

## THE NEW ATLANTICISM

Classical realist theory suggests that with the end of the Cold War NATO should have been abolished, like its Warsaw Pact counterpart, or at

least to have quietly withered away. Without the Soviet threat to keep the alliance together, it was assumed that the member states would disperse, and that Europe would take responsibility for its security. At the same time, the countries making up the alliance were undergoing major demographic changes that turned them into multicultural societies that weakened the traditional focus on Atlantic security. Pessimism about the future of the community was justified (Coker, 1997). Instead, following a period of disorientation and a search for an 'out of area' role, the Atlantic power system re-invented itself. The Atlantic community prospered and assumed increasingly ramified features to create a post-Cold War 'New Atlanticism'. This took five main forms.

First, NATO enlarged to encompass most of the new Mediterranean democracies and post-communist countries, and then pushed its way into the Balkans. This was far from uncontested, yet the enlargement drive appeared inexorable and impermeable to political challenge. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined in March 1999, and then in a 'big bang' enlargement in March 2004 the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia joined, followed by Albania and Croatia in April 2009, Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2020. Despite repeated warnings by Russia that bringing NATO to its borders would be perceived as a first order strategic threat, the Bucharest NATO summit of 2-4 April 2008 promised Georgia and Ukraine eventual membership. The Summit Declaration stressed 'NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO'. The Declaration once again affirmed the principles on which the community was based:

Recognising the enduring value of the transatlantic link and of NATO as the essential forum for security consultations between Europe and North America, we reaffirmed our solidarity and cohesion and our commitment to the common vision and shared democratic values embodied in the Washington Treaty. The principle of the indivisibility of Allied security is fundamental (Bucharest Summit, 2008).

Membership Action Plans (MAPs) were deferred because of German and French concerns that encircling Russia would be unnecessarily provocative, yet the strategic direction had been set. Resistance by France and Germany was practical rather than fundamentally political. Although the Declaration talked of 'indivisibility', it had in mind the security of the Atlantic community

itself. The result of enlargement was precisely to enshrine the divisibility of European security, and thus the new partition of Europe.

There was some genuinely political criticism of the enlargement process. In an interview with Thomas Friedman in 1998, George Kennan, the doyen of international diplomacy and the architect of the original policy of 'containment' of the Soviet Union in the post-war years, was unsparing in his condemnation. Kennan spoke with dismay about the US Senate's ratification of NATO expansion plans:

I think the Russians will react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anyone else ... This expansion would make the Founding Fathers of this country turn over in their graves. We have signed on to protect a whole series of countries, even though we have neither the resources nor the intention to do so in any serious way.

Not for the first time the 'superficial and ill-informed' nature of Congressional discussion was condemned. Equally, he adds words that have portent to this day:

I was particularly bothered by the references to Russia as a country dying to attack Western Europe. Don't people understand? Our differences in the cold war were with the Soviet Communist regime. And now we are turning our backs on the very people who mounted the greatest bloodless revolution in history to remove that Soviet regime (Friedman 1998).

Kennan was not alone, and in July 1997 an open letter from senior American statesman to the White House prefigured Kennan's warning that enlargement would be a 'policy error of historic proportions'. They argued that it would be bad for NATO, since it would 'inevitably degrade its ability to carry out its primary mission'; it would be bad for Russia since it would strengthen the non-democratic opposition; it would be bad for Europe since it would 'draw a new line of division between the "ins" and "outs" and foster instability'; and it would be bad for America, since it would 'call into question the US commitment to the alliance' (Walker 1997).

Second, NATO became the military arm of liberal hegemony. In the 1990s it intervened militarily in the Balkans, and then in the 2000s it coordinated allied operations in Afghanistan. The liberal universalism of the Clinton presidency dominated the discourse and swept aside realist objections. The idea was that by bringing in the former communist states

into the 'civilising institutions and prosperity of the West', they would be transformed, just as Germany had been after the war, and that eventually the same would apply to Russia. This was self-contradictory, since NATO's unilateral enlargement alienated Russia, and inhibited the transformative experience that a more inclusive security order may have offered. Russia certainly did not consider itself a defeated power, unlike Germany and Japan after 1945 (cf. Dower, 2000), and instead drew on the 'common victory' principle originally enunciated by Mikhail Gorbachev. Russia considered itself a great power in its own right, unlike the former imperial powers France and Great Britain, which after 1956 effectively accepted their subaltern status within the Atlantic community. Liberal hegemony is a combination of power and norms, and while Russia was ready to accept the norms (hence it joined the Council of Europe and signed up to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union), it was unrealistic to expect it to accept a subaltern status in the new European security order. The US made clear that it was not prepared to share hegemonic leadership, and this in turn rendered the normative transformation of Russia more problematic.

Third, while the emerging security dilemma was clear, there was also a less clearly defined 'normative dilemma'. Atlanticism, both old and new, combines norms and power. This was at the heart of the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 and then incorporated into NATO's founding Washington Treaty in 1949. This gave rise to 'transdemocracy': the view that security and democracy are inseparable. The perspective is formulated in 'democratic peace theory' arguing that democratic states do not go to war with each other. The transdemocratic claim is central to the New Atlanticism. This was welcomed by the former communist countries, and even by many in Russia itself. Security and democracy were the foundations of the post-Cold War order, but this was attended by a growing contradiction between the two arms of the transdemocratic impulse. Tying security and regime transformation into a single package repudiated the pluralism and sovereign democracy that had been recognised at Yalta and become the foundation of the post-war international system. The New Atlanticism was increasingly unable to reflect critically on the geopolitical and power implications of its own actions, a type of geopolitical nihilism that in the end provoked the Ukraine crisis. From a defensive alliance established to resist the Soviet Union, Atlanticism became both more militant in advancing its interests and more culturally aggressive, setting itself up as a model of civilisational achievement. This represented a blow to Russia's self-image as a great power, representing not only a distinctive pole of security but also a country

with distinctive challenges on the path to some sort of democratic modernity. Transdemocracy moreover, undermined the classical principles of diplomacy, where difference is recognised as legitimate and thus focuses on how to reconcile diversity. Instead, the universalism at the heart of transdemocracy has a homogenising tendency, seeking to ensure all states converge on a single model of modernity.

Fourth, the strategic rationale underlying NATO enlargement is unclear. An alliance system is obviously designed to enhance the security of all of its members, yet the expansion of a security system to the borders of a large neighbouring power with a history of antagonism inevitably created a security dilemma of the highest order. NATO was aware of this, and hence a number of mitigation strategies were adopted. Russia was included in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme in 1994, although even then Moscow expressed its dissatisfaction. More was required, and the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations of May 1997 spoke of a new era:

NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries. They share the goal of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation. The present Act reaffirms the determination of NATO and Russia to give concrete substance to their shared commitment to build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all its peoples. Making this commitment at the highest political level marks the beginning of a fundamentally new relationship between NATO and Russia. They intend to develop, on the basis of common interest, reciprocity and transparency a strong, stable and enduring partnership.

The document defined 'the goals and mechanisms of consultation, cooperation, joint decision-making and joint action that will constitute the core of the mutual relations between NATO and Russia', and argued that 'NATO has undertaken a historic transformation' and insisted that this was a 'process that will continue'. Cooperation was to be achieved through the creation of a new NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. NATO committed itself not to place nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, to work on adapting the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty to the new realities, and above all 'NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces' (Founding Act, 1997).

Although the spirit of the Founding Act was cooperative, in institutional terms it was declaratory than substantive, and left Russia isolated vis-à-vis other NATO members. This is why, in the wake of the 9/11 attack on the US and Russia's support in what was to become the 'war on terror', the decision was taken to go further. On 28 May 2002 the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established at the NATO-Russia summit in Rome as 'a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision and joint action in which the individual NATO member states and Russia work as equal partners on a wide spectrum of security issues of common interest' (NATO 2002). Russia's status was enhanced from one against the others to what was intended to be a higher degree of partnership, although the text studiously avoided allowing Russia a 'veto' in any shape or form on NATO-centred security issues (Nato-Russia Council, 2002). In the event, at moments of crisis the NRC failed to become a forum for conflict resolution, isolating rather than engaging Russia. America vetoed convening the NRC to discuss the Georgia crisis in 2008, a move which it later admitted was a mistake; but once again as the Ukraine crisis unrolled in 2014, on 1 April NATO suspended 'all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia', although contacts at ambassadorial level were allowed (Statement, 2014). The institutional architecture of cooperation, despite the aspirations of both sides, was inadequate to meet the real challenges of European security in the twenty-first century. The various Foundational statements and Partnership bodies were *mitigation* measures, intended to blunt the edges of the onward enlargement of the Atlantic power system. Equally, they were no more than sticking plaster disguising the fundamental process at work, namely *over-balancing* against a putative Russian threat. It was understandable that the former Soviet bloc countries would have concerns about a revival of Russian imperialism, but balancing strategies were not necessarily the most rational response.

This takes us to the fifth and final point, namely the way that the New Atlanticism made explicit what in the Cold War era had been latent, namely the fact that European integration developed within the constraints of Atlanticism, what Glenn Diesen calls 'inter-democracy'. With the end of the Cold War, there was much talk of the 'hour of Europe' yet misguided and inept interventions in the Balkans revealed the limited instruments at the EU's disposal, and the pre-eminence of the conflicting interests of its member states in the region. In the end, it was the US that took the lead in bringing the Bosnian war to an end in 1995, and which led the assault against Serbia in 1999. The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) since the Treaty of Lisbon (the 'Reform Treaty') of 13 December 2007 effectively

became part of the Atlantic system.<sup>2</sup> Accession countries are now required to align their defence and security policy with that of NATO, resulting in the effective 'militarisation' of the EU. A number of clauses in the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine, which was due to have been signed in Vilnius on 28-29 November 2013 but which in the end were signed only in May 2014 after the overthrow of President Viktor Yanukovych, testified to the growing 'transdemocratic' linkage between security and politics. Article 4 speaks of the *Aims of Political Dialogue*, with section 1 stressing that 'Political dialogue on all areas of mutual interest shall be further developed and strengthened between the Parties. This will promote gradual convergence on foreign and security matters with the aim of Ukraine's ever deeper involvement into the European security area'. Article 7.1 called for EU-Ukrainian convergence in foreign affairs, security and defence. As if this was not explicit enough, Article 10 on *Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Military-Technological Cooperation* noted in section 3 that 'The parties shall explore the potential of military and technological cooperation. Ukraine and the European Defence Agency (EDA) will establish close contacts to discuss military capability improvement, including technological issues'.

### CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEW ATLANTICISM

The main consequence of New Atlanticism is resistance from Russia and the renewed division of Europe. From the very beginning Russia chafed at the Atlanticist definition of the post-Cold War order, which by definition excluded a continental dimension in which Russia would be a natural equal. The country's weakness in the 1990s allowed only impotent growls over Kosovo, NATO enlargement and other issues. However, in the 2000s Russia recovered from its immediate post-communist disorder and was now in a position to reinforce its complaints with action. However, even with the renewed state capacity, Vladimir Putin tried to find some middle path

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<sup>2</sup> The Lisbon Treaty was careful to stress the development of a common European security and defence policy (Section 2, 'Provisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy', Articles 42 to 46), but stressed that this would be compatible with the existing obligations of member states to NATO (Article 42.2): *Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (Luxembourg, European Union, 2010); [http://europa.eu/lisbon\\_treaty/full\\_text/](http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/full_text/).



between the relatively uncritical Atlanticism associated with foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev in the first period of Russian foreign policy in the early 1990s, and then the rather harsh anti-Atlanticism pursued by foreign and then prime minister Evgeny Primakov in the second part of the decade. This classic Putinite strategy of reconciling extremes was new realist: it was realist to the degree that it eschewed what was perceived to be the excessive idealism of the liberal period in the early 1990s; and it was new because of its repudiation of Primakov's revival of neo-Khrushchevite ideas of peaceful coexistence between two fundamentally opposed system. Instead, Putin believed that a more progressive and rational model of interaction with the Atlantic power system could be found.

However, following numerous rebuffs, including the invasion of Iraq and destruction of Libya, plans to install a ballistic missile defence (BMD) system in Poland and the Czech Republic (later revised to a phased system in Romania and Poland), and the inexorable march of NATO to Russia's borders (including the promise of ultimate membership of Georgia and Ukraine), when Putin returned to the Kremlin in 2012 for his third presidential term a new era in Russian foreign policy was inaugurated. Neo-revisionism does not repudiate the normative framework of international society as it has developed since 1945, but it does repudiate the practices of the Atlantic power system as practiced since 1989. This entails the acceleration of Eurasian integration efforts, giving rise to the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015. It means cultural and political resistance to transdemocracy, which in the end precipitated the conflict in Ukraine in 2013-14. Neo-revisionism does not mean the reconstitution of a 'Russian empire' or even the Soviet Union, but it does assert historical and political pluralism and sovereign internationalism. The Second Cold War is as much about alternative models of world order as it is about the character of particular systems.

The New Atlanticism failed to generate a genuinely post-Cold War pan-continental security and developmental model, and thus in the end reproduced the Cold War. The idea that NATO enlargement would help put an end to the division of Europe discounted the fact that Europe's largest country remained a growling and increasingly dissatisfied external presence. By satisfying the perceived security needs of one constituency (the post-communist states), the security concerns of a nuclear-armed major state were ignored (Hill, 2018). The creation of new dividing lines in Europe diminished the security of all. When Russia did finally respond in the manner anticipated by Kennan and other critics, it was taken as justification

of the need for NATO consolidation, thus becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. European security became increasingly militarised as a new Iron Curtain began to be built across Europe, now running from Narva on the Baltic to Mariupol on the Sea of Azov. The New Atlanticism represented a response to the changed conditions of the post-Cold War era, yet failed to generate a larger strategic rethinking of how European, and thereby global, security could be enhanced.

The New Atlanticism's changed functionality shaped its internal evolution. Two outstanding features can be identified: its hermetic and all-encompassing character. The notion of *hermetic* here means that despite the changed security situation after 1989-91 and enlargement to encompass most Soviet bloc states and even part of the former Soviet Union (the Baltic states), its internal rationale and structures remained remarkably impervious to change. The Atlantic alliance was always a combination of norms and power, but this *episteme* in the post-Cold War era shifted from the rational ideational foundations of a security order to become more of an ideological project. Ideologies, as we know, tend to lose flexibility and pragmatism and become more rigid. They lose the ability to devise innovative and flexible policy responses and become more selective in understanding complex information flows. Dogmatism takes the place of dialogue. The view that NATO enlargement may actually undermine the stated goal of enhancing the security of its members is dismissed as subversive and even irrational. The idea of some sort of pan-European security order no longer fits into the Overton window of acceptable discourse. Concessions to Russia are considered weakness if not appeasement (Blank 2014). The idea of a multipolar world order is considered anathema to the New Atlanticists because it undermines the universality of liberal hegemony. In sum, there was little ideational or institutional innovation at the end of the Cold War, and instead the ideological and corporate mentalities of the Cold War were reinforced.

As for New Atlanticism's *comprehensive* character, this gained in intensity as the foreign and security dimension of the EU effectively merged with the Atlantic power system (for an example, see Atlantic Council, 2020). EU enlargement has become part of a broader process of the expansion of the Euro-Atlantic community, in which security, good governance and economic reform go hand in hand. For historical reasons a number of EU countries are not members of NATO – Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Finland, Malta and Sweden – but since 1989 most new members of the EU have also become members of NATO. Even this neutrality is being questioned, with Atlanticists

in both Sweden and Finland now arguing in favour of NATO membership. Overall, post-Cold War Atlanticism reflects the evolution of the Atlantic security system into a total community, encompassing not only security but also a specific representation of a hybrid Euro-Atlantic civilisation. This means the tempering of certain traditional European values, such as social justice and equality, but above all the effective repudiation of neo-Gaullist ideas about pan-continental unity and autonomy.

The New Atlanticism stymied the development of alternative models of European security. In the early period Russia expressed hopes that the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would become the main continental security body. The advantages were clear: Russia would be a founder member and enjoy veto powers. There was talk even of creating a European security council based on the OSCE, analogous to that operating in the UN, to allow the major powers to stake a claim to the management of pan-continental security issues on a parity basis. The idea was rejected, and instead it was NATO that remained predominant, with all of the attendant problems outlined above. In a final attempt to break the impasse, in June 2008 President Dmitry Medvedev suggested a new European Security Treaty, but the idea was again effectively quashed (Weitz, 2012). The hermetic and comprehensive character of the Atlantic community was reinforced, a process that culminated in 2014 when the cold peace gave way to the return of a full-blown new Cold War.

### **TOWARDS POST-ATLANTICISM?**

However, the Second Cold War differs from the first in several significant ways. The regional, ideological and security context differs from the first, but above all the coherence of the Atlantic power system is challenged in new ways. We are beginning to see the outlines of what post-Atlanticism could look like.

First, already in the Barack Obama presidency the character of US leadership in the Atlantic region, and globally as well, was questioned. The global financial crisis from 2008 battered US institutions and prompted calls for retrenchment. However, this provoked a vigorous re-assertion of New Atlanticist orthodoxy from the defenders of liberal hegemony. The perennial issue of greater burden-sharing was articulated not only in the form of the European NATO states paying more for their defence, but also that they should take greater responsibility for their own security. Obama was the first post-war American president to focus less on Europe than on East Asia,

and in particular the growing power of China. This took the form of Hillary Clinton's 'pivot to the East', which entailed reinforcing America's security presence in the region (establishing a new base in Australia and consolidating its existing alliance network); trying to entice India into some sort of quasi-alliance framework, articulated in the form of an Indo-Pacific regional orientation (rather than the old Asia-Pacific formulation); the creation of an economic community that excluded China, the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP); and the beginning of various neo-containment strategies against China itself.

Second, the Trumpian disruption represents a stark version of post-Atlanticism. As with Russia's unexpected defection from the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, so under Trump the core of the alliance system appeared ready to defect from the periphery. Trump's version of 'America First' returned to some of the concerns of so-called isolationists in the inter-war period – although in fact, most were not isolationist in any real sense, but cleaved to the traditional version of internationalism, in which sovereign states engage with each other without the penumbra of norms, a transformative agenda or a ramified and permanent alliance system (Wertheim 2020). To this mix Trump added a harsh mercantilism, which repudiated the post-Cold War globalisation view that intensified economic interactions between states would benefit them all. As the global pie grew, all would have a larger portion. Instead, Trump's approach returned to Physiocratic notions that the gain of one would be to the detriment of the other. Trump applied this to repudiate the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) as well as to the renegotiation of the NAFTA agreement with Canada and Mexico. It was also applied to relations with the EU and above all China. Above all, Trump saw little value in the American alliance system and multilateral institutions in general. During his election campaign in 2016 he argued that NATO was 'obsolete', although once in office he failed to organise a serious strategic review of the issue. Trump was particularly hostile to the EU, which he saw as a cartel that stymied the free operation of American capital. Once again, he had a point, but his formulation was disruptive without a compensating positive agenda. Equally, Trump's endorsement of some of the illiberal resistance to EU norms, in particular by Hungary and Poland, disrupted EU solidarity. In short, Trump provided an intimation of what one model of post-Atlanticism might look like. This represents the negative transcendence of Atlanticism, entailing the reversion to an anarchic and competitive system accompanied by great power conflict and competition unregulated by multilateral institutions and norms.

The third route to post-Atlanticism is the divergence between its two wings. In the cold peace years the EU created several instruments to manage foreign policy and to endow it with greater 'actorness' in international affairs. This includes appointing a President of the European Council and creating the European External Action Service, whose head is a vice president of the European Council. The technocratic role of the European Commission was thereby reinforced, although its President remains a powerful actor in European foreign policy. The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) of June 2016 gave voice to aspirations for greater 'strategic autonomy', based on an emerging ideology of 'principled pragmatism' (European Union, 2016). There were also hesitant moves towards endowing the EU with some military capacity, although always couched in terms of not infringing NATO's prerogatives (Scazzieri, 2020). The onset of the Second Cold War and elements of estrangement from Trumpian America prompted the new President, Ursula van der Leyen, in 2019 to talk about creating a 'more geopolitical' European Commission. After seven years of negotiation, in December 2020 the EU and China agreed in principle on a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), much to Washington's displeasure. Already several EU countries had signed up to China's Belt and Road Initiative, and the 17+1 formula linked China with many south-eastern EU members and aspirants. The Trumpian disruption reinforced an understanding among European leaders that the old days of uncritical interdependence with the US were over, even though Trump's successor, Joseph Biden, restored normal diplomatic intercourse between the two regions. The deeper trend was towards the greater articulation of the EU as a distinct security and foreign policy actor, although remaining within the carapace of the Atlantic power system. However, in the long run the outsourcing of security to an external actor would become increasingly less viable if the EU wished to remain an independent actor in international affairs.

Four, the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 accelerated a process that had already long been in train, namely the 'renationalisation' of security by member states. A number of countries resisted spending more on defence. Even those who met the two per cent target set by the Wales NATO summit in 2014, like the UK, continued to reduce the number of personnel under arms. Equally, Turkey remains an awkward partner, even from the military perspective. Allied forces were not allowed to use Turkish bases to invade Iraq in 2003, and Turkish airfields could not be used to support the Anglo-American bombing campaign against Islamic State in Syria from 2014. Bloc discipline began to loosen, with Greece, Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus coming into conflict over energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean.

This is accompanied by the continued narrative of European abandonment. This was expressed most forcefully by Polish foreign minister Radek Sikorski. In a leaked conversation between Sikorski and the former Polish finance minister Jacek Rostowski in April 2014, published in the Polish magazine *Wprost* on 23 June, the foreign minister warned that 'The Polish-American alliance is not worth anything: it's even damaging, because it creates a false sense of security for Poland', suggesting that Washington had been too weak in the conflict with Russia (Smith 2014). In keeping with the spirit of that conversation, in the Trump era Poland sought bilateral security guarantees with the US.

A fifth indicator of the emergence of a post-Atlantic era would be the loss of popular support for the old alliance system. In the Cold War years there was a clear and present danger in the form of Warsaw Pact armies East of the Elbe, and although there were ups and down in the level of popular support, as well as a vigorous peace movement in the 1980s warning against nuclear escalation, overall popular support and bloc discipline held. However, in the post-Cold War era the rationale for such a ramified security and political system is harder to justify. The emergence of Russia as the bogeyman of course helped reinforce support. NATO needs an enemy to survive, and the image of the enemy was revived to ensure the alliance's continuation. A fatal syllogism emerged, whereby NATO was justified by the need to deal with security threats created by its own existence. The popular base for the New Atlanticism is inevitably more brittle than during the original Cold War. Even in Germany, where the modern state was created by the Cold War, the strong showing for left and right 'populist' parties suggests a growing mood of Atlantic-scepticism. This is countered by a growing elite consensus against Germany's traditional role as the 'honest broker' between Russia and Europe, a type of neo-Bismarckianism that helped Germany first accept and then transcend the Cold War through *Ostpolitik* and the broader policy of *détente*.

A sixth potential danger to New Atlanticist hegemony is the problem of double standards, the perceived or real gulf between normative declarations and political practices. As noted, the NATO alliance is a security community based on the combination of values and power, norms and dominion. The danger is that the gulf between the two could widen beyond acceptable limits. Already Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia have legitimate grievances about the lack of automatic citizenship rights. In Turkey, Hungary and Poland some fundamental principles enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights are being eroded, with the

commitment to effective constraints on the executive, the independence of the judiciary, and the accountability of the political class and the bureaucracy being undermined. The American system of extraordinary rendition, in which individuals were captured or kidnapped and then sent across the world in secret flights to torture and interrogation centres, involved a number of alliance members. The US Senate report on the CIA's interrogation and detention programme provides shocking information about the degree of brutality associated with the programme (Senate Select Committee, 2014). It found that torture 'regularly resulted in fabricated information', as noted by the committee chair Diane Feinstein, who went on to call the torture programme 'a stain on our values and on our history' (Ackerman and Borger, 2014, p. 1). At least 54 countries cooperated with the rendition activities, of which 17 were or were soon to become members of the EU. Some Eastern European countries hosted US 'black sites' (torture facilities) that are now members of the EU, notably Lithuania, Poland and Romania, while the UK was actively involved in facilitating rendition flights.

Seventh, NATO and EU attempts to counter Russian 'disinformation' revived Cold War patterns of propaganda and political warfare (Rid, 2020). One example demonstrates the slippery terrain on which this battle is waged. The 'ecosystem' metaphor was at the heart of the State Department's Global Engagement Centre (GEC) report issued on 5 August 2020. GEC describes itself as 'the US government's dedicated centre for countering foreign disinformation and propaganda'. It analysed supposed Russian proxies peddling policies critical of US policies, but demonstrated how the war against Russian disinformation rendered such material not part of a normal debate and pluralism of views but as 'muddying the waters of the information environment in order to confuse those trying to discern the truth'. The fundamental argument was that 'Russia has operationalized the concept of perpetual adversarial competition in the information environment by encouraging the development of a disinformation and propaganda ecosystem that allows for varied and overlapping approaches that reinforce each other even when individual messages within the system appear contradictory'. The Kremlin was condemned for bearing 'direct responsibility for cultivating these tactics and platforms as part of its approach to using information as a weapon'. The concept of 'disinformation' was defined broadly, encompassing anything published by an alleged Russia-friendly source, whether true or not, and if it contradicted another item, that only revealed how cunning Moscow was in pushing 'multiple versions' of stories to confuse the public. By definition, anything associated with Russia was tainted; and by the same token, anything practiced by the US and its allies

was virtuous. Thus the Kremlin was condemned for the 'weaponisation of social media' and 'cyber-enabled disinformation' as 'part of its approach to using information as a weapon', as if these phenomena were not part of the contemporary media environment. Moscow was accused of investing 'massively in its propaganda channels, its intelligence services and its proxies to conduct malicious cyber activity to support their disinformation efforts' (US Department of State, 2020).

Eight, the attempt to render a contingent security alliance created under one set of circumstances into something more universal and enduring inevitably stimulated resistance. We have noted how Russia became neo-revisionist, challenging not the principles of the current international system but the claims of the Atlantic power system to represent the only viable model of European security and norms. However, there are broader processes at work. Some of these are political, notably the creation of a set of 'post-Western' anti-hegemonic institutions such as the BRICS association as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. There are also long-term geo-economic shifts, as the centre of economic gravity moves to the Pacific basin, and China emerges as a credible peer competitor to the US. A new pattern in global politics is beginning to emerge and the much-anticipated multipolarity is finally taking shape.

Finally, and perhaps most significant in the long-term, the greater Eurasian region is beginning to consolidate. Russia is devising a heartland strategy of its own, to overcome the danger of the country becoming a dual periphery (to Western Europe and East Asia), and this includes alignment with China while keeping the door open to the West. If greater Eurasia becomes a dynamic developmental hub (and in the long-term there is no reason to suppose that this will not be the case), then Western Europe will become a periphery to the new heartland, and at the same time increasingly irrelevant to the US (as Trump already indicated). Equally, as multipolarity takes shape, the New Atlanticist unipolar model will become increasingly anachronistic, and erode the US-EU partnership. The land powers of Asia (although they will also once again take to the seas) will finally overcome the 500-year predominance of the traditional maritime powers, and the New Atlanticism will give way to a post-Atlantic era.

## CONCLUSION

One of the most surprising features of the post-Cold War world is the continued existence of NATO. After all, it had achieved its purpose –



containing the USSR – and even more, it witnessed the demise of its erstwhile foe. Realist IR theory has few explanations for the continued existence of a defensive alliance after the object of its existence had gone. Liberal theory, on the other hand, is more forthcoming with explanations for NATO's continued existence. NATO had always been a dual body: a defensive military alliance; as well as a community of values, as outlined in the Atlantic Charter in 1941, and then in the founding treaty of NATO in 1949. In that capacity, the alliance was about more than security but also concerned with defending a particular way of life. This would have been relatively unproblematic if some sort of substantive security relationship had been established with post-communist Russia. Instead, the failure to incorporate Russia intensified the contradiction between norms and dominion within the Atlantic power system.

From its inception in the wake of the First World War, its reinvention in 1941 as the US prepared to enter the war against Nazi Germany and then codified in Cold War conditions in 1949, and on to the New Atlanticism after 1989, the idea of a Euro-Atlantic security community based on a unique combination of values and power, norms and dominion has shaped the destiny of Europe. The New Atlanticism represented a radicalisation of Atlanticism, but the failure to incorporate Russia revived classic Cold War patterns on the continent. However, the Second Cold War is no mere repetition of the first, and some fundamentally new dynamics are at work. Although there is no imminent prospect for the demise of the Atlantic power system, certain pressures are beginning to tear at its coherence. The New Atlanticism represented the apogee of this order, but its radicalisation in the post-Cold War era sowed the seeds of its own destruction. The failure to incorporate Russia into a transformed security and developmental community provided incentives to advance Eurasian strategies of its own, now reinforced by the enormous and growing power of China.

This paper has identified the main features of the New Atlanticism, and examined some of the issues that could herald the onset of post-Atlanticism. The analysis provides a framework for analysis of the security and normative challenges facing Europe and the world.

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NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations of May 1997



## **STRENGTHENING SECURITY AND DEFENCE - WHAT IS THE RELATIVE POWER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION VIS-À-VIS THE MEMBER STATES?**

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*Abstract:* The implementation process of A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy has triggered significant dynamism into the security and defence domain. This paper deals with the research question of how strengthening the European Union security and defence affects possible shifting preferences between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. The authors analyse new initiatives and tools launched to strengthen the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domains well as the role of the European Union and the Member States in these processes. The tested general hypothesis within this research is the following: Despite the importance of ongoing strengthening of the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain, the development process of almost all new initiatives and tools in this domain is in the hands of the Member States. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, this paper seeks to explain how the Member States are central decision-makers within the processes

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The paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the research project "Serbia and challenges in international relations in 2021", financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and conducted by the Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade.

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related to the defence matters within the European Union. Using the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework, it can be concluded that strengthening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain is the product of bargains amongst member countries that is driven by the domestic policy while supranational institutions have limited importance. The content analysis method in this paper is based on the documents and academic articles mainly related to the defence matters within the European Union and the EU's Global Strategy.

*Keywords:* European Union, Intergovernmentalism, Supranationalism, Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework, the EU's Global Strategy, the Common Security and Defence Policy, the EU's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain.

## INTRODUCTION

Parallel with the implementation process of A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (the EU's Global Strategy) adopted in June 2016, strengthening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain is becoming more and more important and represents a very useful game-changer within European defence and security matters, as well as within the European agenda for cooperation as a whole. From this point of view, the paper gives primacy to the EU's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain over the Common Security and Defence Policy. Consequently, this paper focuses mainly on discussing defence matters rather than security matters even though it is not easy to find literature devoted only to European defence without mentioning security and defence together (Marambanyika, 2018, pp. 1-3).

There are a lot of significant unanswered questions about the genesis of European Integration, and one of them is clearly raised by Erdem (Erdem, 2006, p. 1) – 'To what extent European nation-states gave power vis-à-vis the EU, in other words, what is the relative power of the EU vis-à-vis the Member States?' Considering the topic and scope of his paper, Erdem did not elaborate further on the posed question and left this to other scholars. This paper attempts to answer the mentioned question considering the most important taken decisions and launched initiatives related to the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain during the period from 2013 to 2020 using the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework.

In line with the scope and research aim of this paper, the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework consists of Intergovernmentalist theory, Liberal Intergovernmentalist theory and New Intergovernmentalist theory with assumptions of synthesis based on ontological and epistemological principles and rules. This paper is not about theory testing, but rather about considering the possibility of using the Intergovernmentalist theoretical framework to explore deepening cooperation on security and integration in the defence domain at the European Union's level with some limitation factors which meanwhile were given by the academic community. Bearing in mind that the academic literature that belongs to the Intergovernmentalism Theoretical Framework usually do not cover defence matters, but gives priority to economic interests, it was, therefore, difficult to apply this theoretical approach to the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. However, there are a few exceptions to the above statement. One of them is a research work done by Dover where he utilizes the Liberal Intergovernmentalism '... to provide the framework around which explanations for why the British government sought to Europeanize their defence policy – something that most commentators would have judged unthinkable given the transatlanticist preferences of the British government since 1945' (Dover, 2007. p. 3).

This paper consists of five sections. After the introductory remarks, the second section presents the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework as a tool for theorising the European Union – intergovernmentalism, liberal intergovernmentalism and new intergovernmentalism. The intergovernmental and supranational dimensions of the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain are elaborated in the third section representing the main actors within the European Union, such as the European Council, the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The strengthening cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain – the European Union vis-à-vis the Member States are presented in the fourth section emphasizing the role of the most powerful Member States and the European Union's intergovernmental and supranational bodies. This is followed by a conclusion.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTALIST THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AS A TOOL FOR THEORISING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The European Union as one of the most important and complex creations in contemporary world politics poses demanding challenges for



scholars to explain the European nature of integration in a comprehensive and objective way. Theorising the European Union using different theoretical frameworks has been topical since the idea of European integration was born. As mentioned in Rosamond (Rosamond, 2000, p. 1) '... the emergence and development of the institutions of economic integration in Western Europe after the Second World War provided a valuable site for both the application of existing theories and the development of new perspectives'. Scholars interested in studying European integration have the possibility to use, evaluate and develop a pretty dispersed theoretical framework based on several main theories such as federalism, functionalism, institutionalism, intergovernmentalism and constructivism, including also their successive theories. The bulk of the literature on theories of European integration focuses on the popular conclusion that the European Union and ongoing processes are too complex to be explained completely by a single theoretical approach, referring to the one well-known story of the blind men and elephant emphasized in the paper *Of Blind Men, Elephants and International Integration* written by Donald Puchala (Puchala, 1972).<sup>4</sup> It means that no theory can completely explain the substance and further development of the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. In other words, there is a need for using eclecticism as a conceptual approach where it is possible due to ontological and epistemological bases.

In this paper, there is no intention to examine and evaluate mentioned theories respectively, yet only to present in general the possibility of using the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework to explain the recent deepening of the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain for the following reasons. First, the mentioned theoretical framework is arguing for state primacy and state-centric formulations, which is important due to the fact that the Member States are

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<sup>4</sup> In the paper named *Of Blind Men, Elephants and International Integration*, Puchala wrote the following observation: 'The story of the blind men and the elephant is universally known. Several blind men approached an elephant and each touched the animal in an effort to discover what the beast looked like. Each blind man, however, touched a different part of the large animal, and each concluded that the elephant had the appearance of the part he had touched .... The total result was that no man arrived at a very accurate description of the elephant. Yet, each man had gained enough evidence from his own experience to disbelieve his fellows and to maintain a lively debate about the nature of the beast.' (Puchala, 1972, p. 267)

not eager to hand over decisions on defence matters considering that this is one of the highest areas of sovereignty. On the other hand, despite the mentioned approach related to sovereignty, as pointed out by Puchala 'some intergovernmentalists scholars see the terms of international cooperation as reflecting the relative bargaining power of different governments, who, while never abnegating their sovereignty, may be willing to pool or delegate it as efficiency and effectiveness require' (Puchala, 1999, p. 319). Also, in accordance with observations taken within the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework, we can conclude that the powerful Member States are more influential than European Union's institutions when we are talking about moving the defence integration agenda forward.

Second, the bulk of the recent literature on the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain focuses on the fact that the Common Foreign and Security Policy and its part the Common Security and Defence Policy are regarded as intergovernmental, while policymaking procedures related to these domains are grounded in specific Treaty provisions remaining in the hands of the Member States (Strikwerda, 2019, pp. 1-2). Put another way, the European Union's legislative framework, primarily part of The Treaty on European Union related to the specific provisions on the Common Foreign and Security Policy and established procedures, set boundaries for further cooperation and deepening integration in the defence domain.

Third, The European Union's defence integration has pretty lagged behind in comparison with integration in the economic, monetary and legal domains. In such a view, broadly understood, there are three main functions of the European integration theories – explanatory/understanding, analytical/descriptive and critical/normative, which run roughly parallel to their three main phases of development – explaining integration, analysing governance and constructing the European Union (Wiener&Diez, 2009, pp. 6-18). This pattern is very important due to the fact that the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework is primarily exploring the European integration in the early stage based on milestone events and important arrangements.

Fourth, although the European integration theory has been transformed significantly in the recent period (Pollack, 2005) – the long-standing neofunctionalist-intergovernmentalist debate goes in favour of a rationalist-constructivist debate reflecting broader developments in international relations theory; the application of international relations theory has been rejected in favour of comparative politics approaches which analyse the EU

using off-the-shelf models of legislative, executive, and judicial politics in domestic politics; and considering the EU as an emerging system of multi-level governance in which national governments are losing influence in favour of supranational and sub-national actors, raising important normative questions about the future of democracy within the EU, the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework is still valid and has significant explanatory power to successfully describe processes or events or predict the consequence of these processes or events. Liberal intergovernmentalism which presents a cornerstone of the Intergovernmentalist theoretical framework, in accordance with observations taken by Moravcsik (Moravcsik, 2018), retains its place as a baseline European integration theory.

Fifth, the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework is open to dialogue and synthesis with other European integration theories. From this vantage point, Moravcsik correctly observed that ‘... reason why liberal intergovernmentalism is open to such a synthesis is that it itself is a synthesis of rationalist theories: it combines theories of preference formation, bargaining, and institutions’ (Moravcsik, 2009, p. 84).

Intergovernmentalism, liberal intergovernmentalism and new Intergovernmentalism represent similar and successive concepts based on close assumptions with the possibility to consider within one unique Intergovernmentalism Theoretical Framework with some small-scale constraints. One of the creators and the main proponent of Intergovernmentalism was Stanley Hoffmann, professor at Harvard University. To systematically question neofunctionalist assumptions, his central claim is the following: the nation-state is far from being obsolete, had proven ‘obstinate’. As Hoffmann noticed (Hoffmann, 1966, p. 863), political unification within Western Europe could have succeeded if, on the one hand, Western European nations had not been caught in the whirlpool of different concerns, as a result of both profoundly different internal circumstances and outside legacies, and if, on the other hand, they have been able or obliged to concentrate on ‘community-building’ to the exclusion of all problems situated either outside their area or within each of them.

From this vantage point, Hoffmann has made three remarks and one of them, which concerns the meaning of integration, is especially important and useful for this paper. In short, he concluded that it is ‘possible for scholars to argue both that integration is proceeding and that the nation-state is more than ever the basic unit without contradicting each other, for recent definitions of integration “beyond the nation-state” point not toward the emergence of a new kind of political community, but merely toward an

obscuring of the boundaries between the system of international organization and the environment provided by member states' (Hoffmann, 1966, p. 908). Further, as observed by Howorth (Howorth, 2017, p. 344), integration could only take place in policy areas where states' gains constantly outweighed losses and it means that the integration process would not and could not be the case in the area of the high politics of which defence was the ultimate example.

Furthermore, based on Intergovernmentalism, Andrew Moravcsik presented a new theoretical concept named Liberal intergovernmentalism, which goes a step further in comparison with classical Hoffmann's approach because it rejects the intergovernmentalist position that states will not transfer power to the institutions of the European Union and believes that limiting their sovereignty is a better strategy to retain autonomy than to remain outside the European Union. The central argument of Moravcsik liberal intergovernmentalism is as follows:

'European integration can best be explained as a series of rational choices made by national leaders. These choices responded to constraints and opportunities stemming from the economic interests of powerful domestic constituents, the relative power of each state in the international system, and the role of international institutions in bolstering the credibility of interstate commitments' (Moravcsik, 1998, p. 18).

It means that liberal intergovernmentalism rests on two basic assumptions about politics – the first is that states are actors and the second one is that states are rational. In short, Moravcsik proposed a rationalist framework for international cooperation, which consists of three stages or the specific tripartite sequence as follows: (1) national preference formation; (2) interstate bargaining; (3) institutional choice. Specifically, in explaining national preferences, the main proponent of liberal intergovernmentalism assesses the relative importance of geopolitical interests and economic interests. In explaining interstate bargaining, he assesses the relative importance of interstate bargaining power and the intervention of supranational entrepreneurs. And finally, in explaining the choices to delegate sovereignty to international institutions, the relative importance of federalist ideology, technocratic information management, and the desire for credible commitments were assessed. Each stage is separate, and each stage is explained by a separate theory to distinguish more rigorously between those theories that are substitutes (to explain the same stage of the negotiation) and those that are complements (to explain the different stages of the negotiation) (Moravcsik, 1998, pp. 20; 23-24).

Moravcsik (1998, p. 24) defined national preferences as an ordered and weighted set of values placed on future substantive outcomes, often termed 'states of the world', that might result from the international political interaction and reflects the objectives of domestic groups that influence the state apparatus.<sup>5</sup> Different from intergovernmentalism, Moravcsik incorporated the liberal model of preference formation, whereby national governments have a strong idea of what their preferences are and pursue them in bargaining with the other Member States.<sup>6</sup> Moravcsik evaluated theories based on geopolitical and economic interests in order to explain variation in national preferences. Thus, in this stage, Moravcsik posed the following theoretical question – How much do security externalities and endogenous commercial policy contribute to an explanation of national preferences for international economic policy coordination (Moravcsik, 1998, p. 19)? In order to provide an objective and appropriate answer to this question and using a framework that consists of the two pillars of interests – geopolitical (security externalities) and political-economic assumptions were tested in five cases or five grand bargains.<sup>7</sup> Following conclusions from the mentioned methodological framework, Moravcsik (Moravcsik, 1998, pp. 473, 477) correctly observed that '... The bulk of the existing literature claims that the European Community was founded primarily to address real and

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<sup>5</sup> In line with Moravcsik's theoretical framework, 'states of the world' means that states seek to realize through world politics-are shaped through contention among domestic political groups (Moravcsik, 1998, p.22).

<sup>6</sup> In accordance with observations taken by Rosamond (Rosamond, 2000, p. 135) ,Moravcsik's analysis of the origins of the Single European Act presented in the paper *Negotiating the Single European Act* is consistent with some of the ideas developed by Bulmer related to the claim that the national polity is the source of legitimacy for state actors (*in paper Domestic Politics and European Community Policy-Making*). From this vantage point, Moravcsik presents a departure from classic to liberal intergovernmentalism, which means that national interests are best viewed as consequences of a state-society interaction.

<sup>7</sup> All approaches and alternatives in his book *The Choice for Europe – Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, Moravcsik tested in five cases/bargains which represent the milestones in the process of development of the European Union: (1) the European Community Treaty – 1957; (2) the consolidation of the European Economic Community and construction of the Common Agricultural Policy – the 1960s; (3) the Creation of the European Monetary System – 1979; (4) the Single European Act – 1986; and (5) the Maastricht Treaty on European Union – 1991.

perceived geopolitical threats or to realize federalist ideas. Yet each of the five cases confirms that the most persistent and powerful source of varying national preferences concerning integration over the past four decades has been economic, in particular commercial, interest.' Though, 'yet we should not neglect geopolitical interests and ideas altogether. Over the past forty years their impact on European integration, though clearly secondary, has nonetheless been significant'.

In the second stage of his theoretical work named *Interstate Bargaining: Explaining Efficiency and Distribution* (Moravcsik, 1998. p. 19), Moravcsik raised the question – How much do political entrepreneurship and asymmetrical interdependence contribute to the efficiency and distributional outcomes of interstate bargaining? To explain the efficiency and distributional outcomes of negotiations, Moravcsik (Moravcsik, 1998. pp. 54-67) evaluated two different theories: supranational bargaining theory (based on influence through persuasive information and ideas) and intergovernmental bargaining theory (based on influence through asymmetrical interdependence). Using a theoretical framework which consists of several different dimensions such as the underlying distribution of information and ideas, negotiation process and outcomes, and efficiency and distribution, Moravcsik (1998. p. 485) pointed out that intergovernmental bargaining theory is decisively confirmed while supranational entrepreneurs have only a rare and secondary impact on the efficiency of negotiations.

Finally, we can turn to the third analytical stage within Moravcsik's rationalistic framework of international cooperation – institutional choice. In this sense (Moravcsik, 1998. p. 19), his last question is – How much national identity, informational economies of scale and the desire for credible commitments contribute to state decisions to delegate or pool sovereignty in international institutions or, in other words, the choice of the European Community institutions reflected federalist ideology, the need for technocratic management, or an interest in securing credible member state commitments? In accordance with Moravcsik's approach (Moravcsik, 1998, pp. 67-68), constraints on sovereignty can be imposed in two ways – pooling or delegation of authoritative decisions making. There are three plausible explanations for this – the belief in federalist ideology; the need for centralised technocratic management; and the desire for more credible commitments. With testing three theories related to federalist ideology, technocratic management and credible commitments to explain patterns of institutional choice, based on cross-issue and cross-national variation, domestic cleavages and discourse and institutional form, Moravcsik

(Moravcsik, 1998, p. 489) pointed out that patterns of support for general institutional provisions continued to reflect federalist ideology.

In sum, Moravcsik (Moravcsik, 1998, p. 472; 2009, p. 69) concluded that 'European integration can best be understood as a series of rational choices made by national leaders. These choices responded to the constraints and opportunities stemming from the economic interests of powerful domestic constituents, the relative power of states stemming from asymmetrical interdependence, and the role of institutions in bolstering the credibility of interstate commitments'. As mentioned in Moravcsik (Moravcsik, 2018, p.1651), following the most political-economy model, liberal inter-governmentalism gives priority to a single issue area while empirically this theoretical approach does not deny that non-issue-specific interest and ideals may have a secondary empirical impact. It leaves them to other theories.

Analysing the post-Maastricht period, proponents of new intergovernmentalism noticed one paradox (Bickerton, Hodson&Puetter, 2015, p. 705, 708) – 'Member states pursue more integration but stubbornly resist further supranationalism' and apart from that through further elaboration they concluded that nation-states in Europe become the Member States which paved the way for intergovernmental cooperation rather than delegation to supranational institutions. In their research, they set out six hypotheses related to new intergovernmentalism. Bearing in mind that some of these hypotheses have been used in the preparation of this paper, we believe that it is necessary to list them here to provide amore useful theoretical framework. These are the following hypotheses (Bickerton, Hodson&Puetter, 2015, pp. 711-717) –(1)deliberation and consensus have become the guiding norms of day-to-day decision making at all levels; (2) supranational institutions are not hard-wired to seek ever-closer union; (3) where delegation occurs, governments and traditional supranational actors support the creation and empowerment of de novo bodies; (4) problems in domestic preference formation have become standalone inputs into the European integration process; (5) the differences between high and low politics have become blurred; and (6) the EU is in a state of disequilibrium.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND SUPRANATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S COOPERATION ON DEFENCE AND INTEGRATION IN THE DEFENCE DOMAIN**

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including also the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), emanated from the Treaty

of Maastricht adopted in December 1991. In line with the foundations of the Treaty of Maastricht and the Saint-Malo Declaration signed in December 1998 by the Governments of France and the United Kingdom, the European Council in June 1999 launched the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which was renamed the Common Security and Defence Policy ten years later by the Treaty of Lisbon in December 2009.

Furthermore, related to the process of building military assets, as noticed by Glišić, Stojković and Lađevac, the Bosnian War was a history-making moment for further development of the capabilities and international tools for crisis management (Glišić, Stojković&Lađevac, 2019, pp. 339-340). Based on negative experience from the Bosnian War, related to the insufficient military capabilities, the European Union approved the 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal calling the EU's Member States to be able by 2003 to deploy up to 15 brigades or 60.000 soldiers within 60 days and for at least one year. Due to the fact that the 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal was unachievable in 2004, the European Union adopted the 2010 Headline Goal with a focus on interoperability, deployability, and sustainability, including also the creation of the EU's Battle groups.

In addition, the Lisbon Treaty dated 1 December 2009, as the main milestone, provided the legal framework for deepening cooperation in the area of security and defence thanks to the several relevant clauses. In December 2013, for the first time since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Council discussed defence cooperation within the European Union and identified priorities for deepening this kind of cooperation. Finally, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy with the aim to steer the Union's global action and set priorities to protect EU citizens while promoting the Union's interests and universal values was presented by the EU High Representative to the European Council in June 2016 (European External Action Service, 2016). The European Council welcomed the presentation of the EU's Global Strategy and invited the High Representative, the European Commission, and the Council to take the work forward to implement in practice this strategic document (Glišić, Đorđević&Stojković, 2020, pp. 287-299).

Speaking about intergovernmental and supranational dimensions of the European Union's cooperation on defence matters, within the wording given by the Intergovernmentalists Theoretical Framework, it should be noted that the Treaty on European Union anticipates that competences not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remain with the Member States, and national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State



(European Union, 2016, Articles 4.1 and 4.2). Furthermore, as foreseen in Article 31.1 of the Treaty on European Union, decisions related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy shall be taken by the European Council and the Council of Ministers of the European Union acting unanimously, except where this Chapter provides otherwise. Decisions having military or defence implications must be made unanimously. It means that constraints on the sovereignty of Member States cannot be imposed in the Common Security and Defence Policy, including also domain-related on the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. Taking into account the scope and aim of this paper, the question of sovereignty within European integration merits brief elaboration. In accordance with the established European Union's legal system and decision-making procedures, constraints on sovereignty can be imposed in two ways: pooling – when governments agree to decide future matters by voting procedures other than unanimity; or delegation of authoritative decision-making – when supranational actors are permitted to take certain autonomous decisions, without an intervening interstate vote or unilateral veto (Moravcsik, 1998, pp. 67-68).

On the other hand, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), as a part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), is a Member-State-driven process primarily on a bilateral base using the appropriate European Union's framework established on an intergovernmental base. It is very important to emphasize that the European Union's competence in matters of the CFSP shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the security, including the progressive framing of the Union's common defence policy that might lead to a common defence (European Union, 2016a, Article 24.1). Also, as predicted in the Treaty on European Union, the Member States which wish to establish enhanced cooperation between themselves within the framework of the Union's non-exclusive competences may make use of its institutions and exercise those competences by applying the relevant provisions of the Treaties (European Union, 2016a, Article 20.1). In this sense, the European Council and the Council of the European Union provide the strategic setting for the Commons Security and Defence Policy.

The European Council has been formalized on 9 December 1974 from a process based on European summitry, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with enhancing the role of heads of state and government. This highest body within the European structure sets the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. As noticed

by Luis Amorim, the European Council has always been particularly attentive to the CFSP matters, including the CSDP (Amorim, 2017, p. 47). According to Article 26.1 of the Treaty on European Union, the European Council identifies the Union's strategic interests, determines the objectives of and defines general guidelines for the common foreign and security policy, including for matters with defence implications, and adopts the necessary decisions. Furthermore, as foreseen in Article 42.2 of the Treaty on European Union, the Common Security and Defence Policy shall include the progressive framing of a common European Union's defence policy which will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides. In this case, the European Council recommends to the Member States the adoption of such a decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

Recently, within the presented legal framework, the European Council has taken several very important decisions to strengthen the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. In December 2013, for the first time since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Council discussed defence cooperation within the European Union and identified priorities for deepening this kind of cooperation in three main areas: increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the CSDP; enhancing the development of capabilities; and strengthening Europe's defence industry (European Council, 2013, paragraphs 5-21).<sup>8</sup> Besides that, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy with the aim to steer the Union's global action and set priorities to protect EU citizens while promoting Union's interests and universal values was presented by the EU High Representative to the European Council in June 2016 (European External Action Service, 2016). Owing to that, the same year in December, in order to strengthen the European Union's cooperation on defence, the European Council gave priority to the implementation of the Global Strategy in the area of security and defence and to establish the European Defence Action Plan (European Council, 2016, paragraphs 11-12). In June 2017 the European Council decided to launch or to wake up the 'sleeping beauty' of the Lisbon Treaty

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<sup>8</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon includes the following relevant clauses for defence issues: the Enhanced Cooperation Clause (Article 20 TEU), the Solidarity Clause (Article 222 TFEU), the Flexibility Mechanism (Article 44 TEU), the Mutual Assistance Clause (Article 42.7 TEU), and the most powerful mechanism the Permanent Structured Cooperation (Article 46 TEU).

– the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to strengthen the European Union's security and defence. In this sense, the European Council invited the Member States to agree on a common list of criteria and commitments, together with concrete capability projects, in order to start this cooperation (European Council, 2017, paragraph 8).

In line with Article 26.2 of the Treaty on European Union, the Council of the European Union (shorter Council) shall frame the common foreign and security policy and take the decisions necessary for defining and implementing it on the basis of the general guidelines and strategic lines defined by the European Council. The Council is an intergovernmental decision-making body that routinely legislates by a qualified majority vote with an exception where the Treaties provide otherwise, such as in the CFSP/CSDP domains which require consensus and unanimity. Within the Foreign Affairs configuration (the Foreign Affairs Council), the Council also brings together defence ministers and they usually meet back-to-back with foreign ministers.

The Council has taken substantive decisions since 2016 with a significant impact on deepening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. Conforming to the guidance given by the European Council, the European Union's foreign and defence ministers in November 2016 set the framework for further development of security and defence policy and adopted the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence, which covers several very important initiatives such as the Permanent Structure Cooperation, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, idea related to the establishment of the new organizational unit – Military Planning and Conduct Capability, the European Peace Facility, and the Capability Development Plan (Council of the European Union, 2016a&2016b). In June 2017, the Council adopted the decision establishing the Military Planning and Conduct Capability within the EU Military Staff and under the political control of the Political and Security Committee with responsibility for the operational planning and conduct of non-executive military missions at the strategic level (Council of the European Union, 2017a). In line with the European Council conclusions, in December 2017, the Council adopted the decisions triggering the Permanent Structure Cooperation with the Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher required criteria and which have made commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions, and contributing to the fulfilment of the Union level of ambition while the first initial list of the projects and implementation roadmap were adopted in March 2018

(Council of the European Union, 2017b, Article 1& Council of the European Union, 2018). With an aim to provide stronger and more ambitious defence cooperation with partners in the European Union's framework, the Council in November 2020 established general conditions under which non-EU countries can exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects (Council of the European Union, 2020).

Apart from the European Council and the Council of the European Union, a few very important initiatives were taken by the European Commission, which in the Common Security and Defence Policy plays the secondary role in comparison with the Member States. However, in the last ten years, the European Commission's engagement within the Common and Security Policy is getting more and more visible. With the aim to create an internal European Union's market for defence material based on the Commission's initiative, the Council adopted the Defence and Security Procurement Directive in July 2009. Further, the European Commission is working hard on the implementation process of the EU Global Strategy in the security and defence domain. As a result, the European Defence Action Plan was launched in November 2016 by the European Commission to support Europe's defence industry and the entire cycle of capability generation, from research and development to production and acquisition through three different pillars: (1) launching a European Defence Fund; (2) fostering investments in defence supply chains; and (3) reinforcing the single European defence market (European Commission, 2016). In summary, as correctly observed by Marrone and Ungaro (Marrone&Ungaro, 2014. pp. 13-14), the European Commission has progressively extended its footprint on the legislative, economic and industrial side while positioning itself between defence and issues such as internal market, procurement, industrial policies as well as research and innovation.

As foreseen in Article 36 of the Treaty on European Union, the European Parliament may address questions or make recommendations to the Council or the High Representative. Twice a year it shall hold a debate on progress in implementing the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the Common Security and Defence Policy and adopts reports. Also, based on the declaration made by the High Representative on political accountability in 2010, the Joint Consultation Meetings are organized on a regular basis between the European Parliament and other European Union's institutions related to the CFSP/CSDP domain. It means that the European Parliament has no direct role to influence significantly the Common Security and Defence Policy and the European Union's cooperation on defence and

integration in the defence domain. Nevertheless, we should emphasize that the political framework for consultation and dialogue has been evolving with the aim to allow and give possibilities for the European Parliament to play a full role in developing the Common Security and Defence Policy.

Without any doubt, the European Council and the Council of the European Union represent purely intergovernmental bodies when taking decisions related to the Common Security and Defence Policy, including also the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. Mentioned decisions are taken by unanimity with a few exceptions such as matters related to the European Defence Agency and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (European Union, 2016, Articles 45, 46). As opposed, the European Commission is a supranational institution that promotes the general interest of the Union and takes appropriate initiatives to that end.

On the other hand, there are some scholars trying to make a blur between sharp intergovernmentalism and supranationalism boundaries. In short, Goebel (Goebel, 2013) argues that the European Council is intrinsically intergovernmental in structure and partly supranational in executive policy-making and legislative roles, while the Council is also intrinsically intergovernmental in structure, but the blend of intergovernmental and supranational features in executive policy-making and legislative roles. Whereas, the European Parliament is federal in nature, supranational in vision and operations. By the same token, the European Commission is intrinsically supranational both in structure and its operational role.

#### **STRENGTHENING COOPERATION ON DEFENCE AND INTEGRATION IN THE DEFENCE DOMAIN - THE EUROPEAN UNION VIS-À-VIS THE MEMBER STATES -**

National preferences related to the deepening European Union's defence and integration vary among the Member States and depend on political-economic imperatives or issues-specific interdependence based on political-military threats (Jonson, 2006, pp. 46-47). Before Brexit, three of the most powerful Member States – the United Kingdom, France and Germany had diametrically different national preferences in the mentioned matters. As correctly observed by Moravcsik, Germany is most favourable, France less so and the United Kingdom least so to deepening cooperation in the CFSP domain (Moravcsik, 1998, p. 28). The United Kingdom was the main obstacle for further deepening cooperation on defence and integration in

the defence domain within the European Union due to the fact that was using the veto consistently to hindered integration in the defence domain.

Apart from this, France and Germany have also different ideas on the role of the military and the use of force. Likewise, their defence priorities, threat perceptions and regional priorities are different. At the European level, France wants the European Union to increase its military capabilities and be ready for use of force and intervention when necessary. On the other hand, due to its history, Germany advocates a different approach, giving primacy to capacity building using the PESCO framework without emphasising operational engagement. As Kempin and Kunz presented in their study 'What remains key to French autonomy is the country's capacity to lead operations on its own and to retain key capabilities allowing to preserve a major influence on operations led with allies' (Kempin&Kunz, 2017, p.12). Thus, France proposed the European Intervention Initiative in 2017 as a forum of European participating states to engage their military capabilities and forces to protect European security interests and it is neither part of NATO nor the EU. Despite the mentioned differences, in the post-Brexit era, Germany and France are able to find a compromise on milestone events to support and reinforce European cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. Cooperation in the security and defence domain is becoming the main axes of contemporary French-German relations. Thanks to Germany and France's support in 2017, the Council of the European Union adopted the decision triggering the Permanent Structured Cooperation and the decision establishing the Military Planning and Conduct Capability. Also, common funding for the EU Battle groups is provided. Apart from the mentioned, the focus of the Franco-German European agenda has concentrated on the implementation process of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence and on establishing the European Defence Fund.

Analysing German defence policy, especially the last published White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr (Federal Ministry of Defence, 2016, p. 49; 129), it can be seen that one of Germany's strategic priorities is defined as 'Strengthening the cohesion and capacity to act of NATO and the European Union'. Also, in order to fulfil the interoperability gap between European Armed Forces, the Europeanization of defence is seen as one of the most important content within the armament acquisition process. It can be said that Germany has a long term objective to be a very active player in the process of strengthening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. Thus, during

Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the period from 1 July to 31 December 2020, significant progress related to the cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain has been achieved. It is worth mentioning that Germany within the interstate bargaining process found the optimum way to speed up European cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain using the Permanent Structured Cooperation, and made all necessary conditions for under which third States could be invited to participate in individual projects within this framework. What is more, Germany also made success and reached a provisional agreement on setting-up the European Defence Fund in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. Also, in December 2020, the Council reached a political agreement on the European Peace Facility to finance the external action having military or defence implications under the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Given the above-mentioned, it can be said in conclusion that one of the assumptions which belong to the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework is confirmed – the powerful Member States are more influential than European Union's institutions when we are talking about moving the defence integration agenda forward. Apart from France and Germany, the sum of similar or common national preference of the medium and small Member States, although unable to make significant progress without the commitment of the above-mentioned two states, can provide the critical mass to trigger some processes and initiatives to strengthen the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain.

The EU's Member States are still the key players in the domain of the Common Security and Defence Policy, and also in the domain related to the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the security domain. In line with the legislative framework of the European Union, the Common Security and Defence Policy and also strengthening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain remain subjects of the unanimity role. However, to some extent in the contemporary circumstances, as presented in Rosamond (Rosamond, 2000. p. 144) 'the preferences of institutions also figures as an important variable influencing the style and substance of intergovernmental bargaining'. Likewise, we can see that some scholars claim that the reality is far more complex, especially when they evaluate the decision-shaping process and decision-making process within the European Union. Thanks to the Lisbon Treaty, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (High Representative) is well-powered to bring to the table a politico-strategic approach able to balance both EU-centred –

neofunctionalist view and state-centred – intergovernmental view, by relying on the European Defence Agency (EDA), the European External Action Service including EU Military Committee (EUMC) and EUMilitary Staff (EUMS), as well as the coordinating role within the European Commission (Marrone&Ungaro, 2014). The presented approach creates a fertile ground for deepening the boundary between the decision-shaping process and decision-making process. Also, the fact that decision-shaping process within the Common Security and Defence Policy is becoming more and more supranational taking into consideration engagement of different European Union's bodies, and some of them are already mentioned such as the EDA, the EUMC and the EUMS along with national representatives engaged in different working groups and committees. Consequently, as noticed by Howorth (Howorth, 2012. p. 433-434), '... scholars wonder whether we are not in fact witnessing the disappearance of any meaningful dichotomy between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism', and this is very important due to the fact that working groups and committees represented by national representatives are 'acting in a mode which is as close to supranational as it is to intergovernmental'. In order to explain new trends related to the decision-shaping and decision-making process in the Common Security and Defence Policy, Howorth coined a new theoretical approach 'supranational intergovernmentalism' (Howorth, 2000).

Based on the former review of the intergovernmental and supranational dimension of the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain, it can be said that the Member States have primacy in comparison with the European Union's institutions and agencies. In order to protect national sovereignty all decisions related to the security and defence domains must be made using the principle of unanimity. Having in mind security and defence matters, the European Council and the Council of the European Union, with their legislative procedures, are providing a purely intergovernmental framework for the decision-making process. One of the most important defence matters for discussions within the European Council and the Council was the Permanent Structured Cooperation. The PESCO represents a powerful tool for deepening European cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. Taking into account the preservation of sovereignty, it is very important to emphasize that participation in individual projects within the PESCO is voluntary and leaves national sovereignty untouched based on the intergovernmental agreements in which the Member States represent key players.



Within the European Commission as an intrinsically supranational framework, slightly different trends can be noticed. First, as observed by Strikwerda (Strikwerda, 2019, p. 49), the Defence and Security Procurement Directive represents the first supranational policy within the Common Security and Defence Policy. Also, the mentioned directive has triggered processes which are more EU-centred and market oriented in comparison with the intergovernmental and state-centric approach. Second, it is well known that European military spending has been decreasing after the Cold War, particularly with regard to research and development activities, and also defence industry continues to be fragmented on a national basis. At the same time, the European defence industry remains a crucial asset for the European Union's economy which should be reinforced by the EU's Defence Technological and Industrial Base and through new financial incentives. Within given circumstances, the European Commission launched at the end of 2016 the European Defence Fund which consists of two complementary parts or popularly named 'windows': (1) A 'research window' to fund collaborative defence research projects at the EU's level; and (2) A 'capability window' to support the joint development of defence capabilities commonly agreed by the Member States (European Commission, 2016, pp. 5-6). In order to support presented initiatives within the European Commission's structure, a new body was established in January 2020 – the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space.

Mentioned trends related to defence matters within the European Commission merit brief explanations on the following. First, the Member States still have the possibility to use the European Council and the Council as the intergovernmental frameworks to agree and adopt all the important initiatives related to the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. This is especially important when we are talking about initiatives within the possibilities of Enhanced cooperation procedure (European Union, 2016a, Article 20) and about decision-making procedures which should be used in this case (European Union, 2016b, Article 329.2). Second, following the national preferences, the Member States through interstate bargaining supported both mentioned initiatives in order to provide better conditions for national small and medium enterprises that produce military weapons and equipment and also the defence industry as a whole. It is obvious that here we can implement national preferences formation on way proposed within Liberal Intergovernmentalism which emphasize that national interests are best viewed as consequences of a state-society interaction. In line with Liberal Intergovernmentalism, in this case, the political economy of defence is getting more and more important by

examining the interplay between the fiscal and economic environment that constrains defence spending, domestic politics, and how these relationships influence military procurement and the defence industrial base (Stone&Solomon, 2020). In addition to the above, the cost of current fragmentation and inefficiencies related to the European Union's Defence Technological and Industrial Base is high, even though the defence expenditures of the EU's Member States had a positive trend in the last five years from 156 to 186 billion Euros (European Defence Agency, 2021, p. 4). The European Defence Fund in the given circumstances is getting more and more important to reinforce the Defence Technological and Industrial Base and also for further strengthening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. The mentioned trend for further improvement of the EU's Defence Technological and Industrial base is very important for non-NATO members (Stojković&Glišić, 2020, pp. 594-597) and therefore for a broader approach to analyse the interstate bargain process. And third, the European Defence Agency is one of the main actors in implementing the Defence and Security Procurement Directive and the European Defence Fund. The role of the European Defence Agency has increased in the last years thanks to the exploiting its dual nature as an intergovernmental organization (largely dependent on the interests of the Member States) and the European Union's actor, fully part of the European institutional framework (Marrone&Ungaro, 2014, p. 5).

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that strengthening the European Union security and defence, primarily the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain affects possible shifting preferences between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism by reinforcing the role of the Member States, especially the most powerful. Almost all new initiatives and mechanisms triggered to strengthen the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain are in the hands of the Member States. In other words, the Member States represent the central decision-makers within the processes related to the defence matters within the European Union.

Using the Intergovernmentalist Theoretical Framework and analysing data from a lot of different documents and academic literature, the paper answers the research question related to a possible decline in the importance of the supranationalism in relation to the intergovernmentalism within the

process of strengthening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain and also demonstrates how the mentioned process is possible if the important Member States have positive and strong intention to cooperate on defence matters.

A lot of stakeholders are presented within the implementation process of the EU's Global Strategy and therefore in the process of strengthening EU's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain. Certainly the most important are the Member State bargaining primarily in the intergovernmental frameworks – the European Council and the Council, the European Commission and its agencies. So far, in the process of strengthening the European Union's cooperation on defence and integration in the defence domain, the Member States have primacy in developing initiatives based on intergovernmental nature – for example, the Permanent Structured Cooperation, while the European Commission initiatives aimed to reinforce supranational character in defence matters, such as the Defence and Security Procurement Directive and the European Defence Fund.

Taking into account the intergovernmental and supranational dimension related to defence matters at the European level, it can be said that the Member States have primacy in comparison with the European Union's institutions and agencies. However, due to the fact that a lot of bodies from the institutional framework of the European Union are deeply engaged in the decision-shaping process to prepare decision which will be taken in the auspices of the European Council or the Council of the European Union, the clear distinction between intergovernmental and supranational is blurring slowly.

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# **SUPREMACY OF EU LAW OVER NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND SUPREME JURISDICTIONS OF THE MEMBER STATES – A QUEST FOR A NEW BALANCE**

Uroš ĆEMALOVIĆ<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* The principle of the supremacy of EU law over national legislation is crucial for the viability of the Union's legal order, but also for the safeguard of some basic democratic values within the Member States themselves. Despite its global acceptance, some national courts of final instance keep challenging this principle, invoking complex reasoning that often includes multiple grounds for its refusal. Using mainly a content analysis of the case-law and comparative legal method, the paper examines the possibility of a new balance between the principle of the supremacy of EU law and the specificities of national legal orders. The preconditions for striking this new balance are threefold. First, the national courts should apply the concept of constitutional identity more carefully and in a more restrictive manner. Second, the EU law itself has to be formulated in better and clearer terms, as a result of a less cumbersome legislative process. Finally, without a less hesitant common approach of the European political elites in reforming its functioning, the weaknesses of the Union's institutional and decision-making architecture would continue to undermine its legal system.

*Keywords:* the supremacy of EU law, EU member states, Court of Justice of the EU, national legal orders, constitutional law, the rule of law.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The supremacy (often referred to as 'precedence') of European Union (EU) law over national legislation of its member states is not only a well-

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established principle, but also a basic precondition for the good functioning of the Union's institutional system, and, consequently, the implementation of its numerous policies. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) (after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty: Court of Justice of the European Union – CJEU) started to establish this principle already from 1964, and the next decades have brought its significant deepening and strengthening. Consequently, the supremacy of EU law is applicable to both Union's primary and secondary legislation, while not only the decisions of all national courts, but also national constitutions of all Member States are subject to this principle. In such a context, the recent ruling of the German Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht - BVerfG) has profoundly questioned the principle of the supremacy of EU law, creating turmoil among judges, legal experts, scientists, but also decision-makers within both the EU and its member states. Moreover, the institutions of some EU Member States have recently adopted legal acts and political decisions – often not restraining from directly invoking the inclination towards 'illiberal democracy'<sup>2</sup> – detrimental to the rule of law, independent judiciary<sup>3</sup> and freedom of media, potentially breaching the EU's core values.<sup>4</sup>

Using mainly the content analysis of the case-law and comparative legal method, the author argues that the judicial origin and the unclearly formulated content of the principle of supremacy significantly undermines its *raison d'être*, allowing uncertainty and politicisation. As the global public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak has shown, all actions taken by EU Member States to address it 'have had an impact to a lesser or greater degree on democracy, the rule of law and human rights,' creating a potentially detrimental context to both national and the EU legal order

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<sup>2</sup> For the notion of 'illiberal democracy', see (Pap, 2019); for a wider comparative overview, see (Madariaga, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> On 29 April 2020, the European Commission has launched an infringement procedure against Poland regarding the new law on the judiciary of 20 December 2019, which entered into force on 14 February 2020, estimating that 'the new law on the judiciary undermines the judicial independence of Polish judges and is incompatible with the primacy of EU law'; for more details, see [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_772](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_772). Accessed on 31 January 2021.

<sup>4</sup> In its resolution adopted on 16 January 2020 (with 446 votes to 178 and 41 abstentions), the European Parliament indicated that, when it comes to the rule of law, 'the situation in both Poland and Hungary has deteriorated'; for more details, see <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200109IPR69907/rule-of-law-in-poland-and-hungary-has-worsened>. Accessed on 31 January 2021.

(European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), 2020). Therefore, the paper examines the possibility of a new balance between the principle of the supremacy of EU law, on the one hand, and the specificities of national legal orders, on the other (Chapter 4). To do so, it is first necessary to analyse the content and substance of the principle of supremacy, as it is at the beginning of the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Chapter 2), before turning to the question of the acceptance (or not) of this principle by the supreme and/or constitutional jurisdictions of the EU Member States, including notably the judgement of the German BVerfG of 5 May 2020 (Chapter 3).

### **SUPREMACY OF EU LAW-THE CURRENT CONTENT OF THE PRINCIPLE<sup>5</sup>**

The supremacy that EU law holds over all legal provisions belonging to the internal legal orders of its Member States has never been clearly defined in whichever multilateral legal act of EU primary law. In other words, all international treaties that have progressively established what the Union is nowadays – from the early 50s to the Treaties on EU (TEU) and the functioning of the EU (TFEU) adopted a decade ago – omitted to formulate an unambiguous provision dedicated to the supremacy of EU law. The only exception was the failed attempt to adopt the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe,<sup>6</sup> whose Article 10 provided that ‘the Constitution and law adopted by the institutions of the Union in exercising competences conferred on it shall have primacy over the law of Member States’ (Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, 2003). Therefore, in the silence of primary law, the principle of the EU supremacy

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<sup>5</sup> Wherever in this article it is referred to the period before entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (1 December 2009), the notions of *(European) Community* and *Community law* will be systematically used. However, in order to facilitate the readability, the notion of *supremacy of EU law* (and not *supremacy of Community law*) will be used when referring to the case-law adopted when the European Community still existed.

<sup>6</sup> This act was elaborated by the Convention presided by the former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, and, on 29 October 2004, all twenty-five member states of the EU signed it. However, the document was refused in late May and early June 2005 referendums in France and Netherlands. For a detailed overview, see (Laursen, 2008).

was the fruit of a progressive and laborious interpretation by the ECJ/CJEU. Even if it can be argued that the Court of Justice established the principle of the supremacy 'very quickly' (Rideau, 2006, p. 913), it is clear that 'its judicial consecration was progressive' (Ćemalović&Vukadinović, 2018, p. 40) and that it continues to be invoked in the case-law and analysed by academics. The first definition of what the ECJ referred to as 'the precedence of Community law' can be found in its prominent judgment of 15 July 1964 (case *Flaminio Costa v. ENEL*). The Court's affirmation that 'the law stemming from the Treaty, an independent source of law, could not, because of its special and original nature, be overridden by domestic legal provisions, however framed, without being deprived of its character as Community law' (ECJ, 1964, p. 1160), has not only given rise to abundant writings in legal and political sciences, but was a starting point for a prolific case-law<sup>7</sup> in this matter. The ramifications of the principle of the supremacy of EU law are numerous, but the one that bears special importance for our topic is its applicability to the internal constitutional provisions of the Member States. Only six years after its judgement in case *Flaminio Costa v. ENEL*, the ECJ added yet another crucial element leading to the solidification of the Community (now: the EU) as a *sui generis* entity, with a specific legal order and competences, differing in many aspects from classical international organisations. In its judgment of 17 December 1970 (case *Internationale Handelsgesellschaft*), the ECJ has set the basis allowing the supremacy of EU law over national constitutional provisions of the Member States. However it might have seemed shocking for some conservative constitutionalists, by affirming that 'the validity of a Community measure or its effect within a member state cannot be affected by allegations that it runs counter either fundamental rights as formulated by the constitution of the State or the principles of a national constitutional structure,' (ECJ, 1970, p. 532) the Court initiated a new era in the relations between, on the one hand, national internal legal orders and, on the other, the EU legal order.

As sufficient as it may seem, the content of the principle of the supremacy of EU law – as it was defined in two famous judgements from 1964 and 1970 – was further consolidated by case-law. The most important question to be answered is related to the status of a provision of national

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the most recent judgement of the CJEU mentioning *expressis verbis* 'the principle of the precedence of EU law' was taken on 1 October 2020 (case C-603/19 – *Úrad špeciálnej prokuratúry*).

law that is incompatible with EU law. Already from 1978,<sup>8</sup> the Court's well-established and often reiterated interpretation is that the national court is obliged 'within the exercise of its jurisdiction, to apply the provisions of EU law and to give full effect to those provisions by refusing to apply any provision of national law which would lead that court to deliver a decision contrary to EU law' (CJEU, 2016, para. 32). Moreover, the Court introduced some additional principles that could not be seen as an element of the supremacy of EU law *stricto sensu*, but whose application by national courts of the Member States solidifies the Union's legal order. It is, especially, the case of the principle of effectiveness,<sup>9</sup> according to which the institutions of the Member States, when they act in the limits of their competences, should not do so in a way to 'render impossible in practice or excessively difficult the exercise of rights conferred by the European Union legal order' (CJEU, 2012, para. 45). In other words, the national competences should not be exercised in a way that practically undermines the provisions of EU law, the principle that could also be seen as an indirect consequence of their supremacy over provisions of national laws. Therefore, the principle of effectiveness is, to a certain extent, the application to the Member States of old Roman civil law maxim *Nemo auditur*.

Even though the principle of the supremacy of EU law was first formulated almost six decades ago, the CJEU keeps invoking it quite regularly in its recent acts. For example, over the period of the last five years (1 January 2016 – 31 December 2020), the term *precedence of EU law* was mentioned in two judgments (CJEU, judgments in *Ince* (C-336/14) and C-603/19) and one opinion of the Advocate General (Opinion of AG Kokott in *Association France Nature Environnement v. Premier ministre* (C-379/15)), while, in the same time span, the notion *supremacy of EU law* appears in three opinions of three different Advocates General of the CJEU (Opinion of AG Hogan in *Generalstaatsanwaltschaft Berlin* (C-398-19) AG Wathelet in *Slowakische Republik v. Achmea BV* (C-284/16) and AG Bot in *Beshkov* (C-171/16)). In the same vein, contemporary legal doctrine keeps referring to this principle, underlying its 'evolutionary nature' (Craig & de Búrca, 2020,

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<sup>8</sup> The inapplicability of any provision of the national legal order that is contrary to Community law is first mentioned in the ECJ's judgment of 9 March 1978 in *Simmmenthal* (106/77, para. 21-23).

<sup>9</sup> This principle appears more often in the ECJ's judgements from the middle of the 90s, like, for example, in *Peterbroeck* (C-312/93, para.12) and *Preston and Others* (C-78/98, para. 31).

p. 317) and affirming that it ensures ‘the equality of the member states before the law, preventing each country of the EU from cherry-picking which provisions of EU it likes or not’ (Fabbrini, 2015, p. 1003). However, while the content of the principle of the supremacy of EU law – after decades of its progressive elaboration by the ECJ/CJEU – may be seen as clear and stabilised, it is far from being the case when it comes to its acceptance by the national supreme and constitutional courts.

### ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUPREMACY OF EU LAW BETWEEN LAW AND POLITICS

If there would be a list of statements for which the judges of constitutional and supreme courts share unequivocal and profound disdain, the one that certain meta-legal factors could interfere with their reasoning and decision-making will certainly figure very high on it. It is, of course, undoubtedly justified when judges believe that in their decisions they only ‘stick to the law’ and even more when they actually do so. However, if, for example, a supreme court rejects the supremacy of EU law by reference to a vague and highly politicised concept such as ‘the will of the national legislator,’ it clearly makes a choice not to apply EU law by giving pre-eminence to the value it sees as crucial within its own internal national legal order. Without pretension to be exhaustive, this chapter will try and distil the reasoning of various national courts when they refuse to accept the supremacy of EU law, with a focus on the most recent of such decisions.

The reference to their national constitutional norms is the most common and the most general ground upon which the supreme and/or constitutional courts of the Member States refuse or limit the supremacy of EU law; in other words, by doing so, the judges in the Member States refuse to accept the ECJ’s judgment in *Internationale Handelsgesellschaft* and further case-law based upon it. However, the refusal by a national supreme court to apply EU law could also result from its opinion that the Union, when adopting this legislation, did not act within the limits of its own competence, while, in some cases, a national court could also refer to certain national legal, doctrinal (or even political) concepts. One of the recent examples is the ruling of the Supreme Court of Denmark in *Ajos* (Supreme Court of Denmark, 2014) in which it refused to apply the CJEU’s case law on age discrimination, given that it would, inter alia, contradict the will of the national legislator. This ruling is often seen as a prominent example of the limitation of the supremacy of EU law on the basis of national

(constitutional) identity (Dogan, 2020, p. 4), as well as a possible indication of a 'new *sovereignism* in Danish law that is at odds with the project of European integration through law' (Madsen et al., 2017, p. 140). In any case, the reasoning of the national courts of the final instance, when they refuse the supremacy of EU law, is complex and multifaceted, often including multiple grounds for this refusal. It is, though, particularly interesting – as the example of the ruling of the German BVerfG of 5 May 2020 clearly shows – when the national court invokes the illegality of a CJEU ruling as a reason for its disregard in the national legal system.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of its policy of quantitative easing, back in 2015, the European Central (ECB) Bank adopted the so-called *Public Sector Purchase Programme* (PSPP),<sup>11</sup> a crucial part of a larger initiative known as the *Extended Asset Purchase Programme*. On 11 January 2017 – after four national constitutional actions brought, among others, by a well-known businessman Heinrich Weiss, but also by Peter Gauweiler, a former leader of the German conservative party CSU – the BVerfG made a request before the CJEU for a preliminary ruling regarding the validity of the Decision the ECB<sup>12</sup> of 4 March 2015. In its judgement in this case (*Weiss*) (CJEU, 2018, 1000), the CJEU concluded that the measures taken by the ECB were adopted within the limits of its competence<sup>13</sup> and proportional in relation to the objectives of monetary policy. However, in its judgment of 5 May 2020 (BVerfG, 2020)

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<sup>10</sup> Given that this situation includes two courts of the last instance – in a way that a national court questions the legality of the CJEU ruling – doctrine often refers to it as a 'clash of the titans'; see, for example (Gualco, 2017), (Orešković, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> This programme was introduced by the Decision (EU) 2015/774 of the ECB of 4 March 2015 on a secondary markets public sector asset purchase programme (OJ 2015 L121, p. 20). The PSPP consists of the purchase of bonds issued by euro area central governments, agencies and European institutions, but also of bonds issued by regional and local governments; for more, see *Public Sector Purchase Programme, Questions and Answers*, European Central Bank, <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/mopo/implement/app/html/pspp-qa.en.html> and *Public Sector Purchase Programme*, Deutsche Bundesbank <https://www.bundesbank.de/en/tasks/monetary-policy/outright-transactions/public-sector-purchase-programme-pspp-831140>. Accessed on 9 January 2021.

<sup>12</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>13</sup> More specifically, at issue were, inter alia, the questions whether the ECB was acting within the sphere of monetary policy, and whether its Decision 2015/774 is compatible with Article 123-1 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU; the CJEU has responded positively to both questions (see para. 53-70 and 101-108).

the BVerfG declared that the CJEU's preliminary ruling in *Weiss* was *ultra vires*, due to the inadequate proportionality assessment of the ECB's measures. It is exactly in this point that lie the two most important – and, for the future of the EU's institutional and political specificity, potentially the most far-reaching – characteristics of the BVerfG's legal reasoning.

First, the BVerfG not only held a judgment of the CJEU to be *ultra vires*, but also did so in a matter of the legality of the act of an EU institution. Before the BVerfG's ruling of 5 May 2020, some other national constitutional courts were adopting similar decisions, as it was, for example, the judgement of the Czech Constitutional Court (CCC) of 31 January 2012 in *Slovak pensions* (Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, 2012), in which it held *ultra vires* – and, thus, inapplicable – the earlier judgement of the CJEU in *Landtová* (CJEU, 2011). However, the 2012 CCC's decision was taken in the context 'of the uniqueness of the issue of pension claims associated with the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state and the need to resolve it within bilateral Czech-Slovak relations' (Pítrová, 2013, p. 101). On the other hand, 'the German Court unilaterally granted itself the power to decide on the validity within Germany of the PSPP decision of the ECB, an EU institution under the exclusive jurisdiction of the CJEU' (Walsh, 2020). While the CCC's judgement could be considered as an example of a single-layered breach of the principle of the supremacy of EU law, the BVerfG's ruling is an example of a heavier, double-layered disregard for the Union's legal order: the Constitutional Court of a Member State held that the EU's supreme court was wrong in a matter regarding an act adopted by another EU institution, whose legality the former is exclusively entitled to examine.

Second, in its recent decision, the BVerfG went a step further from its own earlier interpretation that it has the jurisdiction to consider the validity of EU legislation in Germany. The important part of the BVerfG's reasoning in the ruling of 5 May 2020 relies on the criticism of the ECB's methodology and approach to proportionality, issues that are at the core of the ECB's institutional autonomy. By stating that, 'in view of the considerable economic policy effects resulting from the PSPP [...] it would have been incumbent upon the ECB to weigh these effects and balance them, based on proportionality considerations,' and, notably, by affirming that 'it is not ascertainable that any such balancing was conducted,' the BVerfG largely overstepped its mission and competences (BVerfG, 2020). Not only that 'this demanding approach of proportionality contained in the judgment of the constitutional court goes well beyond what has come to be accepted as necessary to satisfy the principle,' (Walsh, 2020) and, thus, is tainted by

illegality; the judges also 'make manifest errors in applying the principle of proportionality to the delimitation of competences between the Union and the Member States' (Ziller, 2020), undermining the primacy of EU law in a matter essentially unrelated to national constitutional law. However, the challenges and possible consequences of the BVerfG's judgement are mainly political.<sup>14</sup> First, by 'putting in question the legitimacy of a current ECB's policy' (Zarka, 2020), the German Constitutional Court effectively undermines the Bank's independence. Second, by departing from the CJEU's preliminary ruling on the very same issue, 'it arrogates to itself the power to make a final assessment of the legality of an act of the European Union' (Ziller, 2020), thus challenging not only the Union's legal order, but also its institutional viability. Finally, it is highly ironic that – by affirming the ECB's decisions are excessively limiting the powers of the national legislator and, thus, contrary to the principle of democracy – the BVerfG opens the way for much stronger national influence of 'refurbished authoritarian tendencies in some EU countries,' (Ćemalović, 2020a, p 186) allowing the potential strengthening of a more substantial disregard for the rule of law within the internal legal orders of some other Member States.

### **TOWARDS A NEW BALANCE BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SUPREMACY OF EU LAW AND THE SPECIFICITIES OF NATIONAL LEGAL ORDERS**

As the previous chapter endeavoured to demonstrate, the acceptance of the principle of the supremacy of EU law is not only crucial for the viability of the Union's legal order, but also for the safeguard of basic democratic values within the Member States. In other words, the argumentation of the BVerfG related to the 'principle of democracy' reduced to the will of the national legislator 'would in fact justify the refusal of governments such as that of Hungary or Poland, which have a comfortable majority in Parliament, to apply

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<sup>14</sup> An additional proof to which extent the BVerfG's judgement of 5 May 2020 became a highly politicised issue is the parliamentary question of several members of the European Parliament of 20 July 2020, in which they ask if (and when) the Commission intends to open an infringement procedure against Germany because of this judgement, see Parliamentary Questions, Priority question for written answer P-004295/2020 to the Commission, retrieved from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-004295\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-004295_EN.html). Accessed on 13 January 2021.



the judgments of the Court of Justice condemning them for violation of Article 19 TEU by their actions that call into question the independence of the judiciary' (Ziller, 2020). On the other hand, a systematic disregard of the supremacy of EU law by the national supreme or constitutional courts would seriously undermine its uniform application in different Member States, putting their citizens in an unequal position. This is why some judges of the highest national courts propose different strategies for 'avoiding, minimising and resolving' (Dimitrakopoulos, 2019, p. 6) potential conflicts between national constitutional law and EU law. However, striking a new balance between EU law and internal legal orders should not rely upon simple casuistic conflict avoiding, but also has to include some general principles, based upon identifying the overarching causes of this conflict, if and when it appears.

It should be first noted that, in numerous national legal orders, the acceptance of the principle of the supremacy of EU law has never been a problem, either because it is 'recently reaffirmed' (Díaz-Asensio and Calvo, 2020, p. 460) by constitutional judges – or even considered by them as 'the most important fundamental principle of the EU' (Trstenjak&Weingerl, 2020, p. 478) – or simply since the issue has not been raised (Radu, 2020, p. 431). In some countries, despite the fact that the constitutional court formally proclaimed the supremacy of the constitution over EU law, in practice, the judiciary 'has recognised the supremacy of EU law over national law and its obligation to apply it' (Bačić Selanec et al., 2020, p. 116). However, in some Member States, the resistance to recognise the primacy of EU law over national constitutions is not only the result of the decisions of the highest national courts, but also 'the result of a non-cooperative attitude of the actors responsible at the national level and an expression of the misunderstanding of the relationship between the national judicial system and the EU courts' (Pítrová, 2013, p. 101). Therefore, the acceptance of the supremacy of EU law encounters the following two overarching problems. First, the internal legal and judicial systems – as well as the doctrine and overall national 'legal culture' – sometimes tend to be self-sufficient and excessively auto-referential, while the *sui generis* character of the EU and its legal system requires more adapted approaches. Second, EU law as such is often either incomplete or formulated in ambiguous terms,<sup>15</sup> thus allowing its

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<sup>15</sup> A good and recent example of a piece of EU legislation that would, most certainly, provoke numerous problems in its implementation is *Directive 2019/790 of 17 April 2019 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market*, that it has to be transposed by the Member States no later than 7 June 2021; for more details, see (Čemalović, 2020b).

inconsistent application by various instances within the Member States. In the same vein, finding a new balance between, on the one hand, the supremacy of EU law and, on the other, national legal orders, requires the efforts of Member States' institutions, but also of the Union's policymakers.

Whenever the CJEU has given a judgement on a matter related to the interpretation of EU law, the obligation of the national judicial systems to follow it is not only the question of the viability and integrity of the Union's legal order; the equality of the Member States, but also of their citizens, critically depends on it. The special responsibility in this matter relies on the national supreme and constitutional courts, the majority of which (*National Courts and the Enforcement of EU Law: The Pivotal Role of National Courts in the EU Legal Order*, 2020) either *expressis verbis* or indirectly –have recognized and applied the supremacy of EU law, the approach that should be their 'normal course of action' (Dimitrakopoulos, 2019, p. 6). Even though national constitutional courts can, to a certain extent, apply identity control tests to EU acts under the clause of Article 4(2) TEU, 'the abuse of constitutional identity and constitutional pluralism by the Hungarian, the Polish or any other constitutional court is nothing but national constitutional parochialism, which attempts to abandon the common European constitutional whole, and is inconsistent with the requirement of sincere cooperation of Article 4(3) TEU' (Halmai, 2018, p. 6). Therefore, as it was indicated in the previous chapter regarding the potential outcomes of the BVerfG's judgement of 5 May 2020, the rule of law within the Member States themselves could be seriously undermined by departing from the CJEU's judgements and more generally, by disregarding the supremacy of EU law in the matters of the Union's competence.

The good and consistent application of EU law in the Member States is far from depending solely on some heavy and sophisticated reasoning related either to the notions such as 'constitutional pluralism, the network concept, multilevel constitutionalism and composite constitutionalism' (Halmai 2018, p. 1) or to the laborious distinctions between relative or absolute supremacy of the EU. Very often, EU law would have been applied much more effectively and consistently by various (not only judicial) national instances if it had been formulated in better and clearer terms. The absence of a definition of the supremacy of EU law from the treaties – already mentioned in chapter 2 of this paper – is just one side of the coin, the other being the over-complexity of EU's law-making process, and its policy-making based on 'the search for the smallest common denominator leading to empty political verbiage' (Ćemalović, 2020a, p. 189). In other

words, the entire EU legal order and, consequently, the principle of its supremacy over national legislation, suffer a lot because of the weaknesses of institutional and decision-making architecture of the Union. Given that the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was not an ideal context for any substantial reforms, it remains to be seen whether the EU legal order will continue to be a hostage of both Union's cumbersome law-making process and its hesitant political elites.

## CONCLUSION

The principle of the supremacy of EU law was established almost six decades ago, and its content is globally clear and stabilised. The recent judgements of the CJEU are invoking it quite regularly, while the contemporary legal doctrine keeps referring to its 'evolutionary nature,' 'disserting about the relative or absolute validity of this supremacy. However, even though in numerous national legal orders the acceptance of the principle of the supremacy of EU law has never been an issue, the constitutional courts in some EU countries are considerably limiting its effects, putting in danger not only the equality of the Member States and its citizens, but also opening a way for more substantial disregard for the rule of law on the national level. Apart from representing a heavier, double-layered disregard for the EU legal order, the BVerfG's judgement of 5 May 2020, could, quite ironically, by reducing the 'principle of democracy' to the will of the national legislator, contribute to undermining democracy in some other Member States. However, striking a new balance between the principle of the supremacy of EU law and the specificities of internal legal orders does not rely solely on the national instances. First, it would be highly beneficial – both for the EU legal order and for the rule of law within the Member States – if the national courts would apply the concept of constitutional identity more carefully and in a more restrictive manner. Second, EU law would have been applied much more effectively and consistently by various (not only judicial) national instances if it had been formulated in better and clearer terms, as a result of a less cumbersome legislative process. Finally, without a less hesitant common approach of the European political elites in reforming its functioning, the weaknesses of the Union's institutional and decision-making architecture would continue to undermine its legal system.

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## ENERGY SECURITY ISSUES: RESHAPING EUROPEAN REGIONAL SECURITY PATTERNS?

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*Abstract:* European energy security is one of the most dynamic areas where many challenges have lately occurred, especially when it comes to natural gas. Politicization and securitization of this energy issue resulted in many changes within the European energy policy, such as re-orientating attention towards diversifying energy routes and suppliers and decarbonising economies. Considering the peculiar regional dimension of relevant pipelines and their effects on regional security dynamics, the main research question could be defined as follows: *Do the energy security issues have the potential to transform European regional security patterns?* European energy security dynamics is analyzed through two case studies regarding the Nord Stream 2 issue and the recent energy clash on natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean. According to the defined research question and the research topic, the analysis is done through the Regional Security Complex Theory' lenses and the concepts of energy governance and energy diplomacy viewed through the recently established Energy Union. The roles of dominant energy players within European energy security are examined, and the role of natural gas as well in the context of its potential to transform established regional security patterns, both internally and externally. The analysis employs a review of the respective literature and also an analysis of key political statements and media releases, and it is

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made in regard to key theoretical guidelines. The results of the conducted analysis support the affirmative answer to the proposed research question.

*Keywords:* energy security, the EU, energy governance, energy diplomacy, the Energy Union, the Nord Stream 2, the Eastern Mediterranean.

## INTRODUCTION

Following the trend of included non-military threats into a security agenda after the Cold War, energy-related topics find their own place within contemporary security studies. While many observations by the late 90s and early 2000s were concentrated around oil when it comes to the energy security theme, natural gas issues seem to be ascending to the top of political and security agendas. By the time of writing this paper, the ubiquitous COVID pandemic has demonstrated the decline of the oil security concerns and raised attention over the gas issues and the overall need for decarbonising economies.

With the global increase of energy dependence and resource scarcity, energy-related issues became one of the most critical security concerns, whether on a state or supranational level. The EU is only one of many in addressing these concerns. The fact that the EU is not an energy-rich subject, presenting at the same time one of the world's largest gas consumers, makes the question of secure and continuous supply of this resource one of its top priorities. As shown by Mišík (2019), natural gas has a prominent place in European external energy relations due to its political and technical specificities. Considering that the EU is importing the majority of gas from only a few countries,<sup>2</sup> where Russia is dominant, the necessity for new suppliers became one of the main tasks over time. Besides, diversifying transportation routes and energy producers or consumers reduces the possibilities to use energy resources as a political pressure tool. The involvement of other actors (such as private companies, investors, regulators, etc.), apart from supranational and nationals, additionally makes this question very complex.

In the context of the above-mentioned, the aim of this paper is to examine *state-of-play* within the EU in the domain of energy security. Employing a theoretical framework in the form of concepts of energy governance and energy diplomacy and Regional Security Complex Theory (hereinafter RSCT)

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<sup>2</sup> Besides Russia, the main gas suppliers of the EU both in 2019 and 2020 are Norway and, to some extent, Algeria (EU imports of energy products, 2020).

as well, current European energy security dynamics will be analysed in order to answer the question referring to the potential of energy-related issues to transform the established European regional security patterns.

### **REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY: POSSIBLE EVOLUTIONS OF THE ESTABLISHED REGIONAL SECURITY STRUCTURES**

RSCT, originally developed by the Copenhagen School of security studies theorists, sees the regional level as the most prominent for analysing security issues and dynamics. Based on the stance that the regional security complex (hereinafter RSC) refers to the 'set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another' (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 44), the authors claim that the key security dynamics is being established within regions (primarily in form of an internal regional security dynamics). Starting from this point, the rest of the paper examines internal dynamics, followed by the analysis of external European regional security dynamics, both being concentrated around natural gas issues. Sketching main theoretical presumptions will help to conduct analysis in order to answer the research question.

Considering that the region represents 'a sufficiently dynamic framework for changing of its key characteristics' (Lipovac, 2016, p. 98), the possibility of the transformation of its established patterns is not excluded from the analysis. Some studies analysed possible scenarios when it comes to the changes within the EU-Russia energy relations (Kirchner and Berk, 2010) or possible transformations of European regional security complex' patterns (Adamides and Christou, 2015; Bogaert, 2019). These possible transformations arise from the potential changes of the security interdependence between units of RSC or within the interregional level.

Key characteristics of RSC form its essential structure. These characteristics (or variables) exist in the form of boundaries of RSC, its anarchic structure, polarity, and social construction (amity-enmity spectrum) (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 53). In relation to these variables, there are three possible evolutions of the established regional security structures.<sup>3</sup> According

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<sup>3</sup> In relation to these variables and evolutions, there are different types of RSCs. In the view of polarity, there are unipolar, bipolar, tripolar and multipolar complexes, while the criterion of power distinguishes between standard and centred

to Buzan and Wæver, these evolutions could be realized in the forms of the maintenance of the *status quo*, internal and external transformation of RSC (2003, p. 53). Maintenance of the *status quo* refers to the absence of any significant changes within the essential structure of a complex. In the context of this research, this scenario would mean that the EU does not perceive its energy situation as challenging and problematic, and thus it is not eager to undertake any actions to change it. The internal transformation refers to the changes in essential structure within the existing boundaries of a complex. More concrete, the internal transformation could be analysed along the line fragmentation-integration (as suggested by the theory) of internal energy security dynamics, which additionally will be examined employing the concepts of energy governance and energy diplomacy. Finally, the external transformation refers to the changes in essential structure by expanding or contracting the outer boundaries of a complex.<sup>4</sup> According to the identified research topic, the external transformation would mean that e.g., diversification efforts create new forms of stronger security interdependence between units of different complexes. In order to examine possible transformational trajectories of established regional security patterns, European energy security dynamics (both internally and externally) should be analysed according to key theoretical and conceptual guidelines. In order to do so, internal energy dynamics will be examined firstly through the lenses of the concepts of energy governance and energy diplomacy, followed by questioning the external transformation of established European regional security patterns by employing two case studies regarding the latest European energy security dynamics.

## **FROM ENERGY GOVERNANCE TOWARDS ENERGY DIPLOMACY: THE EUROPEAN ENERGY UNION**

Liberalization and market logic have been key elements of the European energy policy since the end of the 1980s. However, many contemporary

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complexes. According to the amity-enmity patterns, there are three types of RSCs: security community, security regime, and conflict formation (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, pp. 53-57). Applying all these criteria, today's complex centred around the EU presents a centred complex around one institution (i.e., the EU), in the form of a security community.

<sup>4</sup> The external transformation of the European regional security complex in the form of exclusion of the United Kingdom did happen, but it is not included in the analysis due to its deeply political roots having no relations with energy-related issues.

challenges linked with the global energy environment, such as resource scarcity, the so-called 'resource nationalism', growing competitiveness from 'new' energy players (primarily China and India), and uneven distribution of key energy resources resulted in the EU's shift towards reconceptualizing its energy policy priorities. Deterioration in (energy) relations with Russia and several gas disputes during the 2000s contributed to this complex situation and changed the focus of the EU from its internal energy market towards energy relations with suppliers and transit states. As Szulecki and Westphal noted, the EU is torn between two challenges nowadays – the first linked to the balancing of three energy policy goals (securing stable supply, maintaining economic competitiveness, and safeguarding environmental sustainability), and the second one existing in the form of tensions between 'growing European harmonization with increased competences of the European Commission and the principle of Member State sovereignty over national energy mixes' (2018, pp. 177-178). As will be presented in the following text, this everlasting balancing marked the process of creating a European energy policy over time.

As simply explained by Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, the external energy governance represents 'the expansion of EU rules beyond EU borders' (2009, p. 807).<sup>5</sup> In addition, the EU's external energy approach was aimed to develop a common regulatory space with other regions, accompanied by its 'attractiveness' to the non-member states (Prange-Gstohl, 2009). As it could be seen, this concept was traditionally linked to the EU given the fact that the EU's energy policy was created around the liberal model where energy authorities were mainly private companies rather than national states and governments (Youngs, 2011, p. 51). These first energy policy steps were concentrated around regulating competition and market rules but did not sufficiently consider the security momentum in the supplying process. Over time, the EU starts to take more assertive external energy policy steps, making thus energy diplomacy a becoming part of 'the EU foreign policy vocabulary' (Boersma and Goldthau, 2017, p. 110). Several gas disputes with Russia during the 2000s and the 2014 Ukrainian crisis served as key contextual drivers for the upcoming Commission's actions. Behaviour in the form of energy diplomacy, i.e., the usage of 'foreign policy tools to secure energy

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<sup>5</sup> The clearest example of the so-called European 90's energy governance was the *Energy Charter Treaty*, a tool aiming to spread the EU's energy trade rules beyond its borders. However, this mechanism did not gain much success after the withdrawal of Russia in 2009 and Norway's rejection to ratify it (Avlichou, 2017).

supplies' (Mišík, 2019, p. 8) thus became a new shape of the EU energy policy. Put differently, the originally market-oriented approach was gradually replaced by the stronger geopolitical. Similarly, as Herranz-Surrallés (2016, p. 1387) noted by showing the evolution of the peculiar paradigm shift, the EU has reinforced its role in external energy relations since the late 2000s, directly promoting external infrastructure diversifying projects and taking a notably bigger role in securing access to external energy sources, significantly bringing closer concepts of energy diplomacy and energy governance. These EU's external moves were further accented by the Ursula von der Leyen's announcement of the new Commission's agenda, where she expressed her pledge to lead a 'geopolitical Commission' and to reinforce the EU's role 'as a relevant international actor' (EP, 2020, p. 1). In order to secure its internal energy needs, the EU put an energy to the top of its priorities and political agenda within its external relations.

Energy issues seemed to be one of the first integration steps when observing the process of European integration, illustrated by the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. Although these 'pillars' were not driven by exclusively energy reasons,<sup>6</sup> the place of energy in the context of establishing and developing supranational organization should not be neglected. Although the idea of a common energy policy in the EU was present a long time ago, it became significantly important in the past three decades due to rising concerns over the energy and climate issues (Tarnai, 2018, p. 53). The very first step made in regard to settle the political and security background of European energy dependency and to change focus to the external energy relations refers to the Green Paper on the security of energy supply named 'Towards a European Strategy for the Security of Energy Supply' from 2000 (Knodt et al., 2015; Herranz-Surrallés, 2016; Cotella et al., 2016).<sup>7</sup> Another Green Paper

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<sup>6</sup> As Knodt and Ringel (2020) observed, these 'steps should not be misunderstood as first efforts to create a common energy policy'. The main reason for establishing these two out of three 'pillars' was the 'fear of Europe's future becoming like Europe's past if fragmentation and power balancing are allowed to return' (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, pp. 352-353). Fear of going back to the war context and from weapon proliferation left over from the Second World War prevailed at this moment.

<sup>7</sup> A market paradigm and neoliberal ideas were dominant when talking about the EU energy policy back in the 1990s (Herranz-Surrallés, 2016, p. 1388). Gradually, it has been replaced by the external energy policy in the form of energy governance, and, lately, by the bigger involvement of the EU's supranational bodies led by the European Commission in an effort to become a form of energy diplomacy.

was released in 2006 under the title ‘A European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy’ where the need for a common energy policy was again stressed out by adding the concept of *solidarity measures*. One of the most important shifts happened in 2009 where the energy policy gained its legal basis (by incorporating it into the EU primary law) after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, presenting thus the first transfer of the national states’ competences to the EU (Knodt et al., 2015; Tichý, 2019; Knodt and Ringel, 2020).<sup>8</sup> With the establishment of shared competences between the EU and member states in energy as one of the principal areas (EU, 2007, p. 47), starting from this point, the European Commission is trying to extend its energy competences based on energy diplomacy manner. The power to monitor bilateral agreements between a member state and its energy supplier and stopping the South Stream’s construction were the most blatant examples. The legal and institutional basis of the politicized and securitized European energy dependency and louder devotion to the common energy policy were further strengthened by the adoption of many other initiatives, mechanisms, and packages. The most significant among them were the establishment of the Energy Community (entering into force in 2006 and presenting one of the clearest tools of the European energy governance), European Commission’s communications from 2007 (‘An Energy Policy for Europe’) and 2008 (‘Second Strategic Energy Review: An EU Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan’), the Third Internal Energy Market Package (2009), ‘Energy 2020: A Strategy for Competitive, Sustainable and Secure Energy’ (2010), and European Energy Security Strategy (2014).<sup>9</sup> The culmination of these pushing efforts made in the EU in regard to achieve a common energy voice with strong security momentum was introducing the Energy Union initiative.

Initially proposed by the then Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in 2014, the Energy Union (with the subsequent Diplomacy Action Plan) became one of the top priorities for the upcoming Juncker’s Commission agenda. The

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<sup>8</sup> The so-called ‘energy provisions’ of the Lisbon Treaty have limited to a significant extent the sovereignty of member states in decision-making regarding energy security issues and provided EU authorities to employ bilateral agreements as an important means of control mechanisms.

<sup>9</sup> There were many other initiatives, packages and decisions made in regard to the European energy security adopted after 2015 (for instance, revised directives on gas supply and the European Green Deal being one of the most important lately) but, due to the lack of space, will not be considered in the context of this paper.

main goal of this energy project is 'to bring all energy related issues [...] under a common "roof" and thus basically create a common EU energy policy' (Mišić, 2019, pp. 81-82). Among five dimensions of this energy policy strategy<sup>10</sup>, special attention is given to the diversifying Europe's sources of energy (under the first dimension) and a fully integrated internal energy market (as the second dimension) (What is the Energy Union about, 2015), giving thus the equal importance to internal and external elements of European energy security. As shown by Avlichou (2017, pp. 20-21), the policy practice prevailing within the EU in the context of energy security after establishing the Energy Union gained more geopolitical meaning, while Franza and Van Der Linde noticed that the Energy Union aims to strengthen the EU's role in external energy policy (2017, p. 94). The importance of this project was highlighted by establishing the position of Vice-President of the Energy Union within the European Commission. Calling for the tougher European energy policy stance, the Energy Union as 'the most ambitious energy project since the European Coal and Steel Community' (Šefčovič, 2015) clearly goes beyond traditional energy governance mechanisms.

Some research state that the integration effects of the Energy Union are questionable so far (Herranz-Surrallés et al., 2020, pp. 1-2), not being far from the truth. Nevertheless, the Energy Union stands for a more assertive stance with no doubt and shows the need for the transformation of the European energy reality. Besides, according to some of the latest researches (Tosun and Mišić, 2020), European citizens strongly advocate the necessity of functioning the Energy Union, either as a tool for promoting decarbonising economies or for increasing European energy security. Put differently, European citizens become a very important medium for advocating the significance of the Energy Union, much more than the member states' governments. These data should not be neglected by the national governments giving the fact that European citizens are the end-users of the results of European energy policy and, in that sense, are giving legitimacy to the European energy actions.

Sketching this brief history of efforts for developing supranational prerogatives in the domain of the EU's energy policy had a two-fold purpose: firstly, to inform and contextualize the process of politicization and

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<sup>10</sup> These five dimensions are: energy security, solidarity and trust; a fully integrated internal energy market; energy efficiency contributing to the moderation of demand; decarbonising the economy; research, innovation and competitiveness (What is the Energy Union about, 2015).

securitization of energy-related issues within the EU, and secondly to show gradual change of its perspective and practice from energy governance towards energy diplomacy and realizing more-integration-than-fragmentation evolution. Today, more than ever, the EU is basing its external energy relations on 'directly involving itself' in negotiating bilateral energy deals or accomplishing infrastructure projects (Herranz-Surrallés, 2016, p. 1386), contrary to its 1990s policy of creating common regulatory space. Direct negotiations between the EU and Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan over the Southern Gas Corridor presents one of those examples of pure energy diplomacy moves. Considering that the *dependency* is the most used keyword to describe the EU's energy *state-of-play* and future energy scenarios (Cotella et al., 2016, p. 39), it is not surprising when noticing that the majority of supranational efforts were, and still are, directed towards reducing EU's dependency rate from one dominant supplier and, therefore, towards promoting diversifying projects.

## RECENT EUROPEAN ENERGY SECURITY DYNAMICS

According to the Copenhagen School of security studies scholars, today's Europe consists of two RSCs, each one being centred around two great powers – the EU and Russia. These two RSCs form a loose supercomplex where the EU and Russia 'are not involved enough in each other's security issues to turn "Europe" into one large RSC' (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 343). This statement could be questioned considering that Buzan and Wæver' book was published in 2003 when energy relations between these two actors were not politicized (and securitized) and when security dynamics between them generally were not so much high in agendas as nowadays.

Observing the EU as the closest to the security community form, it is the most coherent regional security complex today, meaning that most of its units perceive threats in the same manner. Speaking of securitization actors who label certain phenomena as a threat to security, Buzan and Wæver gave to processes of securitization key place in defining threats to units/states within a regional security complex.<sup>11</sup> Although there are some discrepancies between member states when it comes to marking European energy dependency from one dominant gas supplier as a threat, this paper focuses on the supranational level from where securitization moves come

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<sup>11</sup> Simply said, securitization means labeling certain phenomenon as a *threat* to security. More on the process of securitization, see: Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998.



undoubtedly. Either way, identification of key actors involved in European energy security dynamics and its (de)securitization moves imposes as the main methodological step. The proposed research question should be examined through two case studies that marked the most recent European energy security dynamics: the case of the Nord Stream 2 as one of the 'most controversial' energy projects and the ongoing gas dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean, both tackling key Energy Union's dimensions.

### **The case of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline**

Presenting a project that will lead to greater EU's dependency on Russian natural gas, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline (hereinafter NS2) remains one of the main topics of many debates. Bringing an additional 55 bcm of gas per year to Europe (Gazprom, 2020a), this pipeline doubles the capacity of the Nord Stream 1. Although the construction of this pipeline was negotiated in 2018, tensions over its final realization do not subside almost three years later. As has been pointed out many times, the NS2 has divided the EU into supporters (led by few Western member states and their gas companies) and opponents (mostly coming from Central and Eastern Europe) (Loskot-Strachota, 2016; Šekarić, 2020). This division is mainly led by the interplay between material and geopolitical factors (de Jong et al., 2020), showing that national energy interests played significant roles. Besides, the NS2 has raised the US's attention, which is above all interested in exporting its LNG to Europe. This US's focus on the NS2 resulted in the packages of sanctions against European companies and individuals employed in its construction,<sup>12</sup> consequently leading to the deterioration in German-USA relations. Considering one of the main goals of the established Energy Union in the form of diversifying European energy transportation routes and producers, the NS2 could be seen as a prominent obstacle. Additionally, concerns over the greater dependence from Russia and uncertainty over the Ukrainian transit route<sup>13</sup> were intensified by the announcement of the construction of the TurkStream.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The latest expansion of sanctions included 'those that provide services for vessels used in laying the final hundred miles of the project' (Morningstar et al., 2020).

<sup>13</sup> After much speculation, Ukraine and Russia signed a new agreement at the end of 2019 for the next five years of gas transit.

<sup>14</sup> The TurkStream (with an aggregate throughput capacity of 31.5 bcm) will connect Russian gas reserves and the Turkish gas transport network across the Black Sea

Labeling America's behaviour on this issue as 'mafia' (Vujić, 2020, p. 3), the Bundestag openly gives support for the realization of the NS2 and places Germany as its loudest supporter. Nevertheless, a 'pipeline from Hell' (Koeljo and Grojec, 2018) has divided Europe when it comes to the political and security consequences of the NS2 and thus brought the integrative role of the Commission under the question.<sup>15</sup> The division of European member states over this pipeline leads further to the inability of the EU to take a common stance in its energy policy, especially when considering that the completion of the project is more than 90% (Timeline, 2020). This question clearly posed an obstacle in front of the EU regarding its internal integration, and is stopping the EU's energy diplomacy efforts. As Boagert showed, the role of the European Commission is the key for the future of this project: either the Commission will lead to 'strengthening of the energy security community of the EU' or failure to stop its completion will lead to 'a regression to an energy security regime with internal agreements maintaining cooperation' (2019, pp. 42-43). Its controversial background is further deepened by the statements that the main supporters are masking the costs of its cancellation by advocating that it is a 'purely commercial' project (Morningstar et al., 2020).

In the context of RSCT, when talking about the possibilities of the NS2 to transform established European regional patterns internally, it could be seen that the role of the European Commission as a key securitization actor and integration leader will be undermined in case of its completion. Therefore, total integration will still be under question. Also, strong support for its realization coming from Germany poses the question of the RSC's main actor in terms of the power criterion. However, following the steps made so far, it is expected that the Commission would still continue to carry on integration steps towards achieving a common energy voice within the EU under the Energy Union roof, even when the NS2 is realized. In any case,

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and provide the rest of South and Southeast Europe with Russian natural gas (Gazprom, 2020b). This pipeline is often presented as a successor of the failed South Stream.

<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the case of Poland could also be added to this complex equation. Namely, Poland is one of the main opponents to the NS2's completion considering that it is the loudest in securitizing this issue. However, its energy dependency on coal undermines European climate and green-energy goals to some extent and thus, the achievement of a common energy voice within the EU. Nevertheless, this calls for some future analysis.

the NS2 certainly presents a peculiar milestone for the future of European energy integration. On the other hand, the external transformation of the RSC could be realized in the form of strengthening bonds between two complexes centred around the EU and Russia, considering that energy-related topics are still the dominant question among all (security) others where the EU and Russia are being brought together. The realized Southern Gas Corridor, almost done NS2 and the announced TurkStream are the most significant pipelines that affect European energy security dynamics as key factors of its external rapprochement with Russia.

### **The case of energy clash in the Eastern Mediterranean**

Northern and Western Europe seem not to be a lonely example of controversial energy-related issues. Although gas fields have not been recently discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, recent events put them high on the agendas of Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Syria, and Lebanon.<sup>16</sup> In the context of RSCT, it is important to note that Turkey is perceived as an *insulator* state and thus not originally being part of an established complex centred around the EU. However, some of the latest researches showed the notably bigger and more active role of Turkey when talking about European energy security, the need to revise its role of an insulator and the possibility to be part of this complex as needed (Barrinha, 2014; Luenam, 2015; Šekarić and Lazić, 2020). When it comes to energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey is taking an increasingly assertive role (Demiryol, 2020) trying to impose itself as a regional energy hub.

As shown by Buzan and Wæver, the character of a local RSC will often be affected by historical relations such as long-standing enmities or the common cultural embrace of a civilizational area (2003, p. 45). In that sense, it is not difficult to conclude that specific historical bondages between Greece, Turkey and Cyprus and the rest of the Levant have a prominent place in its overall security dynamics. In fact, seems that these dynamics is further shaken by the recent energy clash on natural gas that took place in this area, bringing the subcomplex of the Levant closer to the EU when it comes to energy security. The planned EastMed subsea pipeline connecting Greece, Israel and Cyprus while opposing Turkey, is a further contributor

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<sup>16</sup> The first three are being the most important for the EU when talking about its energy security dynamics as well as for the context of this paper.

to this complex picture.<sup>17</sup> What additionally complicates existing regional dynamics is the exclusion of Turkey from the EastMed Gas Forum as well as overlapping maritime claims between those states. Furthermore, the EU and the USA could be classified as supporters of this pipeline due to their strong devotion to diversify European gas suppliers and routes (Mamedov, 2020) which corresponds to the proclaimed goals of the Energy Union.

The power of energy resources not only to redefine existing regional patterns but to create new ones is a debate topic of many scholars (Ceylan and Baykara, 2020; Goldthau et al., 2020). Going beyond the statements that energy could only redefine boundaries of the existing regions, Goldthau et al. claim that energy 'fundamentally affects regionalization processes' (2020, p. 2), thus giving energy the epithet of region-building factor, testing this 'energization' process right on the example of the Eastern Mediterranean. Although this imposes some future operationalizations and research, it should not be neglected that the securitization of these gas fields put the Eastern Mediterranean on the top of the world energy map (Christou and Adamides, 2013; Goldthau and Sitter, 2020), making energy a significant factor in its classification somewhere between conflict formation and security regime.

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Drawing from the description of European energy security dynamics, some predictions of its evolutions could be summarized: the maintenance of the *status quo* is the least likely option considering all the steps made in regard to reduce European energy dependence from one dominant supplier and a general shift in its energy policy priorities. Established regional security patterns in the case of the internal transformation seem more likely to change, especially along the line fragmentation-integration. This process of internal energy integration could be better explained as one step forward, two steps backwards. Given the fact that Germany strongly supports the realization of the NS2, while the leading role of the Commission in securitizing this issue is lagging, the RSC's main actor is somewhat questionable. Consequently, this *state-of-play* questions further European integration in the domain of its energy policy. However, having in mind the

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<sup>17</sup> Turkish argument *contra* this pipeline is that the TAP pipeline is already sufficient and that Turkey is the only logical energy hub for Europe when it comes to the energy resources of the Eastern Mediterranean (Koutantou, 2020).

development of the European energy policy from energy governance towards energy diplomacy so far and Commission's expressed efforts towards its integration as well, it is expected that the Commission would continue to act towards achieving a common energy voice under the Energy Union umbrella. Employed theoretical guidelines further suggest that the external transformation of the RSC could be realized in the form of strengthening bonds between two complexes centred around the EU and Russia as best shown by the realized Southern Gas Corridor, almost done NS2 and the announced TurkStream. Besides, the role of Turkey as an insulator state is also questioned, and the possibility of natural gas to create new regional patterns in the Eastern Mediterranean is analysed. The possibility of creating a new energy-driven subcomplex is not excluded, which brings the EU's periphery closer to the Levant subcomplex. As could be seen, both internal and external elements of European energy security dynamics are so interlinked and overlapping that could not be analysed separately, making energy issues increasingly becoming part of European regional security architecture.

## CONCLUSION

Traditionally, the EU's energy policy was linked to the concept of energy governance and its efforts to create a common regulatory space and to export rules and values beyond its borders. Today, the EU is taking a mixture of energy governance and energy diplomacy, inclining towards the latter one. This subtle shift has led to the greater EU's involvement within the member states' energy policies and security-driven decision-making. In addition, very vivid energy security dynamics in the last two decades in the EU showed increased possibilities towards the transformation of its established security patterns, both internally and externally. Whether talking about the core of the EU or its periphery, both are equally involved in energy security concerns. While the external transformation is likely to occur only through the oncoming of two European RSCs, its internal integration shows some positive trends, but still strongly facing some obstacles such as different interests of the member states and the variety of their energy mix. Many energy-related topics are still in the member states' hands, but the common energy policy is still developing and has achieved some progress compared to the 1980s and 1990s energy picture.

Whether talking about reshaping region's boundaries or creating completely new regional forms and processes, energy resources *do have*

*transformative potential*. With the paradigm shift from the market-based approach and competitiveness towards forms of energy diplomacy, by strongly advocating diversifying projects and strengthening supranational competencies within energy security issues, the EU gave a peculiar geopolitical and security label to its energy policy. The external transformation in the context of energy security ultimately leads to the approaching of two complexes (the one being centred around the EU and the one being centred around Russia) and the formation of a stronger supercomplex. Also, the internal transformation of established European regional security patterns seems likely to occur, particularly along the line of fragmentation-integration. However, this depends on the overall security context and the way of implementation of the proposed Energy Union's goals, so the future scenarios of its application need to be examined and its effects evaluated.

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## EUROPEAN UNION'S QUEST FOR DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY: POLICY CONTINUATIONS AND STRATEGY INNOVATIONS

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*Abstract:* The paper deals with the EU “digital sovereignty” defined as a capacity to influence norms and standards of the information technology in order to preserve the integrity of the internal market, foundational EU values, and the capacity to act as an independent entity in the geopolitical struggle among the great powers for control of the digital sphere. Digital sovereignty was set as a top priority for the next mandate of the European Commission. The article treats the efforts of the EU to achieve digital sovereignty in three interrelated fields such as digital economy, data protection and artificial intelligence, based on the author’s assumption that traditional normative and economic clout of the EU gives it the best chances to succeed quickly exactly in these fields. The author analyses the various legislative acts either adopted or proposed by EU authorities in the field of digital markets and services and their intended effects on major multinationals in the digital economy as a continuation of previous EU efforts in the competition and data protection fields, where the main idea is to protect the integrity of the single market and human rights of EU citizens. In the field of artificial intelligence, in addition to these aims, there is also the wish to engage in strategic competition with China and the US and to offer a third path, one based on the EU values that might attract a following among other states.

*Keywords:* EU, digital sovereignty, digital markets, data protection, digital services, artificial intelligence.

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## INTRODUCTION

Regulation of the digital sphere is not a new topic for the European Union (EU), but regulation with the purpose of achieving sovereignty in this sphere, on the contrary, is a rather recent phenomenon. Take, for example, electronic commerce, which has been regulated by a Directive on e-commerce 2000,<sup>2</sup> at a time when major digital companies were in the early infancy (Google was just two years old) or at best in the minds of its creators (Facebook appeared in 2004). Nowadays, its rules have become obsolete for the most purposes of contemporary digital regulation, and what is even more important for the purpose of this article, they were certainly never intended to provide any notion of strategy or sovereignty in the digital sphere, but rather were used as a tool to regulate the business on the internal market in the usual, *laissez-faire* approach of economic liberalism and fair-play (Blankertz and Jaurisch, 2020).

This approach, in general, has not proved convenient for the EU's ability to control its own development in the digital sphere, since the EU is primarily an economic powerhouse, with the internal market as the greatest asset in the projection of its power in international relations. Thus, the EU must assure this market stays under the control of its institutions, that is, under its sovereignty. However, the realities of the digital age approaching are straying aside from the aspirations that the founding fathers of the digital revolution had in mind. It seems the digital space is no longer just a vehicle for international cooperation, multilateralism, and general democratization of the global society. It rather represents a fertile ground for terrorism (Von Behr et al, 2013), hybrid warfare (Danyk et al, 2017), cybercrime (Carrapico and Farrand, 2020), heavy infringements of human rights, and authoritarian aspirations of various global leaders (Druzin and Gordon, 2017). In other words, there is no place anymore for normative acts that treat the digital economy in this business-as-usual manner the EU is so used to.

Furthermore, the economy and politics in the digital sphere go hand in hand, and other great powers are somehow prone to grasp and accommodate this fact into their politics more readily than the EU. The EU is currently experiencing itself divided and more as a passive observer of the process of

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<sup>2</sup> Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market ('Directive on electronic commerce') OJ L 178, 17.7.2000, p. 1-16.

geopolitical (ab)use of the digital sphere than as the united and active actor in the competitive digital race. On the other hand, other great powers efficiently use the digital sphere for the projection of their influence upon international relations. The “Chinese model” – a market economy under the strong grip of the authoritarian state – has proven itself especially conducive to the efficient use of huge digital corporations, such as Huawei, as geopolitical tools of leverage. (Tekir, 2020). China is the proud owner of the world’s most advanced quantum computer and is closing the gap with the United States in the economic and military application of AI (artificial intelligence) (Rahman, 2020). The EU finds itself in between the crushing competition of the two new digital superpowers (US and China). This has repercussions for the economic well-being and respect for human rights of its citizens since they are dependent upon the products, services and technologies of these superpowers, from chat platforms to data storage facilities and telecommunications equipment. This dependence can undermine the economic well-being and human rights if the geopolitical competition between the US and China continues at the same pace, and currently, it definitely seems that this is the case. This would in turn undermine the foundational values of the EU itself and the purpose for which it was created. It would also render impossible in the longer term any meaningful policy implementation in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy since the EU institutions would be left without independent means to implement this policy in the digital age and instead relying on the goodwill and interests of one of the superpowers to whom they would attach. “The questions of who owns the technologies of the future, who produces them, and who sets the standards and regulates their use have become central to geopolitical competition” (Shapiro, 2020, pp. 6-7).

In this context, the idea of digital sovereignty is part of a wider debate and activity to maintain the EU’s capacity to act independently on the world stage to protect the interests of its citizens in the atmosphere of increasing geopolitical competition on a host of issues, from armaments race, trade and investment, resources and markets grab, to health and security, etc. This accelerating competition is coupled with the popular US pivot to the Pacific and a consequential lack of interest for the protection of EU interests (Davidson, 2014). In some instances, it is exacerbated by the ever more obvious focus of the US upon its own economic interests, which leads it to regard the EU not as an ally but as a competitor due to its economic power (Hackenbroich, 2020). The EU is looking for its own path, and it tries to leverage the humanistic values upon which it was founded to create a general framework to guide the policy formulation and implementation in

this field. This general framework can then be applied to various manifestations of digital policy: internet governance, 5G infrastructure security, data management and protection, artificial intelligence usage, disinformation prevention and mitigation, and finally the issue of broadband capacity. Of all these manifestations, this article chooses to concentrate on three interrelated issues – data sovereignty, artificial intelligence “with a European touch”, and internet governance in the digital market sphere since it is the opinion of the author that those three fields are the most promising for the EU’s quest to achieve the digital sovereignty. This opinion is grounded in the assumption that the EU’s abilities to achieve digital sovereignty are primarily its regulatory and institutional powers and a rich and profitable internal market. The ability to shape the international environment on digital issues through quality normative models and effective institutional application and enforcement of these models, in combination with the internal market power of attraction enables the capacity to influence the norm-setting practices of other states.

### **DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY AS AN UPGRADE OF ANALOGUE SOVEREIGNTY**

The distinction between national or supranational sovereignty is an important issue for the EU since it reflects the usual dynamic of power relationships in this complex institutional entity. Does digital sovereignty relate to the national sovereignty of a particular member state or is it really about the EU as a whole, and if is, is that the realistic proposal? How are the competencies between the EU and its member states divided when it comes to the policies required to achieve digital sovereignty? The answer is not a straight one. The traditional or, let us say, “analogue” sovereignty in the EU is split between the supranational and the member state levels, with some parts of it staying in between. Therefore, sovereignty can be split into three categories, exclusive competences of the EU, shared competences, and the exclusive competences of a member state. For example, “tax policies remain in the national remit, which implies that the multinational digital companies can exploit this to its advantage and play out national sovereignties against each other” (Floridi, 2020, p. 375). On the other hand, monetary sovereignty has largely become supranational, at least for those member states that have adopted the euro. It is probably to be expected that this mixture of sovereignties will be applied to the digital realm as well. This will largely depend on the functional criteria, meaning that in those fields of policies where the EU is better placed to act, digital sovereignty will manifest as

supranational, while in some others, the member states themselves would keep the independence to act.

Thus, for example, digital data sovereignty has already become an EU sovereign policy, through the adoption and vigorous implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Only in 2020, the GDPR provisions were enforced more than 150 times by the EU or the member states authorities against multinational companies, of which a substantial number was actually established outside the EU. One of the biggest fines were enforced against *Google* (over 50 million euros) (Majstorović, 2020, p. 114). The GDPR basically prevents foreign companies from pulling the sovereignty over digital data out of the hands of the EU citizens. "Due to its strong extra-territorial effect, it is applicable to and enforceable over any company wishing to pursue business inside the internal market or otherwise having substantial effects upon the EU citizens or residents" (Vučić, 2020, pp. 44-47). The attraction of the internal market and the strong normative power of the EU institutional framework combine to provide digital sovereignty over data in this case.

This is something already seen in other policy fields, such as competition, where the EU Commission has a rich and long-standing practice of extra-territorially applying and enforcing competition provisions of the EU legislation over companies from all over the world defending this application and provision through the so-called *effects doctrine*, which basically provides that any anti-competitive behaviour in the global economy which causes the substantial effect to the functioning of the internal market falls under the jurisdiction of the EU law (Gerardin et al, 2011, pp. 21-26).<sup>3</sup> Both the competition and data protection policies have the additional purpose of strategically positioning the EU as the normative and value-based role-model for other states, ensuring that the EU remains sovereign in its pursuit of specific rules and values for the protection of human rights, free market principles, and democracy. Their power of enforcement has

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<sup>3</sup> For landmark cases of the application in practice of the effects doctrine see: *Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd. v. Commission of the European Communities* (Dyestuffs), ECJ judgment, Case 48/69, *Imperial Chemical Industries Limited v. Commission* [1972] E.C.R. 619; *In re Wood Pulp Cartel*, 1985 O.J. (L 85) 1, [1985] 3 C.M.L.R 474 (1985); *Gencor*, Judgment of the General Court, Case T-102/96, *Gencor v. Commission*, [1999] E.C.R. II-753; *Grosfillex-Fillistorf* [1964] 3 CMLR 237; and the most important in recent years *Intel*, Case C-413/14 P, *Intel Corporation v European Commission*, ECLI: EU: C: 2017:632.



been proven time and again in practice. Just to illustrate with one prominent example, in the period 2017-2020 the Commission fined three times a US-based digital-giant *Google* for its anti-competitive behaviour influencing the internal market and consumer rights of EU citizens and businesses, and the damages awarded totaled around 8.2 billion euros.<sup>4</sup>

## DIGITAL MARKETS AND SERVICES

The policy fields of data protection and competition have been moved during the last year in the direction of an additional digital upgrade. The European Commission unveiled two long-awaited legislative proposals – the Digital Services Act (DSA)<sup>5</sup> and the Digital Markets Act (DMA).<sup>6</sup> These two acts combined represent the cornerstone of the European digital strategy, a policy document of the EU Commission unveiled in February 2020, which states as its main aim the establishment of the EU as a global role model for the digital economy, through the development of digital standards in line with European values.<sup>7</sup> The Digital Strategy builds upon the results achieved in the period 2014-2019 when the Commission pushed through various legislative proposals for boosting e-commerce, e-Privacy, IP protection, the harmonization of digital rights, harmonized VAT rules, and cyber security as part of its “Digital Single Market” strategy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See cases: Case AT.39740 – Google Search (Shopping), C(2017) 4444, OJ C 9, 12.1.2018, pp. 11–14; Case AT. 40099 – Google Android, C(2018) 4761, OJ C 402, 28.11.2019, pp. 19–22; and see for third case the press release relating details of the case available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_19\\_1770](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_1770), 20.1.2021.

<sup>5</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Single Market For Digital Services (Digital Services Act) and amending Directive 2000/31/EC, retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?qid=1608117147218&uri=COM%3A2020%3A825%3AFIN>, 20.1.2021.

<sup>6</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector (Digital Markets Act), COM/2020/842 final, retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?qid=1608116887159&uri=COM%3A2020%3A842%3AFIN>, 20.1.2021.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, “Shaping Europe’s Digital Future”, February 2020, retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs\\_20\\_278](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_278), 20.1.2021.

<sup>8</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions:

While the EU Treaties do not contain any special provisions on information and communication technologies, the EU is allowed to take relevant actions within the framework of sectoral and horizontal policies.<sup>9</sup> All these are among the key elements for a digital Europe. Therefore, the legal basis for the DMA and DSA was found in Article 114 TFEU,<sup>10</sup> which ensures the functioning of the internal market. In our opinion, the EU has the most potential to prosper in its quest for digital sovereignty through the implementation of these two pieces of legislation since they build upon a successful past practice of application and enforcement of competition and privacy laws, guaranteed by the powers of attraction of the economic clout of the internal market and normative role-model of the EU's data protection policies. Therefore, we will concentrate a little bit longer on their provisions and how are they expected to function in practice.

Digital services are in the essence of cross-border nature. The new rules will limit regulatory fragmentation of digital services, in particular in relation to gatekeeper platforms, and reduce compliance costs for companies operating in the internal market. The DMA establishes a set of narrowly defined objective criteria for qualifying a large online platform as a so-called "gatekeeper". These criteria will be met if a company: 1) has a strong economic position, significant impact on the internal market, and is active in multiple EU countries;<sup>11</sup> 2) has a strong intermediation position, meaning that it links a large user base to a large number of businesses;<sup>12</sup> 3) has (or is about to have)

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A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe, COM/2015/0192 final, retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52015DC0192>, 20.1.2021.

<sup>9</sup> Such as industrial policy; competition policy; trade policy; the trans-European networks; research and technological development and space; the approximation of laws for improving the establishment and the functioning of the internal market; the free movement of goods; the free movement of people, services and capital; education, vocational training, youth and sport.

<sup>10</sup> "Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union", consolidated version, OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, pp. 47–390.

<sup>11</sup> This is presumed to be the case if the company achieves an annual turnover in the European Economic Area (EEA) equal to or above € 6.5 billion in the last three financial years, or where its average market capitalization or equivalent fair market value amounted to at least € 65 billion in the last financial year, and it provides a core platform service in at least three Member States.

<sup>12</sup> This is presumed to be the case if the company operates a core platform service with more than 45 million monthly active end users established or located in the

an entrenched and durable position in the market, meaning that it is stable over time.<sup>13</sup> The potential addressee of the DMA is a large multinational corporation whose activities, in the long run, cause direct and substantial effects on the functioning of the internal market and the livelihoods of multiple EU citizens. These companies control at least one so-called “core platform service” (such as search engines, social networking services, certain messaging services, operating systems and online intermediation services), and have a lasting, large user base in multiple countries in the EU.

Once identified as the gatekeeper, the company will carry an extra responsibility to conduct itself in a way that ensures an open online environment that is fair for businesses and consumers, and open to innovation by all, complying with specific obligations laid down in the draft legislation. Some examples include: allowing third parties to inter-operate with the gatekeeper’s own services; providing the companies advertising on their platform with access to the performance measuring tools of the gatekeeper and the information necessary for advertisers and publishers to carry out their own independent verification of their advertisements hosted by the gatekeeper; allowing their business users to promote their offers and conclude contracts with their customers outside the gatekeeper’s platform; providing their business users with access to the data generated by their activities on the gatekeeper’s platform. Gatekeepers may no longer block users from un-installing any pre-installed software or apps; may not use data obtained from their business users to compete with these business users, and may not restrict their users from accessing services that they may have acquired outside of the gatekeeper platform.

The DMA is not a toothless piece of legislation since, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the new rules, the possibility of sanctions for non-compliance with the prohibitions and obligations is foreseen. If a gatekeeper does not comply with the rules, the Commission can impose fines of up to 10% of the company’s total worldwide annual turnover and periodic penalty payments of up to 5% of the company’s total worldwide annual turnover. In case of systematic infringements, the Commission can impose additional remedies. Where necessary to achieve compliance, and where no alternative, equally effective measures are available. These can include structural

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EU and more than 10 000 yearly active business users established in the EU in the last financial year.

<sup>13</sup> This is presumed to be the case if the company met the other two criteria in each of the last three financial years.

remedies, such as obliging a gatekeeper to sell a business or parts of it (i.e., selling units, assets, intellectual property rights, or brands).

Given the cross-border nature of gatekeepers and the complementarity of the DMA with the DSA and other internal market rules and competition law, in particular, the enforcement of the tool will remain in the hands of the Commission. The Member States may always request the Commission to open a market investigation for the purpose of designating a new gatekeeper. Besides, DMA is a Regulation, containing precise obligations and prohibitions for the gatekeepers in scope, which can be enforced directly in national courts. This will facilitate direct actions for damages by those harmed by the conduct of non-complying gatekeepers. The DMA complements the enforcement of competition law at the EU and national levels. The new rules are without prejudice to the implementation of EU competition rules (Articles 101 and 102 TFEU) and national competition rules regarding unilateral behaviour. Regulation and competition enforcement already coexist in other sectors, such as energy, telecoms, or financial services. The DMA addresses unfair practices by gatekeepers that either: 1) fall outside the existing EU competition control rules; 2) cannot always be effectively tackled by these rules because of the systemic nature of some behaviours, as well as the *ex-post* and case-by-case nature of competition law. The DMA will thus minimize the harmful structural effects of these unfair practices *ex-ante*, without limiting the EU's ability to intervene *ex-post* via the enforcement of existing EU competition rules.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) is a complementary act to the DMA which intends to foster innovation, growth and competitiveness, and facilitate the scaling up of smaller platforms, small and medium enterprises and start-ups on the EU digital market. Its provisions are situated into a context of European values, placing citizens at the centre, thus the responsibilities of users, platforms, and public authorities are rebalanced according to these values. The ultimate purpose is to ensure better consumer protection and respect for the fundamental rights online, at the same time establishing powerful transparency and a clear accountability framework for online platforms. This will provide an important aspect of digital sovereignty, since democratic forms of control would ensure the systemic platforms respect the EU legal order, while at the same time manipulation or disinformation, as systemic risks to this democratic sovereignty, would be prevented or at least mitigated.

The addressees of the DSA are companies offering so-called digital intermediary services, in essence, basic network infrastructure: internet

access providers, domain name registrars, hosting services such as cloud and web hosting services, online platforms bringing together sellers and consumers such as online marketplaces, app-stores, collaborative economy platforms and social media platforms. Again, as with the DMA, specific rules are foreseen for platforms reaching more than 10% of 450 million consumers in Europe since they pose particular risks in the dissemination of illegal content and societal harms. The DSA is extra-territorial in nature since it regulates all online intermediaries offering their services in the single market, even if they are established outside the EU.

The mechanisms of the DSA's implementation should serve as an upgrade over the previously existing EU legislation in this field. They will include measures to counter illegal goods, services or content online, such as a mechanism for users to flag such content and for platforms to cooperate with "trusted flaggers". This procedure is inclusive and enables a form of a participative right for users in the digital environment's regulation. Users whose content has been flagged would have the possibility to challenge platforms' content moderation decisions, thus ensuring the principle of *audiatur et altera pars*. Users would be safeguarded in their consumer rights through the establishment of transparency measures for online platforms on a variety of issues, including the algorithms used for recommendations. Complementary to this provision is the one related to the researchers who are allowed access to key data of the largest platforms, in order to understand how online risks evolve. The oversight structure is provided in order to address the complexity of the online space. The EU member states will have the primary role, supported by a new European Board for Digital Services.

Very large platforms would be under additional obligations. They have to act proactively and prevent the misuse of their systems by taking risk-based action and by independent audits of their risk management systems. Furthermore, enhanced supervision and enforcement by the Commission complements the work of the Member States and the European Board, when it comes to large platforms oversight.

For both the DMA and the DSA, the issue of very large platforms or digital giants, multinationals that have a strong influence on the EU's digital sovereignty, is the most controversial, not the least because these are also some of the companies with the biggest lobbying budgets in the EU.<sup>14</sup> These

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<sup>14</sup> According to <https://lobbyfacts.eu/>, The Big 5 Silicon Valley firms which would be hardest hit by new provisions (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, often known as „GAFAM“) are among the top lobby spenders in Brussels.

budgets have been recently streamlined into a fierce battle for watering down the enforcement provisions of these two acts. According to a corruption watchdog's report: "since the start of the Von der Leyen Commission, 158 meetings were logged as including discussions on the DMA or DSA", and the highest percentage of these meetings involved Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Apple and Amazon.<sup>15</sup> As the legislative battle passes from the Commission on to Council and Parliament, the lobbying intensifies and becomes less transparent. As Transparency International EU found, "by September 2020, only 44% of MEPs had published their lobby meetings, so likely lobbying has been much higher", while the Council does not have the central obligation to disclose lobby meetings (less than half of the permanent representations to the EU do so voluntarily).<sup>16</sup>

### **AI WITH A "EUROPEAN" TOUCH AND RELATED ISSUES OF DATA LOCALIZATION**

Apart from the digital efforts described above, the EU has embarked upon ambitious policy agendas in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), as another important component of digital sovereignty. Last year saw a publication of the key policy document so far by the European Commission – "AI White Paper", which prompted a discussion by policy experts from member states, civil society and businesses that culminated in the Final Report, published just at the end of last year.<sup>17</sup> The "White paper" endorsed the guidelines of a High-Level Expert Group on AI (AI HLEG), commissioned during the year 2019 by the EU authorities which formulated the concept of the "trustworthy Artificial Intelligence", which is centred mainly around the "human-centric" approach to AI that requires compliance with fundamental rights, whether or not these are explicitly

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<sup>15</sup> Corporate Europe Observatory, "Big Tech Lobbying: Google, Amazon & friends and their hidden influence", retrieved from: <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2020/09/big-tech-lobbying>, 20.1.2021.

<sup>16</sup> "MEPs take steps towards lobby transparency and publish 10,000 meetings", retrieved from: <https://transparency.eu/european-parliament-10000-meetings/>, 20.1.2021.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, "Public consultation on the AI White Paper: Final report", November 2020, retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/white-paper-artificial-intelligence-public-consultation-towards-european-approach-excellence>, 20.1.2021.

protected by EU treaties, such as the Treaty on European Union or by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Jobin et al, 2019, pp. 389-399). This approach follows closely the previously discussed areas of data protection and digital market competition. The “White paper” especially stressed the importance of adopting a flexible, agile regulatory framework limited to “high-risk” applications, in sectors such as healthcare, transport, police, and the judiciary, and focused on provisions related to data quality and traceability, transparency, and human oversight (White Paper on AI, p. 2). Some of the potential rules have already provoked concern among non-EU countries: for example, the possibility that AI systems developed and trained outside of Europe will be required to be retrained with European data ahead of their commercialisation (Renda, 2020, p. 59).

The key resource in the development of the AI industry is a huge quantity of data to fuel the process of machine-learning. Therefore, AI sovereignty is so closely related to data sovereignty that they form two sides of the same coin. So far, data needed for research and innovation in the AI field have been mostly stored on cloud servers located outside the EU borders, on platforms such as *Google* and *Alibaba* (US and Chinese incorporated firms respectively), while just around 20% of available data is stored on EU-based servers (Renda, 2020, p. 58). The Commission envisions in the “White paper” that this situation would shift for 180 degrees to around 80% of data being stored locally if every piece of AI strategy gets implemented (White Paper on AI, p. 13). This would enable the Union to pursue sovereign AI policies by controlling the majority of data resources needed for its development and in turn decrease the dominance of its competitors in the AI data global market. In such an environment the EU will have a chance to compete through technologically cutting-edge infrastructure based on a federated cloud, a cloud infrastructure that can accommodate various heterogeneous cloud services under a common set of interoperability specifications (Renda, 2020, p. 58). Some proposals for such a cloud have been already put forward by the German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy – the so-called “Gaia-X”,<sup>18</sup> and currently it

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<sup>18</sup> Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), “Project GAIA-X – A Federated Data Infrastructure as the Cradle of a Vibrant European Ecosystem”, 2019, retrieved from: [https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/Digitale-Welt/project-gaia-x.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/Digitale-Welt/project-gaia-x.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4), 20.1.2021. Interestingly enough, in the Ministry’s document, digital sovereignty is defined

seems that the imagined EU-wide cloud would be based on this technology. Large cloud operators from non-EU countries have already recognised that being admitted to the future European federated cloud infrastructure will imply adhering to a set of protocols and standards that embed compliance with European rules, starting with privacy but also encompassing the forthcoming requirements for high-risk AI applications. (Renda, 2020, p. 60). Similarly, the data spaces announced in the EU strategy for AI will incorporate the EU *acquis* – the body of common rights and obligations that are binding on all EU countries – as software code (Renda, 2020, p. 61).

In order to create the EU-wide infrastructure needed for this undertaking, the Data Strategy,<sup>19</sup> a Commission communication released on the same day as the White Paper, aims to integrate the national data markets of the member states into a single market for data that will allow it to flow freely within the EU and across sectors for the benefit of businesses, researchers and public administrations. The first legislative proposal to come from this strategy is a Regulation on European data governance.<sup>20</sup> It aims to boost data sharing across sectors and the Member States, strengthen mechanisms to increase data availability, and overcome technical obstacles to the reuse of data. If adopted, it will support the set-up and development of common European data spaces in strategic domains, involving both private and public players: health, environment, energy, agriculture, mobility, finance, manufacturing, public administration and skills.

## CONCLUSION

The aspects of the quest for digital sovereignty analysed above tell us a two-part story of how the EU is adapting its traditional tools for power

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not only as state sovereignty, but also as encompassing the power of companies to freely determine the use and structure of their digital systems, data and processes.

<sup>19</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European strategy for data, COM/2020/66 final, retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1593073685620&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0066>, 20.1.2021.

<sup>20</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European data governance (Data Governance Act), COM/2020/767 final, retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020PC0767>, 20.1.2021.



projection to new digital realities. The first part is related to the traditional *effects doctrine* that was invented to tie the companies operating on the single market to the jurisdiction of the EU institutions in competition law cases. It has been accepted as the leading idea behind a plethora of legislation adopted or proposed by the Commission to implement its strategy for achieving digital sovereignty. Fines for behaviour that distorts the EU rules of play in the digital single market have as its ultimate goal the creation of the level-playing field, or “filling-in the economic gap between the EU companies and American and Asian technology giants” (Celeste and Fabrini, 2020, 56). Due to the attraction of doing business on the internal market, these giants are prone to pay the fines and accept the imposed rules of play. Therefore, the GDPR, the DMA and the DSA with their elaborate systems of enforcement can be expected to continue in locked step with this well-defined practice.

The second part is related to the ever-deepening integration of the common European space based on common values of human rights, free market and democracy to create a uniform bloc that can compete with its much more monolithic adversaries (primarily the US and China) in pursuing the fruits of the new technological revolution. In this part, the main role is given to the concepts of data localization and “trustworthy AI” (or what we have called “AI with a European touch”). Although less developed than the previous part, it builds upon similar examples from analogue reality – forging its own path and waiting for others to follow it as a role-model. The unity of the member states as opposed to the foreign interference will in the end enable this strategy to prosper. If they go through with Commission proposals and allow the free flow of data over the internal borders, while at the same time opting for creating a “Gaia-X” or similar federated cloud infrastructure instead of leaving their data in possession of foreign-based cloud services, sovereignty would be preserved and might serve “as a third path between the laissez-faire US approach and authoritarian Chinese model” (Vučić, 2020, 54), attracting other like-minded states in the process and projecting EU normative power ever further.

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## **NATO VS. RUSSIA: IMPACT ON BALKAN REGIONAL SECURITY**

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*Abstract:* NATO, led by the US, and Russia are important factors in the regional security of the Balkans and all Balkan states individually. In the post-bipolar world order, which is marked by strong US domination after the collapse of the USSR, Russia's influence has weakened. However, by stabilizing the internal situation and then consolidating its position in international relations, Russia has returned to the scene and used the military, political (including soft power and cultural ties) and economic power (which is primarily visible in the energy sector) to restore its presence in the region of the Balkans, which is especially noticeable after 2008. However, due to almost two decades of American domination, the regional security dynamics have changed greatly in relation to the time of bipolarity, and part of the Balkan states that belonged to the Eastern Bloc or emerged from the disintegration of Yugoslavia have already become NATO members (Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia). In such circumstances, the United States has an advantage. They are a key factor in the regional security of the Balkans and they are trying to prevent the growth of Russian influence. This research will explain the relationship between NATO and Russia, their long-term goals in the region, as well as the causes of lasting rivalry. The general hypothesis of this research is: the conflict formation within which the long-

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The paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the research project "Serbia and challenges in international relations in 2021", financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and conducted by Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade.

term interests of NATO and Russia are opposed will be maintained in the long run, and this will be reflected on the regional security of the Balkans. The historical method, comparative method and qualitative content analysis were used in the research, as well as modelling in the context of the future foreign policy positioning of the US and Russia and reflections on regional security. The conclusion of the authors is that the United States has no interest in stopping the planned expansion, while on the other hand, Russia is not in a position to allow them to do so. Because of everything, the Balkans remain a region where the establishment of a kind of balance of power between NATO and Russia is being monitored.

*Keywords:* NATO, USA, Russia, regional security, Balkans.

### **THE BALKANS IN THE NEW POST BIPOLAR WORLD ORDER: NATO'S REGIONAL EXPANSION**

The only region to which NATO has been continuously expanding in the last 15 years is the Balkans! The last 'big enlargement' took place in 2004, when seven countries from Central and Eastern Europe were admitted to membership. At that time, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia became part of NATO. Since then, three 'small waves' of admission of new Balkan states have followed (Albania and Croatia in 2009, Montenegro in 2017, and North Macedonia in 2020). The process of NATO expansion in the Balkans is shown in Table 1. (Table compiled according to: Proroković, 2018, pp. 557–579)

TABLE 1: NATO EXPANSION TO THE BALKANS (1952–2004–2020)

Country	In NATO since	Geostrategic significance for NATO
Greece	1952	Securing a position in the Eastern Mediterranean; surveillance of communist states in the immediate vicinity (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania); control of Otranto; harmonization of foreign and security policy with Turkey in order to prevent the outbreak of a large-scale interstate conflict; further securing control of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.
Bulgaria	2004	Access to the Black Sea coast; control of the strategic direction from the Adriatic to the Black Sea; ensuring access to the Middle East; approaching the southwestern border of Russia.

Country	In NATO since	Geostrategic significance for NATO
Romania	2004	Access to the Black Sea coast; control of the strategic direction from Central Europe to the Danube Delta; border control to Ukraine; approaching the southwestern border of Russia.
Slovenia	2004	Securing a position in the northern Adriatic; control of the strategic direction along the Sava valley to the confluence with the Danube.
Albania	2009	Securing a position in the southern Adriatic (control of Otranto); control of the strategic direction from the Adriatic to the Black Sea (through the territory of Kosovo and/or North Macedonia to Bulgarian ports).
Croatia	2009	Securing a position in the central part of the Adriatic waters; control of strategic routes from the Pannonia Plain (Hungary) to the Adriatic Sea (most pass through the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina); control of the strategic direction along the Sava valley to the confluence with the Danube.
Montenegro	2017	Establishment of the Adriatic Troika by linking with Albania and Croatia, whereby NATO fully ensures the communication route from the Gulf of Trieste to the Peloponnese; control of the southern branch of the Belgrade - Bar traffic route.
North Macedonia	2020	Completion of control over the southern route of the strategic direction from the Adriatic to the Black Sea; Control of the 'Balkan vertical' - a key regional traffic route (Athens - Thessaloniki - Skopje - Nis - Belgrade - Budapest) that stretches through the Moravian-Vardar valley.

These activities are largely a consequence of earlier plans of the United States, mostly defined in the mid-nineties. The collapse of the Soviet Union was a 'geopolitical earthquake' on a global scale, affecting world politics as a whole. While, on the one hand, this 'earthquake' opened new perspectives for the United States, on the other hand, it was a 'geopolitical catastrophe'



for Russia. During the time of bipolarity, the Balkans were in the zone of demarcation between the political West (NATO and the European Community) and the Eastern Bloc. Greece became a member of NATO in 1952, communist Yugoslavia articulated a 'policy of non-alignment' by maintaining relations with both geopolitical blocs, while Enver Hoxha's Albania first replaced a strategic partnership with the Soviet Union with a partnership with the People's Republic of China and later, from the 1970s it started to build 'its own path to socialism' by pursuing an isolationist policy. (Hoxha, 1979) Two Balkan states - Romania and Bulgaria - were in the Warsaw Pact.

The great 'geopolitical earthquake' marked the beginning of the 'reconfiguration' of this geographical area. 'The Balkans in general and former Yugoslavian countries in particular have been under significant geopolitical pressure of the political West since the end of the bipolar global order.' (Gajic&Ponomareva, 2020, p. 70) The expansion of NATO and, through that, the expansion of American influence certainly had its geostrategic reasons. The Balkan Peninsula represents a contact zone between the Adriatic and the Black Sea waters in a narrower geographical sense (along the west-east axis), i.e., the Central European and Middle Eastern continental area in a broader sense (along the northwest-southeast axis). Domination over the Balkans made sense in the context of limiting the maintenance or a long-term penetration of the Russian influence in the border area (which represents the first step in the process of ensuring its own borders) - at the Caucasus-Black Sea direction (newly created independent states Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, as well as USSR allies at the time - Romania and Bulgaria) and for uninterrupted planning of activities in the Middle East. Nevertheless, already in the early 1990s, it was obvious that NATO's expansion to the Balkan states and the US's 'political domination' over the entire peninsula could not pass easily and without consequences.

The dissolution of the USSR had as a direct consequence the collapse of socialistic Yugoslavia. First, Western attempts to weaken the Soviet mega-state have long been based on 'awakening' national feelings and promoting nationalism in separate republics, most notably in the three Baltic Soviet units, but to some extent also in Georgia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The nationalism of the peoples of Eastern Europe is becoming 'politically acceptable', even financially supported, it is a means of overthrowing the communist system. (Staniszki, 2001) Therefore, no European communist federation 'survived', including Czechoslovakia. Only 'nation states',

countries that have a smaller percentage of national minorities, are kept in the existing borders (and even in such states, like Romania with its Hungarian minority, had tensions and the threat of escalation). Communist Yugoslavia as a former 'quilt' became an arena for the 'clash of nationalisms' (Ponomarjova, 2019, p. 15) and numerous factors of internal character and local causes contributed to the flare-up of the conflict (for example, in Croatia, it was the suppressed fears of the Serb population rooted in horrific crimes committed by the Croatian Ustasas; in Kosovo, it was a desire for unification with Albania and the counter-reaction of the authorities in Belgrade, which abolish the previous constitutional powers of the province, etc.).

Secondly, Yugoslavia, although created by the will and desire of the dominant parts of the intellectual and political elites of the South Slavic people, still owed its survival more to geopolitical balance than to the conviction of those same elites whose priority was to preserve one state. (Stanković, 2009) Primarily, the revisionist policy of Germany and Hungary between the two world wars determined Great Britain and France to support the survival of Yugoslavia at any cost, and then after the 'parting' of Tito and Stalin in 1948, communist Yugoslavia became an important player in implementing the American concept of 'wedging'. When the Soviet Union no longer existed, there was no need for 'wedging', and therefore no need for keeping Yugoslavia alive at any cost. The internal conflict potential, well inflamed with nationalism, meant that the disintegration of Yugoslavia could not take place relatively peacefully as it was the case with Czechoslovakia.

The US hesitation to quickly and directly get involved in resolving the Yugoslav crisis while leaving the initiative to European countries that had completely different views (Germany versus France, plus Great Britain which calculatedly followed only its own line of interest), or catastrophic errors of assessment (no matter if they were accidental or intentional, such as putting pressure on Alija Izetbegović to withdraw his signature from Cutileiro's plan, which practically led to the immediate beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina) did not contribute to calming the situation on the ground, but on the contrary, it helped spreading the conflict and its escalation. (Kecmanović, 2017)

In the first phase of 'Yugoslav crisis management', American (geo) policy primarily started from the situation on the ground and with the 'bottom up' strategy it directed local conditions towards fulfilling its own goals. This meant that in this development of the situation, all actors had

reasons for dissatisfaction, but also made certain gains (Croats carried out the largest ethnic cleansing in Europe after the Second World War, getting ethnically homogeneous territory of their independent state, but also remained without entity in B&H; Muslims maintained B&H within the existing borders where they had the largest population, but the country remained divided into two entities; Serbs got an entity in B&H with broad powers but experienced a tragedy in Croatia where the Republic of Serbian Krajina disappeared). From today's perspective, the Americans created a starting position not only to declare themselves 'guarantors of security' in the region because of their mediating role, but also to demonstrate to everyone in a bilateral format how they have to thank the US for their achievements. But in the second phase of 'managing the Yugoslav crisis', American diplomacy is moving to an 'up to down' strategy, ignoring local realities and trying to impose solutions. This primarily refers to the American engagement in Kosovo, which from the beginning was directed to provoking NATO military intervention by bringing official Belgrade into an impossible position (at the negotiations in Rambouillet, the Yugoslav delegation was essentially required to agree with the Albanian secession) (Mitić, 2003). Having in mind the epilogue of the Kosovo war and NATO aggression on the FR Yugoslavia, it is indisputable that the United States remained the 'guarantor of security' in the regional framework, and in that sense, they further strengthened their position. However, it is also clear that they lost the opportunity to offer anything to Serbia in a bilateral format since the Serbian corps had lost all confidence in the sincerity of American intentions. Therefore, by going from the 'bottom up' to the 'up to down' strategy, the US had additionally strengthened its influence among Muslims - Bosniaks, Croats and Albanians, but it has irreversibly lost its influence among Serbs. Hence, regardless of the great and to some extent externally supported political changes in Belgrade (the fall of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, the fall of Vojislav Koštunica in 2008, and the congratulations on the victory in the 2012 elections to Tomislav Nikolić by the EU few hours before polling stations were closed), a constant in Serbian politics remained that NATO membership is not an option.

Since 2007 and the mentioning of the military neutrality thesis in a parliamentary resolution concerning the preservation of territorial integrity (dedicated to the situation in Kosovo and Metohija), this formulation has become an official position and gradually gained some content (finally, it is elaborated in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia from 2018). Contrary to the successful NATO expansion, the Balkans also remained the region that (for the first time after the fall of the bipolar order)

gave decisive resistance to NATO's further expansion and made a public stance that membership in this military alliance is not the only way to protect national security.

This research will explain the relationship between NATO and Russia, their long-term goals in the region, as well as the causes of lasting rivalry. The general hypothesis of this research is: the conflict formation within which the long-term interests of NATO and Russia are opposed will be maintained in the long run, and this will be reflected on the regional security of the Balkans. The historical method, comparative method and qualitative content analysis were used in the research, as well as modelling in the context of the future foreign policy positioning of the US and Russia and reflections on regional security.

### **THE RUSSIAN COMEBACK: RENEWAL OF INFLUENCE AFTER 2006**

The articulation of Serbia's position on military neutrality is therefore influenced by historical reasons and current US geopolitical aspirations to complete the reconfiguration of the post-Yugoslav space (only four years after the aggression on the FR Yugoslavia, the US began political initiatives regarding Kosovo status, talks that should be completed by the 'Declaration of independence' and Belgrade's consent to that decision). On the other hand, this position is also influenced by the Russian stance that provides decisive support to Belgrade and thus strikes a balance in the conditions of very unpleasant NATO pressures regarding the 'Kosovo issue'. The title of this chapter mentions the 'Russian comeback', which is only somewhat true, as the real truth is that Russia has never left the Balkans (despite the shortcomings, this subtitle is kept as it reflects a kind of 'turnover' in Balkan geopolitics that occurred in 2006-2008).

Despite the hard position caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, problems in the immediate neighbourhood (conflicts in Moldavia, Georgia, Tajikistan and between Azerbaijan and Armenia, tensions within Russia itself, the rise of nationalism and the status of the Russian population in most of the emerging states), and the real decline of military and economic power, Russia remained an 'active player' in the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia and the search for solutions to the crises in Croatia, B&H, and Kosovo.

Russian ambassador Leonid Vladimirovich Kerestdzhiant was a member of the so-called 'mini Contact Group', together with his American counterpart Peter W. Galbraith and German diplomat Geert-Hinrich

Ahrens, a Group that was trying to come up with a peaceful solution to the conflict in Croatia (Ahrens, 2007, p. 165). In the end, these efforts resulted in Plan Z-4, which was not well accepted by the Serbs and Croats.

Russian diplomacy has been involved in resolving the war conflict in B&H from the very beginning, due to the fact that the role of the UN Security Council is unavoidable. The First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Igor Ivanov, was the co-chairman together with the EU Special Representative Karl Bildt to the Chief Negotiator Richard Holbrooke at the Dayton Peace Talks held in November 1995. (Bildt, 1998)

Among the other signatories of the Paris-Dayton Peace Agreement is Viktor Chernomyrdin, at that moment, the Prime Minister of Russia. Four years later, Chernomyrdin appears as a special representative of Russian President Boris Yeltsin during Martti Ahtisaari's mediation over the crisis in Kosovo and Metohija, and that work will influence the definition of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which was eventually adopted.

Parallel with the change in the American approach and the transition to the 'up to down' strategy, Russia intensified its activities and gradually took a different course. More and more the 'conflicted' attitude was prevailing the previously dominant 'constructiveness' approach in the relation to the US. This was first seen during the Rambouillet talks, when Russia's envoy, Ambassador Boris Mayorski, disagreed with the 'US amendments' that included substantial acceptance of secession and was even more apparent on the sidelines of the UN, where Russia has shown absolute resilience to the US proposals to allow military intervention against the FR Yugoslavia under the flag of this international organization. (Proroković, 2019, pp. 237–245)

It must be admitted that 'from the very moment of Yugoslavia's breakup, Russia's position has been that of Serbophilia, although retroactively many decisions look too hasty and strategically ill-conceived. Such was, for example, the recognition of the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina – despite the obvious inevitability of a bloody interethnic war. The Russian leadership signed the relevant documents on April 27, 1992, when sporadic conflicts had already taken place. The real war began a few days later, in May, immediately after the withdrawal of the Yugoslav People's Army.' (Ponomareva, 2020, p. 171) The analysis of the transcripts of conversations between Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin dated April 1996 to December 1999 provides sufficient proof that the March 1999 events could have taken a different course and the Kosovo issue could have been settled then and there. (Declassified Documents, 2018, pp. 432–436)

The interesting information is that the Russian nuclear submarine K141 'Kursk' was sent to a secret mission in the Mediterranean Sea (the Fifth Fleet of the US Navy was in the waters as a 'striking fist' in the war against FR Yugoslavia) at the beginning of the war to approach NATO vessels unnoticed, and it has carried out the entrusted mission in full (Russia 24, 2020). This shocked NATO to the extent that the diversion of foreign services is still cited as a possible reason for the 'Kursk' tragedy during a routine exercise a year later in the Barents Sea (Voltskaya, 2020). The reason for this conclusion is the testimony of the then Admiral of the North Sea Fleet of the Russian Navy, Admiral Vyacheslav Popov, that 'Kursk' was sent to the 'Mediterranean mission' for political reasons, in order to put pressure on the United States and achieve a faster and more favourable diplomatic solution (Rossiya 24, 2020).

Resolution 1244 is a result of long and troublesome negotiations, organized in several different phases, but to a certain extent, it is also the work of the Russian foreign and security policy, which participated in this process from the very beginning and maintained it until the end, although exposed to numerous unpleasant pressures. It turns out that Russia's engagement on the Kosovo issue was in many ways the key to Moscow's future actions in the Balkans, and thus to the regional security. Namely, after 2001, Russia remained committed within the Contact Group to seeking a 'fair status solution' for Kosovo, which means first negotiations between the Serbian and Albanian sides, and then harmonization of positions. The United States viewed the negotiations as a mere means to reach the goal as soon as possible, to elaborate plans and prepare the public (both domestic and Balkan by using various channels for information distribution, including generous financial assistance to numerous media) for 'Kosovo's independence', and at some moments they tended to show excessive impatience (like putting deadlines to the mandate of Martti Ahtisaari as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Kosovo Status Negotiations, and then the three-month term of the Troika that succeeded Ahtisaari, a group of three diplomats representing the EU, US and Russia authorized to find in such a short time solution to this complex problem). (Jovanović, 2006) American diplomacy was not hiding that they were in a hurry. Kosovo is a topic that they would like to 'archive' and see the end of the whole thing in the act of admitting the 'state of Kosovo' to the UN. In this way, the position of the 'state of Kosovo' in international relations would be completely legalized, but at the same time, it would legitimize the NATO attack on FR Yugoslavia, which then would no longer be called aggression, but only and exclusively – humanitarian intervention. Russia responded to the 'American

rush' and a large number of initiatives by referring to Resolution 1244 and insisting on international law, which meant very concrete support for Belgrade. In circumstances when all the most important western powers (US, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy) and Turkey as an important actor of regional relations, are for the 'independence of Kosovo', (China is giving principal support to Belgrade, but is not engaging in any broader activities), Serbia does not have another ally among influential states beside Russia. In that sense, the strategic partnership with Moscow is seen as a logical solution that should serve as a long-term amortization of 'western pressure'. Having in mind that Serbia is the first European country west of the former Soviet border that is asking for the 'strategic partnership' with Russia (although this strategic partnership will be formalized latter, the document pretentiously named 'Declaration of Strategic Partnership between Serbia and Russia' was signed in May 2013), at the time the ambitions of Moscow were becoming somewhat different and with that also their calculations regarding the Balkan foreign policy vector.

In February 2008, a unilateral declaration of 'Kosovo's independence' was definitely taking place, followed by a frontal 'diplomatic attack' by the entire 'Western bloc' on Serbia's interests. Consequently Serbian public started turning towards Russia, a fact that could not be ignored by any political establishment. Russia's political activity was primarily related to Serbia (due to the favourable 'climate' and the actuality of the Kosovo issue, which was then dealt with by the 'whole world'), although it was also evident in other Balkan countries. Russian investors became present in Montenegro, where on the one hand, they bought a lot of real estate, and on the other hand, the Russian capital entered one of the most important industrial capacities in Podgorica – the Aluminum plant (Kombinat aluminijuma Podgorica). In B&H and Bulgaria, Russian interests are being realized through the energy sector. The representatives of Zarubezhneft JSC in 2006 signed with the Government of the Republic of Srpska the Protocol on the Process of Privatization of the Petroleum Refinery in Bosanski Brod, of the Oil Refinery in Modrica, as well as of the energy sails company 'Petrol'. Together with Bulgaria, Russia is planning three strategic projects: the construction of the South Stream gas pipeline to Serbia, the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline to Greece and the new Belene nuclear power plant (Georgiev, 2009, pp. 3–9). The originally considered route for 'South Stream' stretched from Bulgaria to the north through the territory of Romania to Hungary, but it was changed so that Serbia 'entered the game', which has implications not only in the domain of energy, but also in the domain of geopolitics. In Serbia, in addition to the agreement on the

strategic pipeline, the privatization of the state oil company NIS has been done (with two refineries, modest - but with its own sources and a huge distribution network), which through different kind of taxes made up 15 - 19% of the state budget, a figure that must be taken into account when talking about the stability of the fiscal system. Although with modest consumption, the FYR Macedonia is one hundred percent 'dependent' on Russian gas (EIA, 2006, ex. 9-15). This will serve for later attempts to include Skopje in the 'Turkish Stream' project. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov estimated in May 2015 that behind the demonstrations against the government of Nikola Grueski in Macedonia (which eventually succeed and cause the overthrow of Grueski, who fled to Hungary where he received political asylum) 'stands the United States because of the refusal of the Macedonian government to impose sanctions on Russia and to prevent Skopje's participation in the Turkish Stream gas pipeline project.' (RTS, 2015) Parallel to the strategic plans in the energy sectors (for which it must be said to have been successfully implemented - on January 1, 2021, in the village of Gospodinci in the north of the country the so-called Balkan Stream, 402 km long, has been officially put into work; the Serbian part of the Turkish Stream has been laid down all the way from the Bulgarian to the Hungarian border: Russian gas came to Serbia and the Republic of Srpska), Russia approved a credit line to Serbia for the revitalization of the railway in the value of 800 million dollars. Thanks to the geographic position of the country and its infrastructure connection, this project will be reflected in the traffics systems in Montenegro, B&H, (North) Macedonia, and Bulgaria.

In addition, based on a special agreement from 2009, a Russian-Serbian humanitarian centre of regional significance was established in Niš (officially opened in April 2012). For the US, this center, which was established with the aim of acting more efficiently in the event of natural disasters (in which the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations has vast experience and knowledge, incomparable with similar institutions in other countries) was the 'spy nest', and so periodically there were articles in the media on this subject. US Deputy of the Assistant Secretary of State Brian Hoyt Yee even warned about this very openly during his speech in Congress: 'We share this with the government of Serbia, that Serbia has the full control of its territory and facilities on its territory. If it allows Russia to create some kind of a special centre for espionage or other nefarious activities, it will lose control over part of its territory.' (Djurdjic, 2017) However, the real reason for the concern of American officials is the development of military cooperation between Russia and Serbia. As NATO expanded to Montenegro



and North Macedonia, thus 'closing the circle' around Serbia, Belgrade and Moscow improved military relations. 'Russia has so far helped (direct aircraft donations and armoured patrol vehicles, favourable terms of purchase or credit) by equipping Serbian armed forces with six MiG-29 planes, 30 armoured patrol and reconnaissance vehicles (BRDM-2MS) and 30 tanks (T-72 MS). Serbia has already purchased four new, Russian helicopters Mi-35M, and three transport helicopters Mi-17, as well as one anti-aircraft system Pancir S-1 (which serves to defend from low-flying objectives and because of its tactical and technical characteristics is currently the best tool for defence from such attacks). The curiosity is also the fact that Russia's sophisticated anti-aviation system S-400 only once in history has been transferred to another country's territory because of a joint military exercise: in Serbia in October 2019.' (Proroković, 2020, pp. 203 - 204) Also, since 2019, when two important strategies - National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy were adopted, Serbian military neutrality became formalized: 'Development of the partnership cooperation of the Republic of Serbia with NATO, based on the policy of military neutrality through the Partnership for Peace and the monitoring position in The Collective Security Treaty Organization (ODKB) contributes to the stability of the Republic of Serbia. For further development of democracy, stability and prosperity of the region, for the Republic of Serbia, it is important to improve relations with the US, Russia, China, and other traditional partners and major factors of the international community.' (National Security Strategy, 2019, p. 6)

Unlike the approach in the first decade of the post bipolar world, since 2006 Russia has started acting somewhat differently in the Balkans, using the issue of energy security as a basis for strengthening its position, and cooperation with Serbia as a means of penetrating not only its energy, but also its political and military influence that will transfer further to the surroundings, primarily to B&H, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.

#### **NATO AGAINST RUSSIA: THESIS ON THE RUSSIAN MALIGNANT INFLUENCE AND AMERICAN CONTRA MEASURES**

As some previous years were ground-breaking in some respects, so was the year of 2014 due to the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, which will leave long-term and more significant consequences on international relations (or more precisely - European relations) than it was thought at first. Even before the events on the Kiev Maidan, every action of Russia provoked a counter-

reaction from the US and (often!) the EU.<sup>3</sup> For example, during its visit to Sofia in the summer of 2007, Frank G. Wisner as a special US representative of 'Troika' (next to the German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger and Russian representative Alexander Botsan Kharchenko) in the negotiations on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija called on President Georgi Parvanov to 'Euro-Atlantic solidarity'.

Wisner's mission was well-known in advance. He went to Sofia to put pressure on the Bulgarian state leadership to accept 'new reality' after the unilateral declaration of 'independence' of the Kosovo Albanians, as soon as possible. This was important because of the very resolute announcements of Greece and Romania that they would not do that.

If Bulgaria would stay in the 'bloc' together with Greece and Romania that would complicate the position of the Albanian state-like creation, but it would also further problematized Skopje's decision on that issue (Macedonian Albanians explicitly demanded such a decision with the threat of consequences if it is waited for). However, Wisner used the moment to talk not only about the Kosovo case. It seems this was a second-rate issue for him. Instead, he talked about Bulgaria's three energy arrangements with Russia and the necessity of 'Euro-Atlantic solidarity' in that context! (Proroković, 2018, pp. 668–672) It is worth recalling that after the political changes in 2009, Bulgaria suspended or simply slowed down all three projects, respecting the principle of 'Euro-Atlantic solidarity', although in return it received absolutely nothing in terms of alternative projects for the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline and the Belene nuclear power plant (and what was offered to it as an alternative to South Stream and it concerns the inclusion in the Trans-Adriatic Gas Pipeline and interconnection with Greece and Serbia, is not worth a serious discussion, although it was presented to the Bulgarian public as a realistic substitute for giving up its deals with Russia). Nevertheless, unlike before, after 2014 all US and EU activities aimed at pushing out any Russian influence from the Balkans became completely open, more brutal, without the usual diplomatic phrases and sensitive political formulations. The thesis about 'Russian malignant influence' was launched, and for the sake of fighting it, anti-Russian actions were allowed in all directions. The goal of marking the 'Russian malignant

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<sup>3</sup> The new version strongly promoted in the English language since 2015 is – Kyiv (transcription from the Ukrainian language), not Kiev (transcription from the Russian language).

influence' as a threat was to legitimize in advance any informative action of Russia and thus make Russia a 'big liar' in international relations.

Despite all the shortcomings and inconsistencies in the process of defining the term 'hybrid war', it is obvious that such an approach is applied, and that NATO is waging a 'hybrid war' in relation to Russia. In that context, the thesis of Russian malignant influence is important both from a tactical and from a strategic point of view. (Kuczyński, 2019, p. 3) In this respect, political relations were also disrupted, as all Balkan states were involved either in the expulsion of Russian diplomats or in exposing 'spy scandals'. The President of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović, went the furthest, accusing Russia of attempting to carry out a coup d'état during the 2016 elections. Other cases of diplomatic incidents are shown in Table no. 2.

After 2014, the United States is fully using the position they have built since the early 1990s, the ties that have been built, and the mechanisms of dependence on the American political mercy or financial aid in order to push out any Russian influence. Thus essentially becoming the only external actor of regional security and gaining the possibility to manage all key political processes in the Balkans through the order of hegemonic stability.

One of the consequences of these American activities (which were to a great extent coordinated with the EU) is suspending of the 'South Stream', its replacement with the 'Turkish stream' and the multi-year postponement of its implementation. Another consequence is the joining of all Balkan states to the Western sanctions against Russia (except, of course, Serbia and thus B&H, since the representatives of the Serbian entity are blocking the adoption of such a decision). This practically prevents the expansion of trade exchange and strengthening of economic relations. Finally, all Balkan NATO members take part in military exercises against Russia, which sometimes takes on a grotesque picture.

TABLE NO. 2: CHRONOLOGY OF DETERIORATING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS  
(2016–2020)

State	Diplomatic incident	Time frame
Montenegro	Accusing Russia of a coup d'état Expulsion of a Russian diplomat	November 2016 March 2018
Albania	Expulsion of two Russian diplomats	March 2018
Croatia	Expulsion of a Russian diplomat	March 2018
North Macedonia	Expulsion of a Russian diplomat	March 2018
Romania	Expulsion of a Russian diplomat	March 2018
Greece	Expulsion of two Russian diplomats	July 2018
Bulgaria	Expulsion of a Russian diplomat Expulsion of two Russian diplomats	October 2019 September 2020
Serbia	Charges against the Russian deputy military attaché of spying (he had already left the country)	November 2019
B&H	The absence of two members of the Presidency at the meeting with the head of Russian diplomacy in Sarajevo	December 2020

The naval exercises 'Breeze 2020' brought both Greek and Turkish warships to the port of Burgas (Bulgaria), although at that time Greek-Turkish relations were heated due to the conflict over exploitation rights in the Mediterranean (natural gas exploitation rights). (US Embassy in Bulgaria, 2020) So, even though bilateral relations were bad, it did not affect relations with Russia because the course is determined by the United States.

The United States defines its attitude towards Russia primarily through the prism of its long-term geopolitical goals. The key instrument in achieving these goals is NATO. Rearranging Ukraine on the 'anti-Russian track', as was previously done in Georgia, and which will be done in the coming years in Moldova, while trying to implement regime change in Belarus and problematizing relations in Russia's immediate vicinity wherever possible

(for example - between Armenia and Azerbaijan) indicates that the focus of US action through NATO structures has shifted to the immediate Russian border, to the post-Soviet space.

Looking from that angle, the Balkan Peninsula should have already been a secured 'NATO zone', a geographical region in which the United States will be not only the most important, but also the only guarantor of regional security. Russia's attempt to 'come back', noticeably strengthening its influence since 2006, primarily through 'energy projects', but also relying on international agreements that guarantee its position as a significant player in regional relations, is an obstacle for NATO, as it slows down its further 'progress on the Eastern Front' and coordination of pressures on the immediate Russian border, in the post-Soviet space.

Hence, the 'discipline' of the Balkan states through demands to expel Russian diplomats (due to the alleged poisoning of retired Soviet agent Sergei Skripal who fled to Great Britain two decades ago!); revealing of 'spy scandals' and 'coups'; demands to participate in joint military exercises directed completely against Russia (for the US, it would be absolutely no problem to connect the military forces of Serbia and the so-called Republic of Kosovo in the same way as connecting Greece and Turkey in naval exercises, since it is in the 'broader interest' of the fight for 'democratic values' against Russian malignant influence); constant expression of 'Euro Atlantic solidarity' even when it comes at its own cost (like in the case of Bulgaria). All that concerns Russia is or will be problematized, including energetic cooperation, economic ties, and cultural exchange. The thesis on the fight against the Russian malignant influence, which is almost proclaimed as a threat to the achieved 'civilization development', is only a 'political frame' to explain the broader context of a need to align the Balkan states with the US.

## CONCLUSION

The Balkan Peninsula has a certain strategic importance, both for NATO and for Russia. During the transformation of the structure of the world political system from bipolar to unipolar, in the 1990s, this geographical region became the scene of armed conflicts and a region of marked destabilization, which attracted the attention of all important actors in international relations.

Complex mutual relations of the newly formed states after the disintegration of communist Yugoslavia, mistrust between the constituent

nations within those states, historical heritage, but also the unwillingness of the international community to react adequately and in time, in certain situations made the 'Balkan crisis' last longer than a quarter of a century, despite all the peace agreements, and the (partial) expansion of NATO and the EU to this region.

Burdened by the painful consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia in the 1990s largely limited itself to using political means and mechanisms to influence regional relations. Russia's goal was to reach solutions in accordance with the principles of international law (inviolability of the external borders of the newly formed states and allowing as little interference of Western actors in internal affairs as possible) and thus maintaining certain principles according to which regional relations would be regulated in the long run. Such an approach could have been maintained until 1999, but, as time has shown, not after it. NATO's aggression on the FR Yugoslavia determined the further positioning of the United States not only in the Balkans but also in the entire (Southeastern) Europe and Eastern Mediterranean, as would show further activities in the Caucasus, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, but also in Iraq and Syria. The reconfiguration of the post-Yugoslav space projected by the United States included the final separation of Serbia-Montenegro, acceptance of the 'reality' of 'Kosovo's independence', and then a derogation from the Dayton Agreement and internal reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, all with full control of the Balkans and with NATO's expansion to all Balkan states. That is why this region remained the only area to which NATO continuously expanded until 2020 when North Macedonia was admitted to membership. For Russia, such US plans and NATO expansion presented a problem for several reasons.

First, placing the Balkans under the complete control of the United States also meant that the focus of NATO's geopolitical activities shifted farther east, to the post-Soviet space, to Russia's immediate border zone. The unlimited and immediate expansion of NATO also meant a defensive attitude of Russia in every respect.

Second, the rejection of all the principles on which the disintegration of multinational communist countries took place (which the United States de facto did by allowing Albanians to unilaterally declare independence in Kosovo) may be an introduction to a great nightmare not only in the post-Yugoslav but also in post-Soviet space. Such a nightmare would mean long-term destabilization in the immediate vicinity of Russia, possibly also within the country, which prevents any development (economic, social, cultural, etc.) and induces crises with unforeseeable outcomes. For NATO expansion,

‘crisis management’ with the imposition of solutions (up to down) and the creation of ‘new realities’ is a way to achieve hegemonic stability through the construction of projected regional orders. For Russia, however, this represents a first-class threat, and that is why Russia’s position is a ‘firm persistence’ both on respect for the Dayton framework and on UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Third, in the existing circumstances, and after the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, Serbia has practically remained the only Balkan ally of Russia. Undoubtedly, Russia has invested in this alliance, just as Serbia, under the slogan of conducting a ‘multi-vector foreign policy’, constructed a certain political framework for cooperation with Russia, regardless of its obligations to the EU. However, it is more than noticeable that Serbia is a ‘target’ of continuous and coordinated pressure from the United States and the European Union to change its position and abandon the ‘multi-vector approach’.

Somewhat similar to Serbia, although it was less pronounced in every respect and realized in different circumstances, until 2014 the officials of Montenegro and North Macedonia also spoke of excellent ties with Russia. But, since then, a lot has changed, including the strategic determination and foreign policy priorities, and from ‘excellent relations’ with Russia, they have come to NATO membership, expelling Russian diplomats and establishing sanctions against Russia. For Serbia, giving up the alliance with Russia would mark the beginning of a ‘geopolitical catastrophe’ from which it would be difficult to recover in every respect, but such a development of the situation would certainly harm Russia as well. First and foremost, this would reflect on a political, or more precisely psychological plan because it would pose a question of Russia’s capabilities to defend its allies. NATO’s expansion on Serbia would also leave very tangible consequences to Russia’s political reputation and the possibility to renew its influence in Southeast Europe. Due to the above, it is possible to state that Russia cannot peacefully observe NATO’s expansion into the Balkans, nor choose a strategy of non-reaction regarding the processes concerning the US’s attempt to become the only guarantor of regional security in this part of the continent. Since 2006, Russia has projected a ‘comeback’ to the Balkans through the expansion of cooperation in the fields of energy, but also the connection of railway infrastructure and the increase of trade exchange. However, after 2014, that proved to be insufficient, since Russian actions provoked very aggressive counter-reactions from the US (and the EU which followed the US). Although the ‘Balkan issue’ is no longer as important to the United States

as it was in the 1990s, the impossibility to 'close the issue' through fully legitimizing the new regional order (which includes 'independent Kosovo') somewhat problematizes the operationalization of their plans in the post-Soviet space.

Therefore, the US will 'remain active' in the Balkans, and in certain development of a situation this region may gain significance in some potential political and economic negotiations between Washington and Moscow. The signing of the so-called 'Washington Agreement', on many issues controversial statements of wills between the Prime Minister of Kosovo Avdullah Hoti and the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić with the mediation of Donald Trump, shows that the Balkans, and above all 'the problematic Serbia', remain in the US's line of sight (although it could be more accurately called a 'peripheral zone'). The document also explicitly mentions the issue of 'energy security', which once again indicates the 'unacceptability' of further expansion of Russian influence through energy cooperation.

Hence the increasingly aggressive action, which after the accession of Montenegro and North Macedonia to NATO is mainly directed towards Serbia. On the other hand, for Russia, the success of the United States and the completion of NATO expansion in the Balkans would bring certain threats and challenges, or more precisely - it would make the existing threats more dangerous, and the existing challenges - more explicit. So, on the one hand, the United States has no interest in stopping the planned expansion, while on the other hand, Russia is not in a position to allow them to do so. Because of everything, the Balkans remain a region where the establishment of a kind of balance of power between NATO and Russia is being monitored.

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## STATE, RELIGION AND REFUGEES: THE CASE OF TURKEY AND DIYANET\*

Birgöl DEMİRTAŞ<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* Turkey has a world record in hosting the greatest number of refugees since 2014. The outbreak of the civil war in Syria led to huge human mobility across the border as millions of refugees tried to enter Turkey to escape from the tragedies of the war. Although Anatolia and the Balkans territories of Turkey have been the destination of many refugee movements since the Ottoman Empire, the huge size of the Syrian refugees presented an important challenge for Turkish decision-makers as well as Turkish society. The Justice and Development Party (JDP) government has tried to justify its open border policy to the Turkish public and promote integration of the refugees in the Turkish society. In order to be able to realise these objectives, the JDP has instrumentalised various state institutions as well. The Presidency of Religious Affairs, the Diyanet, was one of these institutions. This article tries to unravel the policies and discourses of the Turkish Diyanet towards the Syrian refugees. The basic research questions of the paper are as follows: Which policies did the Diyanet follow towards Syrian refugees? What are the basic characteristics of Diyanet's discourse with regard to refugees? How can we explain Diyanet's discourse and policies? What is the function of the Diyanet in the JDP's attitudes towards refugees? The paper argues that the JDP instrumentalises the Diyanet in its refugee policies and the Diyanet's discourse and policies aim to justify and glorify the JDP's policies.

*Keywords:* Turkey, Justice and Development Party, Diyanet, Religion, Islam Syria, Refugees.

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\* This article has been dedicated to the memories of my dear grandmother Vasfiye Avcı Kılıç and my dear aunt Kıymet Kılıç. In addition, the author devotes this article to the academicians and students of Boğaziçi University.

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## INTRODUCTION

‘Institutions are usually evaluated according to their vision and mission: where does an institution see itself today, and where does it plan to be in the future?... To establish a framework of vision for making projections about the future, global institutions nowadays utilize their imaginative skills in a creative way... The Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey with its *historical experience, present accomplishments and tremendous potential*, deserves to be acknowledged as one such *global institution*’ (Aydın, 2008, p. 64. (emphasis added)).

Turkey’s former Minister of State Mehmet Aydın’s characterisation of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) as a ‘global institution’ in the quotation above reflects the Diyanet’s increasing importance in Turkey’s domestic and foreign policies under the reign of the Justice and Development Party (JDP). Although Turkey is a secular country, according to the Constitution, the JDP governments have emphasised the role of religion in many realms of politics as a conservative religious party. The increasing role of religion in the JDP’s policies has had implications for the increasing role of the Diyanet in societal and political life.

The JDP came to the power in 2002 as a single-party government and it has governed Turkey for the last 19 years. The JDP political elite, like their Islamist predecessors, has claimed that religious people in the country were disadvantaged in the country since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. They have very often criticised the secular policies of the previous decades. Hence, in all policies of the JDP from domestic issues to external ties, one can see increasing traces of religion.

It is also noteworthy to state that the JDP’s coming to power in the early years of the 21st century has been accompanied by a religious turn in the globe as well. The events of 9/11 increased the attention of political science and international relations on the increasing role of religion. As politics on the global scale has been witnessing a populist and conservative turn, religion has started to play a bigger role in the domestic and foreign policies of many countries ranging from the US to India, from Poland to Turkey. Therefore, what Turkey has been experiencing at home has been accompanied by global trends (Fox and Sandler, 2004; Öztürk and Gözaydın, 2018).

This article tries to understand the Turkish Diyanet’s policies towards the Syrian refugees in the framework of the JDP’s instrumentalisation of religion in coping with the challenge of refugees. The paper tries to answer

the following research questions: Which policies did the Diyanet follow towards Syrian refugees? What are the basic characteristics of Diyanet's discourse with regard to refugees? How can we explain Diyanet's discourse and policies? What is the function of the Diyanet in the JDP's attitudes towards refugees? The paper reaches the conclusion that the JDP instrumentalises the Diyanet in its refugee policies and the Diyanet's discourse and policies aim to justify and glorify the JDP's policies. Hence, there is a mutual interaction between the two in terms of strengthening each other in Turkey's domestic policies. The article uses the case study as its methodology.

The Diyanet's website, contents of sermons (hutbe in Turkish, khutba in Arabic), programs of the Diyanet TV, relevant legal acts, articles of the Diyanet journal, newspaper articles as well as speeches of the President of the Diyanet have been analysed in this research.

In the first part, the chapter will briefly analyse the JDP's policies towards the Syrian refugees since 2011. The second part will examine Diyanet's role in Turkish politics from the establishment of the Republic till today. The third part will try to grasp Diyanet's discourse and policies towards refugees. The basic findings of the research will be summarised in the conclusion.

## **THE JDP AND REFUGEES: AN INCREASING CHALLENGE**

Criticising the former governments for being too much dependent on the West and being too passive, the JDP came to power with an ambitious foreign policy agenda symbolised by the notorious conceptualisation of 'Strategic Depth' developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey has had a unique geographical and historical depth and is supposed to become a 'central state' in global politics by becoming an active player and order setter. 'Zero problems with neighbours' has become an important concept in Davutoğlu's approach towards foreign policy (Davutoğlu, 2001). By becoming a more active player and achieving better relations between state-society, Turkey is supposed to become the order setter country in its neighbourhood as well as to become a central state in world politics.

This image has been shattered by the war in Syria. The JDP elite believed that the Bashar Assad regime would fall in a short period after the start of the violent conflict. What happened to Husnu Mubarak in Egypt and Muammar Kaddafi in Libya supposed to be repeated in Damascus. Therefore, as soon as the conflict in Syria started, Turkey implemented an

open-door policy towards the refugees. The refugee flow started in April 2011 and continued at a high pace, especially in the first years of the conflict. As the refugee flow continued, Turkey has become the country hosting the biggest number of refugees in 2014, hence surpassing Pakistan (Erdoğan, 2020a, p. 75).

The JDP tried to use discourse and implement certain policies to convince the Turkish public to accept incoming refugees. As far as the discourse of JDP politicians is concerned, they used a discourse full of historical and religious references. It was emphasised by the governing elite that migration was part of the history of Islam during the time of Prophet Mohammad. In addition, it was stated that Anatolian territories have always hosted refugees from the Ottoman times onwards. Hence, the JDP politicians tried to justify their policies via historical and religious references (Demirtaş, 2020).

In addition to the discourse, the JDP also implemented some legal and institutional changes as well. A new Law on Foreigners and International Protection (*Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu*) as well as Temporary Protection Regulation (*Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği*) came into force. Hence Syrian people coming to Turkey were accepted as people under temporary protection. They could benefit from basic humanitarian rights as well as the right to non-refoulement.

The Regulation on Work Permit for Foreigners under Temporary Protection was also accepted in 2016 that would give the Syrians the right to work legally, subject to certain conditions. That regulation was important proof that the government has come to recognise the fact that most of the Syrian refugees would stay in the country in the long term. Although only a small minority of the refugees could work legally, most of them work illegally without any registration and social security. This illegal and unregistered refugee labour is tolerated by the JDP authorities. Moreover, the Directorate General of Migration Management (*Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü*) was established in the Ministry of Interior to help formulate Turkey's policy towards refugees (Demirtaş, 2020). This was another important institutional change under the JDP.

Turkish state ratified the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees dated 1951 and the 1967 Protocol. However, it had a geographical reserve that states that only those people coming from the European countries would have the status of refugees. Turkey still retains the geographical reservation. This geographical reservation can be criticised from an ethical

and legal point of view; however, it has a reason from the perspective of the Turkish state because of the turmoil in Turkey's neighbourhood.

However, despite all the attempts, there are increasing concerns of the Turkish public towards the Syrian refugees. Professor Murat Erdoğan conceptualises this trend in the Turkish society as 'securitisation from society' (Erdoğan, 2020a). A public opinion poll conducted by Professor Erdoğan among 2247 participants in 26 provinces in 2019 with 95 % reliability proves important evidence of society level securitisation. 73 % of the Turkish people find the policy of the Turkish state towards Syrians to be unacceptable. Even 53.6 % of the electorate of the governing party JDP and its junior partner the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP) find the policies of the government to be unacceptable. In addition to that, almost 82 % of the Turkish society thinks that Syrian refugees are not culturally similar/not similar at all to the Turkish people (Erdoğan, 2020a). That percentage was 80.2 % in 2017. Hence, there was an increase of 2% of the Turkish people thinking that Syrian refugees do not have any cultural similarity to the Turkish people in two years (Erdoğan, 2020b).

Turkey Trends 2020 Survey conducted by Kadir Has University also show the negative attitudes of the Turkish public towards Syrian refugees. According to the survey, 55 % of the people are not happy with the presence of refugees. Although that number was 66.6% in 2018, still more than half of the Turkish people do have a negative perception with regard to the Syrian refugees (Aydin et al., 2021).

At that point, the Diyanet's role in the JDP's policies becomes crucial. As the JDP tries to justify its policies towards refugees via using religion, it made use of the Diyanet in various 'creative' ways. The following section summarises Diyanet's historical background in Turkish politics.

## **THE DIYANET AND TURKISH POLITICS**

Religion played an important part in the administration of the Ottoman Empire and Şeyhülislam as the Minister of Religious Affairs and Charitable Foundations was part of the Ottoman cabinet. Although Padişah had the upper hand, religion was an important part of the Ottoman system. The 'Millet' system, the core of the Ottoman administration was also based on religious differences in society. Muslim *millet* and Christian *millet*s formed the core of the Ottoman Empire.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish administration in 1920, religious affairs became the subject of the



Ministry of Religious Affairs and Charitable Foundations. However, after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, the Caliphate was disbanded, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Charitable Foundations was replaced with the Presidency of Religious Affairs in 1924, which was responsible for administering religious affairs and institutions (Öztürk and Gözaydın, 2018, p. 342). The Presidency became an administrative unit that was under the authority of the Prime Ministry. In 1937, laicism entered into the Turkish Constitution.

The new Turkish Republic aimed to open a new page in Turkish history by establishing a system based on laicism. Turkey's laicist system is different from secularism. While secularism is based on the separation between state and religion, in the laicist model, religion has been under the control of the state. As the leaders of the new Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the founding cadre wanted to give an end to the administrative system of the Ottoman Empire that was based on religion. Their model was the French state. They wanted to create a new state based on contemporary norms and values. Although it was a top-down model of establishment of a laicist state (Çınar, 2008), it seemed like the only option at the time if the aim was to establish a modern state after the dissolution of the empire.

It is noteworthy that after each coup d'état, the Diyanet would widen its authority over society. The first major expansion of its authority took place with Act No 633 in 1965. With this Act, the Diyanet became responsible not only for religious issues, but for issues of *morality* as well. It was also authorised with the function of *enlightening society about religion* (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Kuruluş ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun, 1965). This was a new 'responsibility' given to the Diyanet. Hence, it was not only administering religious affairs as a bureaucratic organization, but it was also expanding its scope via becoming an institution responsible for morality and 'enlightenment' of society (Öztürk, 2019, pp. 85-86).

The Diyanet got a new boost after the 1980 coup d'état. The leaders of the military junta implemented a new policy of Turkish-Islamic synthesis (*Türk-İslam Sentezi*) via policies to increase nationalist and religious feelings of society (Coşar, 2012). 1982 Constitution prepared by the junta regime had a particular article on the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Article 136), stating that the aim of the Diyanet was to have national solidarity and integration (*milletçe dayanışma ve bütünleşme*) (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, 1982). This meant that the Diyanet's responsibilities were stepping beyond administering religious affairs and enhancing the construction of national identity.

After the JDP came to power in 2002 after the failure of the coalition government to solve the economic crisis in the country, the role of religion in domestic and external affairs started to increase. This was reflected in the JDP's policies towards the Diyanet. It was not a coincidence that the JDP and the Diyanet created a mutually beneficial relationship to justify and strengthen each other's policies and responsibilities. Especially legal amendment in 2010 (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Kuruluş, 2010) by the JDP government created new avenues for the Diyanet to increase its impact on the Turkish society. The fact that the JDP stemmed from the religious National Outlook (Milli Görüş) Movement led by Necmettin Erbakan was an important historical fact. Religion was one of the fundamental elements of the JDP's policies. Hence, it was quite expected that the JDP would try to use the Diyanet as its instrument in important issues.

The new act in 2010 was a turning point in the Diyanet's recent history. It stated that the Diyanet had the duty of the enlightening and guiding family, women and youth with regard to religious affairs. It allowed the Diyanet to start TV and radio broadcasting. In addition, it gave the duty to organise panels, conferences and seminars outside of the mosques. Furthermore, the act assigned the Diyanet the responsibility of providing religious information to the people in prisons, juvenile detention centres, care homes and health centres (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Kuruluş, 2010). These changes in 2010 allowed the Diyanet to have new duties and responsibilities outside of the mosque. That represented an important expansion of the Diyanet's area of responsibilities. Its new functions towards family, women and youth are also noteworthy. The increasing scope of activities by the Diyanet is in line with the JDP's focus on creating a religious generation. Erdoğan stated the following: 'We will raise a religious generation. Do you expect from a political party that has the identity of conservative democracy to raise atheist youth?' (Erdoğan hedefine bağlılık bildirdi, 2016). Opening the Quran courses by the Diyanet for 4–6-year-old children was another initiative of the JDP to raise a pious generation (Öztürk, 2016, p. 628). The fact that the Diyanet would extend its religious services beyond the mosque was an important indication that different spheres of social life would be permeated by the Diyanet. This is a process of desecularisation from above (Adak, 2020).

It must also be remembered that before and during the JDP some of the directors of the Diyanet have become parliamentarians. Lütfi Doğan was the director of the Diyanet between 1972 and 1976. He became an MP and a state minister in 1977. Tayyar Altıkulaç was the director of the Diyanet

between 1978 and 1986. He became an MP of the True Path Party between 1996 and 1999. He then became one of the founders of the JDP. He then became an MP from the JDP as well. Mustafa Sait Yazıcıoğlu was another Director of the Diyanet who also later became a parliamentarian from the ranks of the JDP. Hence, there was also a relationship between the head of the Diyanet and the Turkish right-wing political parties before and during the JDP.<sup>2</sup>

After summarising the increasing activities of the Diyanet under the JDP rule, the following section would examine the Diyanet's rule with regard to Syrian refugees.

## **THE DIYANET AND THE CHALLENGE OF SYRIAN REFUGEES**

The Presidency of Religious Affairs has played various roles in the JDP's management of the refugee challenge. It is possible to categorise those roles. First of all, we can divide it into two: the role of the Diyanet within Turkey and in Syria. In the country, the Diyanet fulfils various functions: 1) Reproducing the JDP's discourse on refugees and justifying its policies, 2) Providing religious education and services to Syrian refugees, 3) Providing aid to refugees.

As to the Diyanet's activities in Syria, we can divide it into four: 1) providing religious services, 2) providing education, 3) preparation of religious publications, 4) providing humanitarian assistance. The article will first start with the Diyanet's functions within Turkey and then examine its roles in northern Syria which is controlled by Turkey.

First of all, the Diyanet has carried out some institutional reforms in order to deal with the refugee problem. The Department of Migration and Moral Support Services was opened within the Diyanet in 2017 to work especially on refugees. The first duty of the department has been stated as working to provide solutions to religious, cultural and social problems that occur as a result of internal and external migration (Göç ve Manevi Destek Hizmetleri, 2020). It is important to note that the Diyanet is seen as responsible for not only providing religious services, but also contributing to the solution of cultural and social problems. This is an indication of the increasing role attributed to Islam in societal affairs by the JDP.

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank the referee for drawing my attention to this point.

Interior Minister, Süleyman Soylu's opening speech at the Department of Migration and Moral Support Services of the Diyanet gives important clues of this approach:

'They are actually condemning humanity today with incomprehensible and solid walls raised by racism. My concern is that, God forbid, winds blowing from Europe and the world would condemn Turkey to such racism. Therefore, this centre has great importance. We could not turn our backs on our brothers in Syria; we did not. Thank God, despite the whole world, we brought peace to an area of 4 thousand square kilometres there. The members of the institution that we opened today are also there today. They recite the call for prayer five times a day. Praise be to Allah, we present a challenge to those who try to raise irreligious children there, to separate them from their own beliefs, not just in our own understanding, but by showing them to the world. We will develop an understanding that provides and constitutes order in whole Turkey' (Göç ve Manevi Destek Merkezi Dualarla Açıldı, 2019).

This quotation from the Interior Minister Soylu has two important characteristics. First of all, it claims that there is racism in Europe and other parts of the world. It is true that the far right is increasing in the world. However, the problem with this speech is that it overgeneralises this problem and hence re/produces 'Europe' as the other of Turkey. Second, Turkey is shown as the saviour of Syrians whose religious beliefs are at stake. Diyanet's approach bears similarities to the Minister's attitude.

Second, the JDP assigned a special role to the Diyanet in its refugee policies. This has become quite clear as the Integration Strategy Document and National Action Plan (2018-2023) of the Directorate General of Migration Management has emphasised the Diyanet's role in providing guidance to refugees and giving them religious education. In this important Document, the Diyanet was one of the institutions that the Directorate General of Migration Management would cooperate with the Integration Strategy Document and National Action Plan (2018-2023) (Uyum Strateji Belgesi, 2020).

We can start our analysis of Diyanet's policies with its function of reproducing the JDP's discourse on refugees and justifying its attitudes. Throughout its discourse, the Diyanet officials stated that migration was a phenomenon that is part of Turkish and Muslim history. There are many references to Turkish history as well as the history of Islam. In addition, there are many references to religious sources, like the Quran verses. Bayram Demirtaş, head of the Department of Migration and Moral Support Services,

stated that human being is a migrant because this world is temporary and a place of exile for Muslims. Giving reference to the verse of the Quran, he states that return is only to God (Demirtaş, n.d.). Therefore, there is an attempt to give the image that we are all migrants anyway according to Islam.

The President of the Diyanet Ali Erbaş stated that Anatolian territories are migration territories. He further expressed his view that ‘We look after the migrants and asylum seekers irrespective of what their belief is... These lands are lands of migration... from the Balkans, Caucasus, everywhere... These lands have become the lands on which migrants live’ (Avrupa’nın sınırlarına dayanan, 2020).

The Diyanet’s discourse is also full of glorification of the Turkish nation that is very much in line with the discourse of the JDP. The political elite of the JDP tries to produce a Turkish identity that is supposed to protect the refugees throughout history. Erbaş, the President of the Diyanet, states that ‘Those who had been migrants (*muhacir*) in history became the host (*ensar*) for those who came later. We are such a merciful nation’ (Avrupa’nın sınırlarına dayanan, 2020).

Moreover, several Friday sermons (*hutbe*) were directly dealing with the refugee issue and carried clear messages for the Turkish public. The Ensar-muhacir metaphor of the JDP was reproduced by the Diyanet in these *hutbes*. Generosity and sacrifices of the Turkish society were glorified as well (General Directorate of Religious Services, 2017). This *hutbe* came a short while after a 9-month pregnant Syrian refugee woman in Sakarya was killed together with her 10-month baby. Hence, the Diyanet was trying to accommodate the concerns of the Turkish public. In another *hutbe*, refugees were named as brothers and sisters and it also stated that ‘our duty is to be the remedy’ (General Directorate of Religious Services, 2016). Hence, Friday sermons were used to produce approval of the Turkish public towards refugees. This is an important indication of how religion has been instrumentalised to have an impact on the Turkish society.<sup>3</sup>

Like the JDP, the Diyanet also tried to construct Europe as the other of Turkey with regard to the refugee issue. The Diyanet’s President claimed that ‘You see, don’t you? They are killing without mercy because 100 thousand people reached the borders of Europe. Once again, we are sending them bread, water, and other needs. If we don’t do it, we are responsible.

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<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive historical and conceptual analysis of Friday sermons, see: Ongur, 2020.

We should be like that. We were raised like that. Because only this way we become great and full of glory. We should never forget this. This is what glorifies us' (Avrupa'nın sınırlarına dayanan, 2020).

Another important feature of the Diyanet's discourse is its replica of the JDP elite's discourse of 'geography of heart' (*gönül coğrafyası*). The JDP elite used this concept to refer to ex-Ottoman territories as well as Muslim territories. This concept was never explained fully and left as an ambiguous term. Erbaş, the President of the Diyanet stated that 'geography of heart cannot be limited to Anatolia' (Bizim gönül coğrafyamız, 2019).

Second, the Diyanet tried to provide religious education and services to Syrian refugees. For every camp hosting refugees, a coordinator religious official was assigned (Demirtaş, n.d.). Furthermore, special classes were opened for refugees in the Quran courses.

Moreover, the Diyanet's broadcasting agencies were helpful to spread the messages of the Diyanet to the Turkish public. There were special programs on refugees on the Diyanet TV. Some religious books were published in Arabic as well. The Diyanet also started to broadcast Friday khutbas (*hutbe*) in Arabic and English as well (Ekiz, 2016). In addition, humanitarian assistance was provided to the refugees via the Diyanet as well as the Turkish Diyanet Foundation.

Furthermore, the Diyanet also played important roles in northern Syria in which the Turkish security forces controlled after the operations of Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch. The Diyanet prepared a report about its activities in this region. The report explained how the Diyanet provided services in four categories: 1) religious services 2) education services 3) publications 4) humanitarian assistance (Din Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2018). In addition, the Turkish Diyanet Foundation has so far built 600 houses in northern Syria. Building of 4,400 houses still continues (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı'ndan, 2020).

It is important how the JDP tried to get societal consent for the military operations using religion. Both Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch Operations started, the *sala*<sup>4</sup> was recited from the mosques in the border provinces of Turkey (Din Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2018).

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<sup>4</sup> *Sala* means prayer read by a muezzin in the mosque at certain times, for example when a person died.

## CONCLUSION

This study focused on Diyanet's discourses and policies towards Syrian refugees in Turkey. Refugees have become an important challenge for Turkey since more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees crossed the border and tried to establish new lives. The JDP assigned a new role for the Diyanet for the integration of the refugees on the one hand and getting the consent of the Turkish public. The JDP used the Diyanet as an important tool in the refugee issue as well as it tries to use it in many domestic and external issues as well. There is a mutual interaction between the JDP and the Diyanet. As the JDP increases the role of the Diyanet, the Diyanet justifies the policies of the JDP from which both benefit as a result of this relationship. This study showed that the Diyanet tried to use migration as a natural phenomenon in human lives. Basing its arguments on historical and religious references, it tries to convince the Turkish society to make further sacrifices. The Ensar-muhacir metaphor stemming from the history of Islam was repeated by the Diyanet as well.

However, the study also emphasised that despite all the policies and discourses of the Diyanet and the JDP, the refugee issue continues to be a challenge for Turkey as the concerns of the Turkish public towards refugees have a tendency to increase further.

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## THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR THE FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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*Abstract:* The subject of the analysis of this paper is the consideration of the important views presented in the document 'Global Strategy for the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union' (hereinafter: the EU Global Strategy) from June 2016 and their impact on the security of the Republic of Serbia. The research aims to point out the correlation of the provisions of the EU Global Strategy, their application in practice, and the positive and negative effects on the security of the Republic of Serbia. The general hypothesis of this research is: The global strategy of the EU can have a significant impact on the security of the Republic of Serbia, but so far it has not been practically realized to the possible extent. During the preparation of this text, the historical, comparative and content analysis methods were used as research methods, and in a certain sense, modelling, that is, the search for a way for the European Union to have a positive effect on the security of the Republic of Serbia. The research has shown that this topic is necessary for at least three reasons. First, the European Union has an indisputable influence on the security and defense of the Republic of Serbia, either positively or negatively. Second, the Republic of Serbia stated its position on security issues in the new 'National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia' (hereinafter: the RS NB Strategy) from December 2019, so it is important to see how similar or different this document is from the EU Global Strategy. Third, the latest challenges, risks and security threats of many countries show that in a certain crisis, there is a possibility of the practical influence of global and regional organizations in overcoming security problems in certain nation-states.

*Keywords:* global strategy, national security strategy, European Union, Republic of Serbia, security challenges, risks and threats.

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## INTRODUCTION

The debate on the relationship between the EU and Serbia has been going on for decades. This is, in a way, normal, considering that Serbia is located in Europe and aspires to join that integration. Thus, Ivica Dačić, Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of the adoption of the EU Global Strategy, states in the introduction to that document: 'The world, and thus the European Union and the Balkan region, which has a very important role in the overall security of the EU, are currently undergoing numerous temptations and major challenges such as pandemics, the migrant crises, terrorism, radicalism, extremism, religious fanaticism, the security of energy supply, climate change, etc. Serbia is firmly determined to contribute to combating threats at the regional, European, and global levels, in cooperation with partners, in the world, and above all, the EU. Serbia contributes significantly to the EU's Common foreign, security and defense policy by participating in the EU and UN peacekeeping missions, and in relation to the population numbers, it ranks first in the region and eighth in Europe. In the challenges of the migrant crisis, Serbia has borne a heavy burden proving to be one of the most reliable partners of the EU and a country that fully respects the valid international conventions, the rights of vulnerable groups, and the EU value system. It is of the utmost importance to preserve the stability of the region, and Serbia sees this as one of its basic priorities, to which it is deeply committed. We are very pleased that our efforts have been recognized by European partners.

The message the EU has sent through the Global Strategy regarding our region, i.e., that a credible enlargement policy is a strategic investment in Europe's security and prosperity and that it will continue to be based on a clear, strict and consistent accession process, is an additional encouragement in the implementation process of our strategic foreign policy goal - full membership in the EU' (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, p. 5).

The relationship between international integration and a state can be viewed in different ways. It seems appropriate if we compare the most important documents that deal with the current topic, and then analyse the practical action, as well as, the possible optimal model of cooperation. Therefore, in this paper, the following units will be considered: (1) the EU Global Strategy and the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia: similarities and differences; (2) Experiences from the practical influence of the EU on the security of the Republic of Serbia: positive and negative

examples; and (3) A possible model for the optimal positive impact of the EU on the security of the Republic of Serbia.

### **THE EU GLOBAL STRATEGY AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

The analysis of the similarities and differences of such important documents must necessarily begin with a presentation of the essence of both strategies, as well as their relationship regarding some important issues. As for the EU Global Strategy, its essence can be seen in the following paragraphs.

In her introductory speech, Natalie Tocci, an Italian professor, points out: 'The EU Global Strategy, presented in June 2016 by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini, sets out the essential interests and principles of global engagement. The strategy can explain what the EU stands for and expects to achieve in the world.

In a world that is increasingly interconnected, opposed and complex, we need a strategy that gives the Union a sense of common direction. The EU must act united on the world stage in order to provide security to its citizens, preserve our interests and represent our values.

The EU Global Strategy aims to provide a shared vision of how the Union can realize its global ambitions - from our core interests and principles of engagement to different geographical regions and policy areas. We must be united internally around security and defence and take responsibility in the regions in our neighbourhood to promote resilience and resolve conflicts and crises.

The Strategy is particularly focused on our immediate neighbourhood, bearing in mind the significant challenges to our own security, as well as to global stability, that arise there. It strives for even closer cooperation with partners than before in achieving our common goals'. (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, p. 7)

Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the time of the adoption of the EU Global Strategy, emphasizes: 'The purpose, even existence, of our Union has been called into question. Yet, our citizens and the world need a strong European Union, like ever before. Our wider region has become more unstable and insecure.

The crises within and outside our borders are affecting directly our citizens' lives. In challenging times, a strong Union is one that thinks strategically, shares a vision and acts together. This is even more true after the British referendum. We will indeed have to rethink the way our Union works, but we perfectly know what to work for. We know what our principles, our interests and our priorities are. This is no time for uncertainty: our Union needs a Strategy. We need a shared vision, and common action ... "Global" is not just intended in a geographical sense: it also refers to the wide array of policies and instruments the Strategy promotes. It focuses on military capabilities and anti-terrorism as much as on job opportunities, inclusive societies and human rights. It deals with peace-building and the resilience of States and societies, in and around Europe. The European Union has always prided itself on its soft power – and it will keep doing so, because we are the best in this field. However, the idea that Europe is an exclusively "civilian power" does not do justice to an evolving reality. For instance, the European Union currently deploys seventeen military and civilian operations, with thousands of men and women serving under the European flag for peace and security – our own security, and our partners. For Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand' (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, pp. 9-10).

On the other hand, regarding the essence and character of the RS NB Strategy is stated: 'The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia is the highest strategic document whose implementation protects national values and interests of the Republic of Serbia from security challenges, risks and threats in all areas of social life. Its starting points are the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, military neutrality, care for the Serbian people outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia, European integration and an efficient rule of law ... The National Security Strategy fully reflects the Republic of Serbia's commitment to general civilizational and moral values, respect for its state-building tradition, the rule of law, social justice, democracy, human and minority rights and freedoms, economic progress, cooperative security and comprehensive international cooperation. The commitments expressed in this document express especially the readiness of the Republic of Serbia to actively participate in the processes of cooperation and joint action with other states and subjects of international relations in building and improving national, regional and global security' (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2019, p. 1).

Both analysed documents contain views on security issues, i.e, challenges, risks and threats. The EU Global Strategy states: 'The Security of our Union. The EU Global Strategy starts at home. Our Union has enabled citizens to enjoy unprecedented security, democracy and prosperity. Yet today terrorism, hybrid threats, economic volatility, climate change and energy insecurity endanger our people and territory. An appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders. We will therefore enhance our efforts on defence, cyber, counterterrorism, energy and strategic communications. Member States must translate their commitments to mutual assistance and solidarity enshrined in the Treaties into action. The EU will step up its contribution to Europe's collective security, working closely with its partners, beginning with NATO' (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, p. 23).

The RS NB Strategy handles the essential security problems as follows: 'Circumstances that contribute to the emergence of challenges, risks and threats to security at the global level are, above all, large differences in terms of economic and cultural development, which result in poverty and social vulnerability of the huge part of the population, which causes the emergence of negative demographic and socio-psychological phenomena. Regional and local conflicts, ethnic and religious extremism, terrorism, organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal migration, hybrid threats, cyber threats, limited availability of natural resources, including water, food, energy and raw materials, and climate change and degradation of the natural environment, threaten the stability of individual countries and entire regions, as well as global security.

The general state of security in the world is significantly endangered by gross violations of the United Nations Charter and generally accepted norms of international law, and especially interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, as well as the concept and practice of preventive attack and military interventionism. Of particular concern is the tendency of straining relations between the great powers, conditioned by competition for the realization of their opposing interests and the change of existing spheres of influence. In such circumstances, the risk of a global military conflict, although significantly reduced, cannot be completely ruled out. The biggest threats at the international level, in the long run, will continue to be international terrorism, organized crime, strengthening political and religious extremism, the migrant crisis and mediation conflicts' (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2019, pp. 2-3).



Both documents emphasize the importance of an integrated approach to security issues. Thus, the EU Global Strategy states: 'An Integrated Approach to Conflicts. When violent conflicts erupt, our shared vital interests are threatened. The EU will engage in a practical and principled way in peace-building, and foster human security through an integrated approach. Implementing the "comprehensive approach to conflicts and crises" through a coherent use of all policies at the EU's disposal is essential. But the meaning and scope of the 'comprehensive approach' will be expanded. The EU will act at all stages of the conflict cycle, acting promptly on prevention, responding responsibly and decisively to crises, investing in stabilisation, and avoiding premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts. The EU will act at different levels of governance: conflicts such as those in Syria and Libya have local, national, regional and global dimensions which must be addressed. Finally, none of these conflicts can be solved by us alone. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through comprehensive agreements rooted in broad, deep and durable regional and international partnerships, which the EU will foster and support' (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, pp. 15-16). When the problems of security and defence are elaborated, similar views are expressed: 'As Europeans, we must take greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats. While NATO exists to defend its members – most of which are European – from external attack, Europeans must be better equipped, trained and organised to contribute decisively to such collective efforts, as well as to act autonomously if and when necessary. An appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important for Europe's ability to foster peace and safeguard security within and beyond its borders.

Europeans must be able to protect Europe, respond to external crises, and assist in developing our partners' security and defence capacities, carrying out these tasks in cooperation with others. Alongside external crisis management and capacity-building, the EU should also be able to assist in protecting its Members upon their request, and its institutions' (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, p. 25).

The RS NB Strategy emphasizes: 'Integrative processes in the field of security, as well as growing political, economic and cultural cooperation, significantly reduce the risks of state conflicts, as well as the possibility of uncontrolled crises and transfer of conflicts from one area to another. However, the world is still faced with numerous, multi-determined security

challenges, risks and threats that need to be addressed in a timely and adequate manner. Given the dynamic changes in international relations, security challenges, risks and threats are changing the character and forms of expression' (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2019, p. 2 ).

The RS NB Strategy also states the following: 'The European Union and/or its member states face the need to address a number of complex issues, such as the threat of terrorism, asylum policy and migration management, the financial crisis and the eurozone public debt crisis, which demands the institutional response of the European Union and its Member States to all mentioned challenges' (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2019, p. 3).

The analysis of the similarities and differences of two documents that deal with approximately the same issues can be best realized if the views on some essential issues are compared. In this case, views on several risks and threat challenges will be presented.

The EU Global Strategy addresses the 'commitments to mutual assistance and solidarity and includes addressing challenges that have both internal and external dimensions, such as terrorism, hybrid threats, high-tech and energy security, organized crime and external border management' (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, p. 26). The fight against terrorism, high-tech security and energy security are discussed in greater detail (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, pp. 25-29).

On the other hand, The RS NB Strategy states significantly more challenges, risks and threats, such as armed aggression against the Republic of Serbia, separatist aspirations, the illegally unilaterally declared independence of the territory administratively covered by the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, armed rebellion, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ethnic and religious extremism, intelligence activities of foreign entities, organized crime, drug addiction, mass illegal migration, problems of economic development of the Republic of Serbia, problems of demographic development of the Republic of Serbia, epidemics and pandemics of infectious diseases, energy security of the Republic of Serbia, the unfinished process of delimitation of the states of the former SFRY, natural disasters and technical-technological accidents, climate change, high-tech crime and endangerment of information and communication systems. In addition to the above-mentioned, there are other security challenges, risks and threats that can have a significant impact, such

as corruption and misuse of new technologies and scientific achievements, genetic engineering, medicine, meteorology and other scientific fields. (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, pp. 10-14).

#### *Similarities between the EU Global Strategy and The RS NB Strategy*

- Both strategies address the issue of security at the highest level of importance;
- Advocating for peace and cooperation runs through both documents;
- These documents point out the importance of an integrated and cooperative approach to the security, and cooperation of various entities in that field.

#### *Differences between the EU Global Strategy and the RS NB Strategy*

- The EU Global Strategy, in addition to security issues, deals equally with foreign policy issues, while the RS NB Strategy mainly deals with national security issues;
- The EU Global Strategy addresses significantly fewer challenges, risks and threats than the RS NB Strategy;
- The EU Global Strategy does not treat Serbia in particular, as well as other countries in Southeast Europe. Our space is not in the priority of the EU, so even in the operational plans, one cannot expect anticipation of concrete measures;
- On the other hand, the RS NB Strategy mentions the EU dozens of times.

### **EXPERIENCES FROM THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF THE EU ON THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXAMPLES**

The practical operation of some institutions often deviates from the positions defined in strategic- doctrinal and normative documents. Regardless of declarative determinations, practical action is still the best indicator of the essence of the existence and functioning of some subjects. In this regard, the following views set out in the EU Global Strategy deserve attention: 'The European Union will promote peace and guarantee the security of its citizens and territory. Internal and external security are ever

more intertwined: our security at home depends on peace beyond our borders. ... The EU will promote a rules-based global order. We have an interest in promoting agreed rules to provide global public goods and contribute to a peaceful and sustainable world. The EU will promote a rules-based global order with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations at its core. ... In a more contested world, the EU will be guided by a strong sense of responsibility. We will engage responsibly across Europe and the surrounding regions to the east and south. We will act globally to address the root causes of conflict and poverty, and to promote human rights. The EU will be a responsible global stakeholder, but responsibility must be shared. Responsibility goes hand in hand with revamping our external partnerships. In the pursuit of our goals, we will reach out to states, regional bodies and international organisations. We will work with core partners, like-minded countries and regional groupings. We will deepen our partnerships with civil society and the private sector as key players in a networked world' (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, pp. 13-14).

The activities of the Union, as emphasized in the EU Global Strategy, are indicated by the following defined priorities: security of our Union; state and social resilience in our east and south; an integrated approach to conflicts; cooperative regional orders; and global governance for the 21st century (The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, 2016, pp. 15-16).

In the EU's response to the security challenges, risks and threats that our country is facing, there are some positive but also unfavourable examples. Positive examples are reflected, above all, in the fact that the EU is declaratively committed to peace and civilized problem solving within the EU and in neighbouring areas. Negative examples relate to the experiences that have come to light in recent years when it comes to attitudes and practices regarding the threat to the territorial integrity of Serbia, then the treatment of the world economic crisis, terrorism, control of illegal emigration, and most recently, the attitude towards the fight against the pandemic. These attitudes and practices indicate that our country cannot fully rely on the EU in terms of preserving its security and international position.

Certainly, the most negative example refers to the fact that the majority of EU members recognized the illegally unilaterally declared independence of the territory administratively covered by the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, and this problem is rightly presented in the RS NB

Strategy as a first-order security problem. If the EU is conceived as a kind of security project, then the structures of that integration should have understood that endangering the key national interest of a candidate country for membership must have certain negative consequences for the members of the Union themselves.

In that sense, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FRY, Živadin Jovanović, notes: 'Macron and Merkel reiterate that it is time for Europe (EU) to turn to itself, but regarding Kosovo and Metohija, they continue the destructive policy imposed by the United States in 1999, which forced it to participate in illegal armed aggression against Serbia (FRY). Using a combination of threats, blackmail and flattery, the leading European countries are trying to drag Serbia into the scenario of creating another Albanian state on a part of its territory, to draw new international borders that divide the Serbian people. They do that, above all, in order to satisfy their selfish geopolitical interests ...' (Jovanović, 2018, p. 752).

A similar assessment is made by Hannes Hofbauer: 'Military intervention as a continuation of politics has long gained a place in the politics of Brussels ... With the proclamation, and soon after, the recognition of Kosovo's independence from Washington, Berlin, and Paris in February 2008, the very international legal basis of the post-war order was shaken, both militarily and politically, which meant the end of the post-war era' (Hofbauer, 2012, p. 18; 28).

At the Bled Forum in 2020, the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, mentioned the importance of Serbia for European security. Orbán pointed out that 'without EU enlargement and Serbia's accession to the European Union, it is not possible to create a complete European Union security infrastructure' (Politika, 2020). However, this basically correct position does not seem to find wide support in EU structures.

A well-known American intellectual, Noam Chomsky, expressed his views on many issues related to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. He also deserves attention for pointing out the basic causes of the NATO attack on the FRY, referring to Strobe Talbot, the US Deputy Secretary of State in 1999. In his views, Chomsky notes: 'He recently wrote a preface to a book of his communications director, John Norris. In that preface, he says that it is a book that we should read if we want to understand how the top of the Clinton administration has thought. He says the real purpose of the war had nothing to do with Kosovo Albanians. The war happened because Serbia did not implement the required social and economic reforms, which means

that it was the last part of Europe that did not submit to the neoliberal programs led by the United States ...' (Čomski, 2018, p.201).

In addition to bare geopolitical interests and the desire to affirm NATO, what Noam Chomsky states is the essential reason for the 1999 aggression. Elementary logic raises the question of whether these could have been the real reasons for the aggression against an old European country at the end of the 20th century, which was so strongly supported and participated in by many EU members. It is worth remembering all the hoaxes and untruths that came from certain EU countries (insinuations about the conflict in the village of Račak, accusations against our country for Operation 'Horseshoe', which did not exist, etc.). It would be good for EU structures to explain to the public how much they had spent and why they gave up the proclaimed peace policy and many of their own values in practice due to the disintegration (breakup of Yugoslavia), the aggression against the FRY in 1999 and recognition of Kosovo's independence. This is all the more strange given the assessments of the character of the EU.

Thus, Professor David Dačić states: 'The European Union is the greatest project of peace (Pax Europaea) in the history of mankind, bigger than the golden age of the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries of the new era (Pax Romana)' (Dačić, 2013, p. 563).

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, made a similar assessment of the importance of the EU: 'If we do not stabilize the Balkans, it will be difficult to consider ourselves a geopolitical force, because no one else will do it, only Europeans' (BETA, 2020).

In the EU Annual Report on Serbia for 2020, only the fight against corruption and organized crime is critically mentioned in the range of security problems, and more affirmative views on Serbia's attitude towards migrants are presented. Positions are expressed about Kosovo (with an asterisk) only in the context of the normalization of relations with Serbia (as if they were two sovereign states). It is also mentioned that Serbia continues its strategic partnership with numerous countries, with special emphasis on China (around the fight against the pandemic) and Russia (military-technical cooperation), and the United States (relocation of the Serbian embassy to Jerusalem) (Delegacija Evropske Unije u Republici Srbiji, 2020).

It would be in the wider interest of the EU to confirm the proclaimed positions on security in practice, among other things, when it comes to energy policy and especially enlargement policy: 'If the EU is, among other things, a major security project, then it is surprising that it takes so long to admit countries that are in a security risk region. The structures of the EU

and its members have already spent significant funds in calming the Balkan crisis, so the admission of those countries to membership and their behaviour in accordance with European values would probably be in the interest of the EU members themselves. It would be especially unfavourable if the conditioning of the Republic of Serbia continues, which was not applied on other countries recently admitted to the EU' (Krga, 2017, p. 160).

Serbia, for its part, strongly emphasizes its commitment to EU membership, contributes to solving common European problems, such as migrants, agreed that the EU would be the bearer of technical negotiations on solving the problems related to Kosovo and Metohija, participates in multinational operations, in addition to the United Nations, and the EU, etc. The EU Annual Report on Serbia for 2020 states: 'Serbia is in line with 60% of the positions of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU in 2019 and should intensify efforts to gradually harmonize its foreign and security policy with the Common EU policy in the period until accession' (Delegacija Evropske Unije u Republici Srbiji, 2020).

Regarding these integrations, Professor Milomir Stepić notes: 'EU (and NATO) membership cannot be a rationally determined "higher goal" or a "far-sighted decision", as the identity, (geo) political, economic and other harms will be undoubted and priceless. The "amputation" of Kosovo and Metohija, and the further probable violation of the territorial integrity of Serbia, are the most concrete, but still only a partial price. The overall post-Yugoslav ultimate condition for the Serbian factor in the Balkans is complete national disintegration for the sake of questionable inclusion in Euro-Atlantic supranational integrations' (Stepić, 2019, p. 125).

There is no doubt that in the structures of the EU when it comes to the attitude towards the security of Serbia, there are clear differences between the general declarative views on the importance of peace and cooperation and the practical moves of individual members and structures of that community. This is certainly not essentially in favour of the security of either the EU or Serbia. Due to such practical behaviour of certain EU institutions, it is imperative for Serbia to realize its own security problems mostly within the national framework. This is also noted by Mile Bjelajac: 'Therefore, the states and their statesmen in the 21st century have the obligation to assess security challenges together with the security forces, and with comprehensive knowledge in this area ensure sovereign power over the entire territory and protection from new attacks from outside and inside' (Bjelajac, 2010, p. 312).

## **A POSSIBLE MODEL OF OPTIMAL POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF THE EU ON THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

Given the real existence of the EU, with numerous institutions, as well as the fact that Serbia is oriented towards joining that integration, it is justified to consider a model of its optimal positive impact on the security of our country, regardless of the views expressed in the previous part.

Experiences from the integration process so far indicate that it would be good for Serbia to get rid of the obsession that 'the EU has no alternative'. The alternative can come without Serbia's influence for the following reasons: first, the EU may conclude that it will not expand further; second, Serbia may be given such conditions that it will not want or be able to meet; and third, the EU may disintegrate, as the most prominent representatives of that integration occasionally warn. Therefore, the alternative to EU membership can simply be forced, and that is, practically, what we have now, an independent, but better organized, legal and prosperous state, which cooperates with many foreign factors.

In such conditions, the following elements are important for the formation of the model of the positive influence of the EU on the security of Serbia: (1) defining the desirable attitude of the EU towards the security of Serbia in political, strategic-doctrinal and normative documents; (2) reaching an agreement on practical cooperation between the EU and Serbian bodies in terms of neutralizing negative challenges, risks and threats that affect the security of Serbia, but also the members of the Union; and (3) exchange of experiences and harmonization of normative positions, organizational solutions, staff training and equipping of individual organizations that practically solve security issues.

Based on the above, the model could contain the following: 'the EU in its strategic-doctrinal and operational documents treats Serbia and other candidate countries as partners in solving challenges, risks and threats; it affirms specific forms of cooperation with elements of Serbia's national security system. On the other hand, Serbia is taking the necessary measures to resolve the issue of national security, relying on the EU to the agreed extent, engaging its capacities, thus contributing to the security of the Union as a whole'.

It is an optimal model and perhaps a little idealistic. But without this or a similar vision, it is difficult to assume that, in the future, a concrete correlation of a positive impact on the security of the EU, and above all Serbia, could be achieved.



## CONCLUSION

The presented facts indicate that, so far, no special and necessary conditions have been created for the optimal positive influence of the EU on the security of the Republic of Serbia. At the same time, if there was goodwill of EU members, there would be possibilities for such a form of correlation, which would be expedient for both the EU and Serbia.

If something changes in that direction in the meantime, it will take a long time to establish the necessary practical and efficient relations. This problem is complicated by the fact that the further development and even survival of the EU are extremely problematic because the members of that integration cannot agree on some essential issues. This means that at least three options will operate in the next period: (1) EU reforms in the direction of federal regulation; (2) reforms towards a confederate model; (3) the option of partial or complete disintegration of the EU will always be present. Many point to these problems, and Richard Haas observes: 'As far as the European Union is concerned, there is obviously a need to reform it' (Haas, 2017, p. 279).

Given the situation in the EU and its attitude towards Serbia, the most important security issue related to the crisis around Kosovo and Metohija, our country should treat it in a relatively new way. 'In resolving the Kosovo-Metohija crisis, according to a favourable variant, an integrated approach should be applied, which means engaging politics, diplomacy on the highest and residential basis, then, economy, elements of the national security system, culture, science, media and other potentials in several phases.' Namely, a multidimensional problem, such as this Kosovo-Metohija problem, cannot be solved by only one dimension - for example, diplomacy. That is why an integrated approach is needed' (Krga&Bjelja, 2018, p. 35).

Having all this in mind, Serbia should continue to correctly treat members and candidates for EU membership and support peace and the strengthening of national and regional security. However, given the internal problems in the EU and its previous relations with Serbia's security, our country should mainly rely on its capabilities and continue to improve and strengthen them. That will make it a more important country and more interesting for foreign factors, including EU structures.

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**II**  
**GLOBAL EUROPE:**  
**THE POSITION OF EUROPEAN**  
**COUNTRIES IN WORLD POLITICS**

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## THE EUROPEAN UNION BETWEEN ITS REGIONAL ROLE AND ITS GLOBAL AMBITIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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*Abstract:* The paper examines regional actions of the European Union, the major lines of its evolution, as well as the transformation of the strategic role of the EU and its continental position as a regional power. Despite being considered a successful regional actor, the EU is facing multiple geostrategic regional challenges, as well as fragmentation processes, which are especially characterized by Brexit. The paper also examines the role of the EU as a global actor. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is faced with the lack of genuine European identity, diversity of interests, and inefficiency of institutions. Besides the progress of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) from soft to hard power, NATO remains the backbone of European security. The role of the EU in the UN had been weakened after Brexit. The authors consider the EU Global Strategy from 2016 as a possible Renaissance of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and a factor of empowerment of the EU regional role and global ambitions in international relations.

*Keywords:* EU, regional actor, global actor, Brexit, NATO, EU Global Strategy.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we will present the role and importance of the European Union (EU) as a regional factor on the European continent, and on the other, its ambitions to act and influence on global issues. Changes in the international order during the 21st century have significantly affected the international ambitions of the EU, as well as its position on the threshold of the third decade of this century (R. Has, 2017; T. Judt, 2005).

In the first part of this paper, we will deal with the evolving role and importance of the EU in Europe over the last three decades, from the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the transformation of the three economic communities into a political, economic and monetary union project, encompassing the entire continent. The ultimate goals of the creation and development of the European communities (i.e., the European Union) have never been quite clearly defined, so they have evolved over time, according to the circumstances and encounters of various challenges and crises. By the end of the 20th century, Europe was dominated by centripetal trends<sup>3</sup>. On the contrary, this century has been characterized by fragmentation processes, which are especially illustrated by Brexit.

The second part will be dedicated to the analysis of the global ambitions of the EU envisaged in its Global Strategy from 2016. We will point out the realization of common strategic goals, obstacles standing in its way, as well as the EU's relations with NATO and its role and action in the United Nations.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A REGIONAL FACTOR IN EUROPE

### **The role of the European Union in building a “new European architecture”**

The beginning of the 1990s represented a time of the transformation of the bipolar world into a unipolar system dominated by the United States, along with its allies. After the disappearance of the Eastern bloc, *“the Atlantic Alliance was stronger than ever before”* (Z. Bzezinski, 2009, p. 20). In this context, the question of building a *“new European architecture”* arose, which would be developed strategically around NATO, and politically and economically

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<sup>3</sup> With the exception of former socialist federations (USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia) that were dissolved after the collapse of the USSR (1991).

around the European Union – as the backbone of the further gradual transformation of the continent into a kind of confederation or “*postmodern empire*” (U, Beck, E. Grande, 2006, p. 71). In this process, the key stages were the unification of Germany (1990) and then the transformation of the former integration composed of three European communities into a political, economic, and monetary union (European Union – EU 1993). It was followed by the gradual inclusion of other European countries in the EU and then the strategically important integration of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (up to the borders of the former USSR). This process, which went largely in parallel with NATO enlargement, culminated in the “big bang”, i.e., the enlargement of the European Union from 15 member states to 25 (2004), or 27 member states in 2007, i.e., practically by doubling the membership in a relatively short period of about a decade.

During the period of preparations and negotiations for EU enlargement of the States of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the Union played a key role as a force that projects its “*transformational power*” on the candidate countries (H. Grabbe, 2006). CEE countries have drastically changed their socio-economic system under its influence, together with very rapid economic development encouraged by significant foreign direct investment, as well as budget incentives from EU funds<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, the key geostrategic influence and the role of the United States should not be forgotten. After unsuccessful interventions by the EU countries at the beginning of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the United States has on several occasions played a key role in military-political interventions in Southeast Europe. That led to the end of the war in BiH (Dayton Accords 1995) and the bombing of Serbia, resulting in the international control over the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija (1999).

In other words, the relative geopolitical, economic and social stability achieved in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and later on<sup>5</sup>, was a

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<sup>4</sup> The average GDP of Romania compared to the average in the EU increased in the period 1999–2018 from 26% to 65%, while the average of Bulgaria increased from 27% to 51% of the Union average (calculated per unit of purchasing power – PPP). A dynamic convergence trend was noted by all other CEECs (ESI Report, 2020, p. 17).

<sup>5</sup> Here we exclude the situation in the former Yugoslavia, i.e., the conflicts in some ex-Yugoslav republics, as well as destabilization processes and conflicts on the outskirts of the former USSR (Moldova, Caucasus, etc.), or Europe’s neighboring areas (Middle East, North Africa).



consequence, on the one hand, of the EU and its enlargement policy, but also of a relatively coordinated transatlantic cooperation between the US and the EU during the presidencies of G. W. H. Bush Senior (1989-1993) and B. Clinton (1993-2001). However, with the policy of the administration of the President of the US, G.W. Bush Jr. (2001-2009 – especially after the US conflict with some European allies over the US intervention in Iraq – 2003), there was a gradual distancing between the US and the EU on a number of important geostrategic issues, which continued during the presidency of B. Obama (2009-2017) and especially intensified during the D. Trump administration (2017-2021).

This trend of the relative weakening of the transatlantic alliance coincided, perhaps not accidentally, with a series of crises in the European Union (Fabbrini, 2015), which ultimately led to a change in the role of the EU and its reduced influence on various important geopolitical issues in Europe and its surroundings. In this context, the following events stand out:

- the failure of the referendum on the *“Constitution of Europe”* in France and the Netherlands (2003), which, together with a big bang, caused a “crisis of identity” in the EU;
- the long-term phenomenon of “enlargement fatigue” in the EU countries after the big bang (2003-2007), which significantly affected the further implementation of enlargement policy (especially towards the Western Balkans)<sup>6</sup>;
- the severe economic and financial crisis of public debts (2008-2012), which threatened the very existence of the euro area and opened the question of the functioning of the monetary union;
- the great migrant crisis (2015-2016), which was the result of the civil war in Syria, but at the same time a far-reaching consequence of the deep destabilization of the Middle East;
- decision of British voters in the 2016 referendum for Great Britain to leave the membership in the EU.

Although the EU has managed to overcome a number of crises, they have in some measure affected its international credibility and influence. Germany and France, whose cooperation represents the geostrategic “backbone” of the functioning and survival of integration, have maintained an appropriate level of cooperation that enables the survival and possible development of the Union.

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<sup>6</sup> The exception was Croatia’s accession to the EU in 2013.

The crisis caused by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic also encouraged some positive reactions, such as the decision to establish an Economic Recovery Plan ("Future Generations" Fund). On this occasion, for the first time, Germany accepted the request of its partners that the EU (i.e., the European Commission) issues solidarity bonds and borrow on behalf of all members of the Union (Roloff, 2020). On the other hand, the phenomena of political, economic "differentiation"<sup>7</sup> and regional fragmentation, i.e., deeper divisions between the member states of the Union, are still present, either in terms of relations with the euro area (north/south divisions), or west/east divide (migrant issues) or in the form of tactical regrouping into smaller sub-regional groups (such as the Visegrad Group or the Baltic countries) as a way of strengthening the position of smaller states in the EU decision-making process (Dyson, Sepos, 2010).

### **The main geostrategic regional challenges for the EU on the threshold of the third decade of the XXI century**

The position and influence of the EU in recent years, and especially after Brexit, stem from the fact that the Union is no longer seen as a system aimed at encompassing the whole of the European continent one day. It now represents only one of the (key) actors of interstate cooperation in continental Europe. "*Multipolar Europe*" is a reality today (Krastev, Leonard, 2010). Regardless of crises, the EU remains a key element and factor of the European geopolitical architecture whose internal market and various internal and foreign policies have great significance, both for European countries and the whole world (Telo, 2016). Therefore, the position of its neighbours, as well as of more distant countries, depends on the future development of the EU. We should also keep in mind that the geopolitical position and stability of the EU and Europe as a whole, are significantly influenced by the state of transatlantic relations.

At the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, it can be stated that the EU has not overcome the centrifugal trends caused by multilateral

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<sup>7</sup> "Differentiated integration is the process whereby European states, or sub-state units, opt to move at different speeds and/or towards different objectives with regard to common policies. It involves adopting different formal and informal arrangements (hard and soft), inside or outside the EU treaty framework (membership and accession differentiation, alongside various differentiated forms of economic, trade and security relations)." (Dyson, Sepos, 2010, p. 4).

internal and external crises. French President Macron's proposals for strengthening "a sovereign, united" European Union are opposed to populism, as well as the tendency to strengthen the role of nation-states in the decision-making process (Mirel, 2020). *The EU is more and more organized through concentric circles – its centre and periphery, plus a third circle composed of the candidate and aspirant countries. Around the European core, there is the circle of neighbouring "powers" (UK, Russia and Turkey).*

The position of the European Union and its credibility and action in the European environment is particularly affected by the following issues from its environment:

- future articulation of the EU's relations with the United Kingdom, as a significant partner in Euro-Atlantic relations. The UK will continue to be an important geopolitical factor as a nuclear power, an economically and politically important country. Although the UK and EU managed to reach a "soft Brexit" agreement at the last minute, the UK will be both a partner and a discreet competitor to the Union in practice (Sampson, 2019).
- redefining the EU relations with Turkey. Turkey is a "perpetual" candidate for membership of the Union, with which accession negotiations have been halted. This country plays a very active regional role. During the formal negotiations on accession to the EU (which started in 2005), Turkey went through two phases: in the first phase, the country was rapidly reformed and "Europeanized". However, with the strengthening of the authoritarian and pro-Islamic regime of President Erdogan, the process of Turkey's accession was stopped. This country was never fully accepted as a possible EU member by a number of its Member States. In addition, we can add serious geopolitical problems, such as the Cyprus issue, Turkey's actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and its relations with Greece.
- the issue of Ukraine and the EU relations with Russia. The EU relations with Russia seriously deteriorated after political changes in Ukraine in 2014. Russia's annexation of Crimea, the conflict in eastern Ukraine (Donbas), EU sanctions against Russia, as well as the great energy dependence of a number of EU countries on Russia, are just some elements of the Union's complex relations with the geographically largest country in the world (van der Togt, 2020). The Ukrainian conflict also fits into the broader picture of Russia's deteriorated relations with the transatlantic allies.

- EU action towards the Middle East. A long term EU "Mediterranean policy" showed the limits of its foreign influence. "The Arab Spring", instead of democratization, resulted in a number of conflicts. The Syrian and Libyan crises and wars had direct consequences for the stability of Europe in the form of Islamic terrorism, as well as a large and almost continuous wave of refugees. Despite the huge interests of some EU countries in the region, they were not able to bring the appropriate stability in this volatile area, where a number of outside actors are present (including the US, Russia, Turkey, Iran, etc.).
- a further evolution of the enlargement policy. The loss of dynamism in the EU WB enlargement policy has reduced its capacity (which still exists) to effectively influence the evolution of the internal situation and the position of the WB countries. By using different instruments and through various forms of diplomatic actions (including, for example, mediation in the Belgrade-Priština dialogue, actions in Northern Macedonia, BiH, etc.), the Union has managed to exercise some positive impact on stability in SEE (Ćemalović, 2020). On the other hand, oscillations in enlargement policy have led to a situation reminiscent of endless EU negotiations with Turkey. The "new methodology" for enlargement negotiations, adopted by the EU, at the initiative of France, in 2020, envisages essentially only a kind of partial – sectoral integration of the WB candidate countries into the EU, which will form a kind of "second periphery" with regard to the political and economic core. The ultimate goal – full membership – remains vague and out of the focus of practical policy.

## **GLOBAL AMBITIONS OF THE EU**

### **EU Global Strategy and obstacles for the global role of the EU**

"We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat (...) To the east, the European security order has been violated, while terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Europe itself. Economic growth is yet to outpace demography in parts of Africa, security tensions in Asia are mounting, while climate change causes further disruption. In achieving these goals, the EU must stand united. The combined weight of a true union has a potential to deliver prosperity, security and make a positive difference in the world." These words of Federica Mogherini in the Global Strategy for

the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy describe the need for the EU's global reinforcement.

The EU's ambitions in global politics and international relations have caused much public and academic attention. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EU Global Strategy) from 2016 highlights global priorities of the EU:

- security of the Union,
- state and social resilience to East and South,
- an integrated approach to conflicts and crisis,
- cooperative regional order and
- global governance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Written on paper, it looks perfectly reasonable and concise. Today's multipolar world is a good opportunity for the EU's better positioning as a global actor. This circumstance raises a question: "Can EU's global ambitions cause rivalry with other actors?" The answer is certainly positive. The US, China, and new emerging forces like Brazil and India have similar global goals like the EU. These actors are in a better position than the EU when it comes to achieving a global role. They are states. The EU is a unique type of actor, a mixture of state and international organisation. It is a supranational organization in which states share sovereignty. Unity is a key factor for the global role of the EU. It is much harder for the EU to create and maintain unity having in mind disagreements on controversial political issues like Kosovo, relations between the EU and Turkey, the migrant crisis, etc.

The institutional structure of the EU and complex decision-making process can be considered as an obstacle in the global role of the EU. The European Council has a leading role in the formulation of the CFSP. The High Representative and the European External Action Service must chair the CFSP. In this case, there is a need for coordination as the High Representative is the Vice President of the Commission. In relation to the CFSP, the High Representative can consult the European Parliament and consider its views in the formulation of the CFSP. The European Parliament has oversight over the CFSP, as it approves its budget. This complexity is slowing down the speed of the CFSP (Lopandić, 2018, p. 260; Khosla, 2019, p. 13).

Three years of implementation of the EUGS have shown significant progress on many levels: European security and defence, the goal of strategic autonomy as set out by the Council; the reaffirmation of the perspective for the Western Balkans; preserving the nuclear deal with Iran; the step change in the partnership with Africa and strong support of the UN

reforms. In achieving these goals, the EU has intensified its cooperation with international and regional organizations and non-state actors. The EU has deepened its partnerships with all countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The EU has demonstrated commitment to the deepening of multilateralism by reaching the political and trade agreements such as with Canada and Japan, as well as pursuing negotiations with Mercosur, Mexico, Chile, Australia, and New Zealand (The European Union's Global Strategy Three Years On, Looking Forward, Brussels, 2019. p. 10).

The EU was facing a hard period – Brexit, the migrant crisis, terroristic attacks, etc. The migrant crisis had caused “fears of the possible Islamization of Europe” (Gordanić, 2019, p. 16). This had a serious consequence – the rise of populist parties and the crisis of the European identity. Issues like the refugee crisis have been used by populist parties to provide a radical rethink of the EU's foreign and security agendas. Populist parties “reject European integration because they believe it weakens national sovereignty, diffuses self-rule and introduces foreign ideas. They oppose European integration for the same reasons that they oppose immigration: it undermines national community” (Barbé & Morillas, 2019, p. 758). These tendencies are serious threats to democracy, human rights, the rule of law within and outside the EU, as well as the threat to the EU's global ambitions.

A report on three years on implementation of the EU Global strategy states that the EU “*must continue to invest consistently in our collective capacity to act autonomously and in cooperation with our partners.*” The politicization of strategic issues and lack of unity among members are key obstacles for the EU in acting autonomously and achieving the status of the global actor, competitive to the US, China and Russia. Besides, the Report on three years of implementation of the EU Global Strategy states: “*Europeans do not aim (...) playing into global power competition and rivalry. (...) Europeans seek the ability to interact and engage with powers, big and small, striving for a more cooperative world in our mutual interests.*” The EU should be more competitive and rival in achieving its global ambition.

### **The EU-NATO relations: dependence on the US?**

Alongside the global ambitions of the EU, its relation with NATO had become more complex. European and American interests are often different. It can hardly exist a single NATO view of the world. Currently, key priorities

for the US are China and Asia. Europe is no longer number one priority for the US, and the US expects the EU to ensure the stability of Europe's periphery. Having in mind this fact, whether they act under the NATO flag or the EU flag, European states have to take initiative by themselves to resolve the crisis around Europe. The US will no longer automatically do it on its own initiative. To what extent the EU depends on the US and NATO? This question is important because Trump's administration made it clear that those who have not contributed enough, cannot count on the support of the US. The EU should use this kind of circumstances and focus on the plan for the defence of Europe by Europeans. This kind of strategy will raise the autonomy of the EU, increase its role as a global actor, and, eventually, it will diminish dependence on the White House (Biscoup, 2018, p. 87).

The EU can reinforce its military capacities by invoking Article 42.7 of the Treaty on the European Union rather than Article 5 of The North Atlantic Treaty in cases of armed aggression on its members. Also, NATO is overshadowed by the success of the EU's maritime operations, especially against piracy in Somalia. Despite its CSDP, peacekeeping missions, the formation of PESCO, etc., the EU is not considered a military force. The US is a military force number one without any doubts. In the arena of military force, the EU can be described as a force *in statu nascendi*. Besides the progress of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) from soft to hard power, NATO remains the backbone of European security. In a military sense, the EU might be considered a younger brother of NATO and the US.

Cooperation between the EU and NATO had been often challenged due to the EU-Turkey relations, with Cyprus as a complicating factor. Turkey, as a NATO member, often blocks various cooperative actions between NATO and the EU. For example, in 2011, Turkey blocked the request of the EU that NATO extends protection in Afghanistan to EU police personnel if necessary (Emerson, Balfour, Corthaut, 2011, p. 104).

The EU and NATO are among the world's most important institutions. They share 21 members. Some informal comments by officials suggest a less positive story about "the two organizations living on different planets", albeit around 5 km away from each other (Emerson, Balfour, Corthaut, 2001, p. 104). For the future of the EU-NATO relations, some scholars suggest the replacement of NATO with a new alliance between the US and the EU or the Europeanization of NATO (Biscoup, 2018, p. 92).

## **The EU at the UN**

After Brexit, the EU is facing some challenges in the UN. It had lost one member in the Security Council. The United Kingdom has been an anchor of EU policy at the UN. The EU will miss British official's skills and pragmatic approach to negotiations. Brexit had arrived at a bad time for the EU at the UN, as the US, Russia, and China are challenging the liberal internationalism that the EU promotes. Brexit has the potential to deteriorate cooperation between the UK and France at the Security Council (SC). The EU expects a lot from France and Germany, who need to raise their cooperation and influence at the UN to compensate for Brexit (Gowan, 2018).

Article 34 of the Treaty of the EU provides that its members in the UN Security Council shall consult together and defend the interests of the block. To compensate for Brexit, the EU should provide these goals and unity of its members at the General Assembly (GA) as well.

The positive tendency for the EU at the UN was enhancing its observer status at the General Assembly in 2011. In accordance with GA Resolution 65/276, the representatives of the European Union, in order to present the positions of the European Union and its member States as agreed by them, are:

- allowed to be inscribed on the list of speakers among representatives of major groups, in order to make interventions;
- invited to participate in the general debate of the General Assembly;
- permitted to have its communications relating to the sessions and work of the General Assembly and to the sessions and work of all international meetings and conferences convened under the auspices of the Assembly and of United Nations conferences, circulated directly, and without an intermediary, as documents of the Assembly, meeting or conference;
- permitted to present proposals and amendments orally as agreed by the States members of the European Union,
- allowed to exercise the right of reply regarding the positions of the European Union as decided by the presiding officer; such right of reply shall be restricted to one intervention per item.

Enhanced observer status of the EU in the GA is a precedent in the UN. Alongside the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Global Strategy, enhanced status in the GA "is an opportunity for the EU to achieve unity of all its members on important external policy issues" and to set the bases for its role as a global actor (Gordanić, 2017, pp. 17-18).



## CONCLUSION

The EU had shown certain duality when it comes to its regional role and global ambitions. As a regional actor, the EU had completely changed entire Europe. It brought hope after World War II, continued the growth and integration of European countries and significantly contributed progress and development of candidate countries. The EU is the world's biggest aid donor. The soft power of the EU is one of its most important mechanisms. Historically based on the principles of coordination and integration, the EU had shown its potential as a regional actor. The EU is one of the most important regional actors and an organization that is a role model for other regional arrangements. Besides its success as a regional actor, the EU is facing some challenging times. It is still looking for solutions for the main geostrategic regional challenges like relations with Turkey, the issue of Ukraine and relations with Russia, actions towards the Middle East, and the future of the enlargement policy. Brexit had shown a danger of fragmentation of the EU.

The global role of the EU had been challenged due to a diversity of interests, the crisis of European identity, the inability of strategic coordination, the complex decision-making process, and the dependence on the US. As a result of the Brexit, the role of the EU at the UN had been challenged. Besides the progress of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) from soft to hard power, NATO remains the backbone of European security. The complex nature of the EU, its structure of the supranational organization, slows down its global ambitions. For fulfilling its global ambitions, the EU should (at least theoretically) become more independent from the influence of the US. Despite all problems, the authors consider the role of the EU as a global actor challenged, not failed. Perhaps, on a global level, the EU will never become what it is on the regional level, but the EU Global Strategy from 2016 can be considered as a possible Renaissance of the EU common foreign and security policy and factor of empowerment of the EU regional role and global ambitions in international relations.

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## IN SEARCH OF A EUROPEAN UNION GRAND STRATEGY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

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*Abstract:* The main aim of the paper is to summarize the arguments in favour of the EU entering the competition for more influence in the 'values-driven' Indo-Pacific. The paper will explore why key international actors support the designation 'Indo-Pacific' instead of 'Asia-Pacific', and why the European Union, an important investor, trader and donor, is motivated to define more clearly its priorities in this space, without excluding cooperation with China, which modelled the regional order the most in the last decade. The investigation will focus also on the synthetic interpretation of the EU's relations with significant strategic partners, including the ASEAN, China and India. At the same time, it will address the strategies related to the Indo-Pacific, already adopted by three EU countries, namely France, Germany and the Netherlands, providing a solid foundation for a common EU strategy in the rules-based Indo-Pacific. The common ground of these strategies is the complex objective of fair rules and norms and conflict avoidance, prerequisites of high-quality growth both regionally and globally. The EU is reconfirmed as a normative power, but also as an actor attempting 'to become a more equal partner to the United States'. The research question is related to the EU alternatives to exert its optimal influence in the Indo-Pacific. The theoretical framework has its roots in Alfred Mahan's sea power theory, Sir Halford Mackinder's heartland theory, and also Karl Haushofer's Indo-Pacific thalassocracy, concentrated in China's Belt and Road Initiative and reactions against this large-scale project. The alternative projects launched by Japan, India, the US, Australia and the EU since 2017, alone, in duo or trio formats, have not generated the expected results. In the meanwhile, China itself, under external pressure and alongside the gradual process of 'learning by doing' put more emphasis on quality infrastructure, sustainable development and

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sustainable debt. Therefore the author, having as support an extensive literature review and official documents, concludes that the Indo-Pacific is better off with the EU as a catalyst, especially as regards quality infrastructure and sustainable development. But to gain such a role, it needs a Grand Strategy supported by all its member states, which is not an easy task having in mind their various attitudes and positions towards key actors in the region, such as the US and China.

*Keywords:* The Indo-Pacific, the EU, strategy, security, values and norms, multilateralism, partnership, cooperation, connectivity, quality infrastructure, sustainable development

## INTRODUCTION

The paper starts from the research question related to the best way for the EU to exert its influence in the Indo-Pacific, underlining that *divide et impera* strategies should be avoided. Stoking tensions between India and China, for instance, by using ‘sticks’ against China and ‘carrots’ for India would finally lead to threats for all partners. Instead, forging ties between China and India is a strong fundament for peace and stability.

Narratives denigrating another country do not bring prosperity. Instead, a conciliatory approach and more intense efforts to generate trust between partners are needed. The Covid-19 pandemic deepened the rifts between nations and underscored once again that chase after profit remains the supreme goal even when humanity is in danger. In this context, the EU should seek more influence in the region in order to bring more benefits to the world economy and humanity as a whole.

Following this rationale, the paper is structured in four main sections. The first one defines the Indo-Pacific and the motivations for this denomination instead of Asia-Pacific, as well as the key supporters of this transition from the continental geography (with China and Russia as core actors) to the maritime side perspective. The second section underlines that the European Union has an active presence in the Indo-Pacific. However, it is missing from the overwhelming majority of strategic documents and speeches of key leaders in the region. Consequently, the EU has to strengthen its networks in the region, with countries, country groups, institutions, by reiterating its sound principles and its support for development, without excluding any actor from its cooperation initiatives. The third section details the French, German and Dutch strategies of the Indo-Pacific, a solid base for a common EU strategy in the Indo-Pacific. The fourth section synthesizes potential objectives of the EU in this space, such

as efforts to generate trust among partners (beyond sound principles, rules and norms), freer trade, economic development (starting from the 17 Sustainable Development Goals), and solutions 'to become a more equal partner to the United States'.

## **DEFINITION OF THE INDO-PACIFIC AND THE EU PRESENCE IN THE REGION**

The Asia-Pacific is an *axis mundi* region, concentrating the overwhelming share of the world's population, gross world product, economic growth, international trade and investment flows, and China is the focal point of the economic transformations in the region. Nowadays, no entity can have the status of a genuine global player unless it has a strong presence in this space, not only economically, but also institutionally and politically. China drew more and more attention to its capabilities with the launch of the unmatched Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, making the whole world understand that it does not intend to keep a low profile anymore, but instead it wants to take the place it deserves in the system of international relations.

Starting with 2011, a firm 'US pivot' to this region was evident. However, it was abruptly interrupted by President Donald Trump in 2017, through the withdrawal from a series of relevant international agreements and the support for a harmful deglobalization process, culminating with the US-China trade war and the intention of decoupling from China. Under President Joe Biden, the US' return to multilateralism is evident and the alliances in the region will be once again reshaped.

At present, the designation 'Indo-Pacific' is preferred to 'Asia-Pacific' by many key actors aiming to contain China and to a lesser extent Russia (already affected by the Western sanctions and the sharp decrease in oil prices). The 'Indo-Pacific' has an 'anti-Chinese connotation' (Camroux, 2020). It is a political term and is closely linked to various aspects of the American-Chinese rivalry (Heiduk&Wacker, 2020). It has reappeared at a time when China increased its economic, political and military power at a level considered *a threat* for the already established powers, after China's rise had been for decades one of the most important factors shaping the complex system of international relations.

In this section, we underscore why relevant countries support more and more this appellative and why it is high time for the European Union to define more clearly its priorities in this region without excluding cooperation with China.

### **A brief chronology of the official declarations in favour of the extended Indo-Pacific**

The term *Indo-Pacific*, coined in the 1920s by one of the ‘fathers of geopolitics’, Karl Haushofer, was consigned to oblivion until 2007. In 2007, the former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe mentioned the term ‘confluence’ of the two oceans, Indian and Pacific, in a speech at the Indian Parliament, paraphrasing the title of the book written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Mughal Prince Muhammad Dara Shikoh (Abe, 2007). In that speech, the goal of deepening cooperation with India was evident. Almost a decade later, at the Tokyo International Conference on Africa’s Development in 2016, the same Prime Minister presented the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy (Abe, 2016), with the rationale to boost cooperation between Japan and African countries, in a time when China and India had the lead in cooperation with the African continent.

Japan was also the country that launched the Security Dialogue of the Four (‘Quad’ or G4) in 2007, together with the United States, India and Australia, as a reaction to China’s economic and military rise. As of 2019, the promotion of a ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific’ represented a priority area of Japan’s foreign policy with the declared objective to develop this region as “‘international public goods” that bring stability and prosperity for any country’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019).

In turn, the Australian Government defined the new Indo-Pacific power relations in the ‘White Papers on Defense’ of 2013 and 2016 and the ‘Foreign Policy White Paper’ (Australian Government, 2013; 2016; 2017), focusing on the relations between the great powers, the US retaining ‘its significant global lead in military and soft power’ and China, ‘the most important trading partner for most of the region’s economies and a major investor’, ‘a large aid donor and lender to the region’.

Nevertheless, the concept of ‘Indo-Pacific’ accompanied by attributes such as free, open, inclusive, stable, secure and prosperous gained true international recognition and spread only after the adoption of the National Security Strategy by the US in December 2017 (The White House, 2017) and its reiteration by the US representatives at relevant international meetings. This space is defined as ‘stretching from the west coast of India to the west coast of the United States, the most populated and dynamic part of the world’.

In his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue (Singapore) of June 2018, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented his own vision of the free,

open, inclusive, stable, secure and prosperous region, from the western coast of North America to the eastern shores of Africa, further expanding the space defined in the National Security Strategy of the United States. Narendra Modi reiterated the Indian Government's vision in the Indo-Pacific, concentrated in one word, 'Sagar' (meaning ocean in Hindi): Security and Growth for All in the Region (Modi, 2018). Mukherjee (Mukherjee, 2019) synthesizes the essence of India's vision of the region in six elements: inclusivity, ASEAN's centrality, the rules-based order, equal access to the commons, trade liberalization and connectivity. On the one hand, India rejects the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. On the other hand, it participates in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with headquarters in Beijing. In the Sino-Indian strategic partnership, there are thorny issues (border disputes, Pakistan, rivalry), but also solid grounds for cooperation.

In June 2019, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)<sup>2</sup> published its own 'Outlook on the Indo-Pacific', focusing on partnerships in the framework of the East Asia Summit (EAS),<sup>3</sup> for instance. The ASEAN combines cooperation with China with hedging against potential threats.

The European Parliament, in its documents, repeatedly stressed the importance of a European Indo-Pacific Strategy, in the context of elevating the EU's role as a global actor (European Parliament, 2020; 2021). The following are considered essential: the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)<sup>4</sup> and a global EU Connectivity Strategy 'as an extension of the current EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy in order to align our connectivity philosophy and connectivity policies with the goal of strengthening the EU's role as a true and indispensable geopolitical and geo-economic actor with a single narrative and as a cross-cultural enabler, and to strengthen partnerships with democracies around the world which share our fundamental values' (European Parliament, 2020).

From the three possible approaches to the Indo-Pacific (equidistance – retaining the previous term Asia-Pacific and avoiding the use of Indo-Pacific; alignment to the majority of interpretations; autonomy – defining

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<sup>2</sup> Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

<sup>3</sup> The EAS means the ASEAN plus 6 (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea) and the US and Russia since 2011.

<sup>4</sup> It comprises 53 partners: The European Union, the ASEAN Secretariat, 30 European and 21 Asian countries.



an EU understanding of the Indo-Pacific, related to its particular economic, security and normative interests in the region) (Heiduk&Wacker, 2020), the EU has already chosen its own way. The EU intends to become 'a more equal partner to the United States' and 'to strengthen its role as a reliable partner worldwide, a preferred 'partner of choice' for third parties, a principled, but not dogmatic, honest broker, an actor of reference for conflict resolution and mediation, which promotes diplomacy and dialogue as the preferred way to play a constructive role in global conflicts, as a leading promoter of sustainable development and a major contributor to the multilateral framework, but also as a global actor that is ready to act autonomously and decisively when necessary to defend the EU's own values and interests, that takes responsibility by ensuring its own security and promoting international peace and stability, based on the principles and values of the UN Charter and as enshrined in international law, with respect for the international rules-based order' (European Parliament, 2021).

### **Why the Indo-Pacific instead of the Asia-Pacific?**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has at present 53 members and 9 associate members, including France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom since 1947. These have a major influence in the region from a historical perspective through the British East India Company (1600-1857), the Dutch East India Company (1602-1799) and the French East India Company (1664-1769), but also by the multiple forms of manifestation of colonialism until 1942-1944. The three countries have reactivated their ambitions to become global powers again. The United Kingdom separated from the EU, with an ambitious vision of strong partnerships with Commonwealth<sup>5</sup> countries (especially India) and France and the Netherlands, as member states of the EU under the vision of the EU Global Strategy of 2016 and more recently under the guidance of the Geopolitical Commission, relying also on international partnerships.

The Indo-Pacific is an extended, enlarged Asia-Pacific, having the Indian and Pacific Oceans at its core. The focus is moved from the continental side to the maritime one (especially from the perspective of maritime security).

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<sup>5</sup> An intergovernmental organization consisting of 54 states (mostly former territories of the British Empire), among the member states being: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Brunei, Pakistan and South Africa.

The region also includes countries of the East coast of Africa. India becomes a key actor, wooed by opponents of China, not only from the perspective of containing the latter but also from that of doing business with India. And it offers India a preferential position, like compensation for its unfulfilled goal to join the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. It can be described as a strategy of using 'sticks' against China and 'carrots' for India, when tensions between the two neighbours are at a new climax for various reasons, including border disputes. In view of the already established powers, China has a too strong economic, political and military role (reflected by initiatives such as the Belt and Road) and, 'as a steadfast member of developing countries' promotes a new type of international relations, based on 'mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit' (Xi, 2021). By generalising the designation 'Indo-Pacific', the continental part of Asia (with China and Russia) is not anymore in the spotlight, but instead, the attention is focused on the maritime ways, with a whole set of issues, such as territorial disputes with China, maritime security, alternative trade routes (Grieger, 2016).

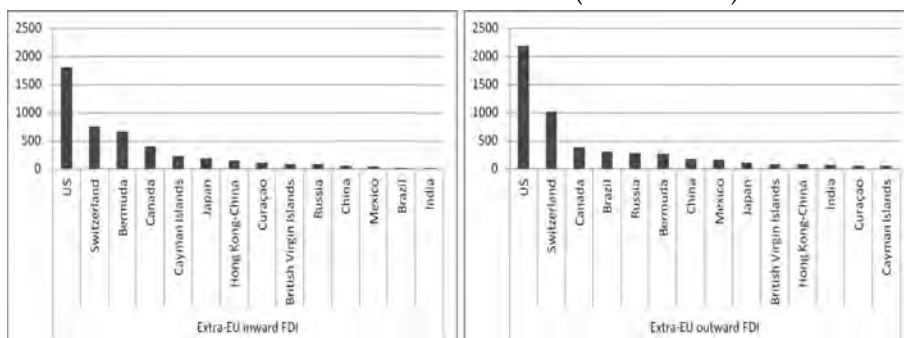
In this extended area not only the countries of Asia-Pacific but also the states of the American continent with access to the Pacific Ocean and the African countries bordering the Indian Ocean, compose a group of over 80 actors, out of which 25 are the most important (participants with overlapping memberships in the Asia-Pacific Cooperation Forum APEC, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership RCEP – or ASEAN+6 – and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership CPTPP).

### **EU, MISSING FROM THE INDO-PACIFIC?**

The European Union has an active presence in the region but is missing from the overwhelming majority of strategic documents and speeches of key leaders in the region. The European Union's ties with this space are not reflected only via trade, investment, development assistance but also through its normative power (good governance, the rule of law, human rights), with intense relations with various partners. The EU's roles in the region are on multiple levels: economic, institutional and related to security. Ten strategic partners of the EU (all, with the exception of Brazil) are from the extended Indo-Pacific (China, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, but also the US, Canada, Mexico, South Africa and the ASEAN).

The EU-US partnership is ‘the largest and most complex economic relationship in the world’ (USTR, 2020). In terms of foreign direct investment (FDI), the United States represents the most important partner for the EU, as underscored by Chart 1. Around one-third of the EU and the US FDI flows are with each other.

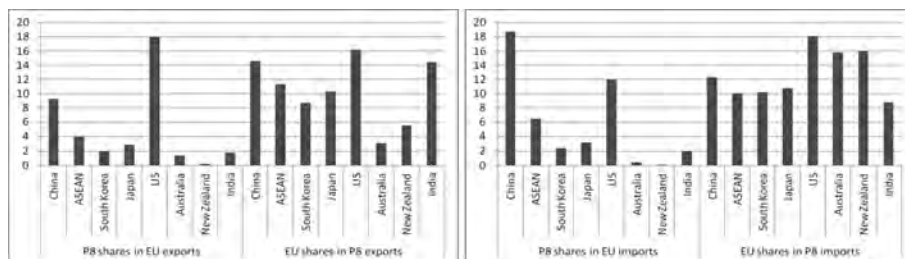
CHART 1: EU INWARD AND OUTWARD FDI STOCKS IN RELATION WITH RELEVANT PARTNERS IN 2018 (EUR BILLION)



Source: Eurostat (2020a; 2020b)

As regards trade in goods, in general, the degree of dependency on countries of the Indo-Pacific on the EU internal market is much larger than vice-versa. Only the US has a larger share in the EU exports (18%) than the EU in the US exports (16.2%), and China a larger share in the EU imports (18.7%) than the EU in China's imports (12.3%). Chart 2 reflects the interdependencies between the EU27 and eight actors from the Asia-Pacific, namely: China, the ASEAN, South Korea, the Quad countries and New Zealand (denominated here as P8 for statistical reasons).

CHART 2: THE DEGREE OF DEPENDENCY OF THE EU ON VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF THE INDO-PACIFIC AND VICE-VERSA, EXPORTS AND IMPORTS, 2019 (%)



Source: DG Trade (2020).

Taking into account both flows (export plus import), the EU is the most important trade partner for the US, China and India and the third for the ASEAN (as a group), South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. But which is the first trade partner for the ASEAN, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand? It is China, with shares of 22.5%, 23.3%, 20.9%, 32.5% and 23.9%, respectively. In recent years, China has been the fourth key partner for the US (13.5% of the US trade flows, after the EU, Mexico and Canada), the second for the EU (13.8%, after the US), and the third for India (10.7%, after the EU and the US). It explains why the first of the three principles proposed by the European Parliament as regards relations with China is (1) 'cooperate where possible', followed by: (2) 'compete where needed' and (3) 'confront where necessary' (European Parliament, 2021).

As compared with vocal countries in favour of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (especially the Quad), the EU is a latecomer in defining its official position. In recent EU documents, the guiding principles of cooperation with the Indo-Pacific region ('openness, prosperity, inclusiveness, sustainability, transparency, reciprocity and viability') are underscored and also taken into account future military-to-military exchanges (European Parliament, 2020).

A more active presence in the Indo-Pacific is targeted not only by the documents of the EU institutions, but also by member states and groups of states. For instance, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, Germany and Poland, meeting in Paris on 15 October 2020, in the *Weimar Triangle* format, underscored that 'the EU needs to adopt an ambitious agenda in the Indo-Pacific region to respond to the rise of unilateralism and regional instability. In this respect, France, Germany and Poland recall their commitment to the adoption of a specific European strategy for the Indo-Pacific, with the aim

of promoting a common approach in this region, in cooperation with like-minded countries, including the transatlantic partners, and with a particular emphasis on the promotion of multilateralism openness, inclusiveness and cooperation, also with a view to reinforcing the EU's cohesion' (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2020).

France, Germany and the Netherlands adopted individual strategies related to this region, which will be analysed from a comparative perspective in the following section. France and the Netherlands have historical ties with countries in this space, and Germany appears for years as a strong supporter of more robust economic relations, as underscored for instance by the Nürnberg Declaration of March 2007 on the Enhanced Partnership with the ASEAN countries. Under the German Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2007, Germany sent a clear signal for cooperation with the ASEAN in multiple fields (political, security, economic, energy, climate change, development).

Nevertheless, the EU-ASEAN relations have not been as successful as expected, as underscored by at least three arguments: (1) negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) with a regional grouping of seven ASEAN member states started in July 2007, but were soon suspended, in December 2009; (2) trade and/or investment negotiations were started with seven ASEAN countries, but only two were concluded, with Singapore and Vietnam (the FTA with Singapore entered into force on 21 November 2019 and that with Vietnam on 1 August 2020); (3) the ASEAN had already entered into strategic partnerships with Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Japan, South Korea, and also the United States and Russia before it concluded a strategic partnership with the EU on 1 December 2020.

In this context, it must be also remembered that negotiations for the Bilateral trade and investment agreement with India (BTIA) were launched in June 2007 and interrupted in 2013 because of differences of opinion. However, starting from 2016, the bilateral partnership entered a new phase. First, at the 13th bilateral summit on 30 March 2016 in Brussels, the Action Agenda 2020 was adopted, with specific initiatives in areas such as politics, security, human rights and global challenges. Second, the EU and India announced in July 2017 a mechanism to facilitate EU investment in India. Third, at the 14th bilateral summit, held in New Delhi on 6 October 2017 (the year of 55 years of diplomatic relations), India and the EU expressed their commitment to strengthening the bilateral economic partnership and, at the same time, the intention to re-launch the negotiations for the broad-based and mutually beneficial BTIA, while announcing the launch of a

platform for energy and climate change cooperation and a partnership for sustainable urbanization. Fourth, the 15th EU-India online summit on 15 July 2020, concluded with the adoption of the 'EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap for 2025', underscores the political will to intensify bilateral cooperation (Oehler-Şincai, 2019).

All these are in strong contrast to the increasingly strained relations of the EU with China, after 2016. In that year, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy agreed on 'Elements for a new EU strategy on China': (1) 'reciprocity, a level playing field and fair competition across all areas of cooperation'; (2) 'respect for the rule of law and human rights'; (3) the intention to 'take full account of the EU's close relationships with the US and other partners' (EC-HR, 2016). The summits of 2016 and 2017 ended without a Joint Communiqué. In 2019, it was adopted the 'EU-China, A Strategic Outlook'. China was described as 'a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance' and the EU proposed ten specific actions, including those related to the security of the 5G networks and security risks posed by foreign investment in critical assets, technologies and infrastructure (EC-HR, 2019).

It should be added that at the end of 2020, under the German Presidency of the European Council, the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) was concluded 'in principle' after 35 rounds of negotiations over the course of more than seven years. In a context where cooperation with China is relevant from a European, as well as a multilateral perspective, the European Commission and Germany support CAI, the European Parliament is against it, while the conflicting interests of the EU member states still persist.

### **FRENCH, GERMAN AND DUTCH STRATEGIES ON THE INDO-PACIFIC, IN A TIME WHEN COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE IN THE REGION IS ON THE RISE**

France, with territories and military presence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, started to define its strategy in the Indo-Pacific in 2018. Its contours were set out by President Emmanuel Macron firstly with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2018, referring to their common vision in the Indian Ocean and secondly in the French President's speech at Garden Island, Sydney, on 2 May 2018. The synthetic document 'French Strategy in Asia-Oceania up to 2030' was presented in August 2018 (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2018).

It followed the 'French Strategy in the Indo-Pacific – For an Inclusive Indo-Pacific' (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2019a) and the more elaborated document 'France's Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific' of 2019, where are underscored 'four strategic ambitions' of this 'sovereign nation of the Indo-Pacific': (1) defend and ensure the integrity of the French sovereignty, protection of French nationals, territories and Exclusive Economic Zones, taking into account that 1.6 million French citizens live in this space; (2) contribute to the security of regional environments through military and security cooperation; (3) 'maintain a free and open access to the commons, in cooperation with our partners, in a context of global strategic competition and challenging military environments' and (4) 'assist in maintaining strategic stability and balances through a comprehensive and multilateral action' (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2019b).

Among the strategic partnerships and dialogues are emphasized those with Australia, Canada (sectoral partnerships), China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Vietnam (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2019a).

France's principles are a rules-based multilateral order, rejection of unilateral ambitions and restrictions to freedom of navigation in the international air-sea commons, strategic balances against terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and erosion of the legitimacy of democratic regimes.

In around 20 pages of the 'France's Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific', the word 'security' is used 97 times, 'military' 76 times, as compared to 'cooperation' 58 times, 'trade', 'climate' and 'aid' 3 times, 'energy' once and 'investment' not at all. India and the Indian Ocean are mentioned 41 times. China appears 32 times, Europe and the European Union around 30 times, the United States around ten times, similar to Japan, while the ASEAN only three times.

'In addition to the particularly strong defence relationship with the United States', France relies on cooperation with the other three Quad countries (Japan, Australia, India), based on the same values and concerns 'about emerging challenges'.

One can remark France's narrow focus on security issues, in contrast to Germany's broad perspective (Duchâtel&Mohan, 2020). In around 70 pages, Germany's Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific of September 2019 details its eight interests in the region: (1) peace and security; (2) diversifying and

deepening relations; (3) rejection of unipolarity as well as bipolarity; (4) securing open shipping routes; (5) open markets and free trade; (6) digital transformation and connectivity; (7) protecting our planet and (8) countering disinformation in the region by increasing the availability of fact-based information.

The Federal Government is guided by seven principles: (1) European action, the German guidelines being considered as a contribution 'to the development of a European strategy for approaching the Indo-Pacific'; (2) multilateralism; (3) the rules-based order; (4) commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement; (5) human rights; (6) inclusivity (the third attribute of the Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific, underlined by India) and (7) a partnership among equals (strongly supported by China).

Germany pays special attention to the regional institutional framework, including the East Asia Summit (where the EU is searching for a more active role), the ASEAN Regional Forum (where the EU is a member), the two multilateral development banks, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Pacific Islands Forum, the Mekong River Commission, the Asia-Europe Meeting (AEM), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

Beyond general objectives and goals, Germany puts emphasis on various cooperation fields with multiple partners, e.g., the digital transformation, sustainable infrastructure, climate change and environment protection, people-to-people exchanges via culture, education, science, the conclusion of EU free trade agreements with additional countries in the Indo-Pacific and with the ASEAN as a whole in the longer term, with the aim to avoid unilateral dependencies by diversifying partnerships. In this context, it is worth mentioning that 'free trade' is repeated 36 times. Germany refrains from criticizing its partners and has a balanced and non-biased position.

The guidelines prepared by the Dutch government and published in November 2019 (ten pages) have a different perspective as compared to the French and German, as they put emphasis on the EU guidance and in most cases, the Netherlands and the EU are mentioned together. The 'EU' and 'Europe' appear in the text more than 100 times. The US is mentioned five times, Japan 15 times, the ASEAN 18 times, India 18 times, China and the South China Sea 26 times. The designation Indo-Pacific alternates with Asia-Pacific, especially when statistics are presented (for the Netherlands, the



Asia-Pacific region is the largest extra-EU export market, 11% of the Dutch exported goods goes to this region, while 22.5% of the Dutch imports comes from Asia). The region is understood through its core countries, namely the ASEAN, China, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

When enumerating the strategies already adopted by key actors in this space, after mentioning the US 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific', but also those of Australia, the ASEAN, India, Japan, South Korea, France and Germany, the document identifies the Belt and Road Initiative, through its Maritime Silk Road, as the 'China Indo-Pacific Strategy'. It is underscored that the EU does not yet have its own Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Netherlands believes that it is desirable for the EU to develop its own vision of the Indo-Pacific, focused on the EU cooperation with this region, according to its own agenda. It is revealed the importance of cooperation with 'like-minded democracies and open market economies'. The main goals are related to the rules-based order, democracy and human rights, sustainable trade, security and stability, maritime security, climate change, global health and poverty reduction. The countries in the Indo-Pacific are faced with two competing superpowers and are in search of economic and security anchors, in a period when the leeway for sovereign choices is becoming increasingly limited. The EU is one of the largest investors and donors in the region, with the Netherlands in the top 5. The Covid-19 crisis has accelerated ongoing geopolitical trends, pointing to the need for international cooperation to combat the virus and mitigate the negative economic consequences. 'Covid-19' is mentioned 9 times, while 'security' 31 times, 'cooperation' 42 times, 'trade' around 40 times, 'climate' 25 times, 'energy' 12 times, 'investment' 12 times, 'infrastructure' 6 times (including digital infrastructure). One of the major cooperation fields proposed by the Netherlands is digital cooperation, as part of the EU Connectivity Strategy, from cybersecurity and internet regulation to innovation, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, data transfer, privacy and digital sovereignty of countries (Rijksoverheid, 2020).

Elaborated during the presidency of Donald Trump, when the United States imposed a new vision of the world order, based on its own interests and objectives, nationalism, protectionism and unilateralism and when the EU-US relationship was often marked by tensioned moments, all the three strategies point to the importance of multilateralism. China also supports multilateralism and it is considered an important partner by the EU countries. However, these expect from China more results in the direction of sustainable development, elimination of existing market access

asymmetries, the entire support for fair competition and democratic values and a peaceful settlement of disputes.

### **EU IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: ANY GRAND STRATEGY IN SIGHT?**

The EU Global Strategy of 2016 (EEAS, 2016), defining strategic priorities such as 'a credible Union', 'a responsive Union' and 'a joined-up Union' was followed by a more active stance in the Indo-Pacific: the participation of the President of the European Council in the ASEAN summits starting with 2017, the completion of negotiations for the 'new generation' free trade agreements with Singapore, Vietnam and Japan and the adoption in September 2018 of a Strategy for connecting Europe and Asia. The EU negotiations for trade agreements with countries such as Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand are going on, and the resumption of negotiations with the whole group of ASEAN countries is not ruled out in the near future.

On 1 December 2020, the EU signed the long-awaited strategic partnership agreement with the ASEAN. On 2 December 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative for European Security and Foreign Affairs issued a Joint Communication to the European Council and the European Parliament proposing 'A New EU-US Agenda for Global Change', pointing to the goals of deepening cooperation 'with like-minded partners in the region' and working closely with the US 'to align our strategic objectives and support democratic progress' (EC-HR, 2020). The new Agenda reiterates China's role, as 'a negotiating partner for cooperation, an economic competitor, and a systemic rival', as stated in the Strategic Outlook of March 2019. It also reconfirms the EU's intention to coordinate its position with the US as much as possible: 'As open democratic societies and market economies, the EU and the US agree on the strategic challenge presented by China's growing international assertiveness, even if we do not always agree on the best way to address this. The new EU-US Dialogue on China will provide a key mechanism for advancing our interests and managing our differences'.

Although the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) was concluded 'in principle' in December 2020, the EU will not give up its normative power, the EU FDI screening mechanism, or the 5G toolbox. It will continue to push China for better market access for the EU companies, a fairer investment environment (prohibition of forced

technology transfers, new rules for the state-owned enterprises, transparency of subsidies) and sustainable development (e.g., including the protection of fundamental labour rights, commitments on the environment and climate) (European Commission, 2021; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c).

In the European Parliament resolution of 20 January 2021 on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, there is synthesized one complex objective of the EU in the rules-based Indo-Pacific, namely safeguarding peace, stability and the freedom of navigation. In this regard, several directions of action are mentioned: (1) Tempering tensions in the region, by contributing to the dispute resolution and preventing unilateral actions, through constructive dialogue; (2) expanding cooperation with 'important like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific region, such as Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand';<sup>6</sup> (3) positioning the EU 'as a partner of choice in a changing geopolitical order' for states and institutions alike, including the ASEAN and (4) 'developing a European Indo-Pacific strategy based on EU principles and values, which may include joint military exercises between Australia and NATO in the Pacific'.

The economic goal is mentioned only tangentially (in the context of 'China's assertive public diplomacy', which 'has made a number of countries co-dependent on its investment and loans') and indirectly (with no explicit reference to the region): 'The EU should actively increase its presence and visibility in partner states worldwide as a major investor and donor of development assistance'. It is evident that economic cooperation is a core component of the EU strategy towards the Indo-Pacific.

This demonstrates that the EU continues in order to be a regulatory power, supports cooperation and partnerships for development, and does not exclude cooperation with China. What China has not managed through the BRI, the EU might do together with China and other countries in the Indo-Pacific. China's powerful initiative is brilliant, but it needs support from the developed countries. In this way, China might lose the geopolitical advantages automatically accompanying the BRI, but will win in economic and credibility terms. The EU should become the pacifist factor in the region, offering credibility to cooperation among actors with various systems. It might become the catalyst

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<sup>6</sup> This recalls the address by the vice-president of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, at the annual German Ambassadors' Conference in Berlin in May 2020: "We need a more robust strategy for China, which also requires better relations with the rest of democratic Asia. That's why we must invest more in working with India, Japan, South Korea et cetera".

of 'stakeholder capitalism', in the sense given by Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum (Schwab, 2019).<sup>7</sup>

Alfred Mahan's sea power theory, Sir Halford Mackinder's heartland theory and also Karl Haushofer's Indo-Pacific thalassocracy are verified in this context. China's Belt and Road Initiative, including both land and sea theories (the first reflected by the 'Belt', the second by the 'Road') would have had success if it had been proposed by a developed power or an alliance of developed countries. Aware of the development power of this initiative, useful not only for China but also for other developing countries, the developed world rejected this bold project having China's signature, labelling it as a 'debt trap'. Instead, alternatives were proposed, such as the Japanese-Indian Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (2017), the US Indo-Pacific Economic Vision (2018), the EU Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia (2018) and the US-Australia-Japan Trilateral Partnership on Infrastructure Investment in the Indo-Pacific (2018) and the EU-Japan Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure (2019). Nevertheless, like-minded actors have not added real projects and funds to their proposed initiatives until now (Okano-Heijmans, 2019).

China started to redefine and rebrand the BRI, attaching particular importance to the sustainability of projects negotiated, agreed and implemented under the BRI, in accordance with the Green Investment Principles. This change is not only the result of external pressure (expressed through documents such as the 'EU-China – A Strategic Outlook', as well as concrete actions and alliances against China), but also the gradual process of 'learning by doing', emphasizing that 'sustainable development' and 'sustainable debt' are essential. These take into account the environmental, social and governance considerations (ESG) but also new technologies (the acronym ESTG), reflecting the gradual transition from 'value-driven' to 'values-driven' investment (Zaman&Oehler-Şincal, 2020).

Infrastructure development has emerged as a source of geostrategic tensions, especially under the narrative (by developed countries but also

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<sup>7</sup> He defines three types of capitalism: (1) "shareholder capitalism", praised by most Western companies, with the main objective to maximize profits; (2) "state capitalism", which entrusts the government with the task of establishing the direction of the national economy and which is present not only in China but in many other world economies; and (3) "stakeholder capitalism", taking into account the environmental, social and governance considerations (ESG), recommended by himself since 50 years ago.

developing countries such as India) considering the ambitious Chinese BRI as a 'debt trap'. Nevertheless, cross-border infrastructure is considered the next frontier for the economic integration of the Indo-Pacific, a region characterized by significant infrastructure gaps. Infrastructure development is at the heart of national development strategies in most developing countries of the Indo-Pacific (Wilson, 2020). Table 1 exemplifies major infrastructure proposals and development banks that support infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific.

TABLE 1: EXEMPLIFICATION OF RELEVANT INDO-PACIFIC INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES

Initiatives	Leader/members	Proposed budget	Financing
<b>Belt and Road Initiative (2013)</b>	China	Estimated USD 1.000 billion	FDI, ODA, loans, technical assistance
<b>Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (2016)</b>	Japan	USD 200 billion	FDI, ODA, loans, technical assistance
<b>Asian Development Bank</b>	68 members	USD 147 billion subscribed capital Developing Asia needs to invest \$1.7 trillion per year in infrastructure, taking into account the efforts to tackle climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	Loans, grants, technical assistance
<b>Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank</b>	103 approved members by the end of 2020	USD 100 billion subscribed capital	Commercial loans
<b>Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity</b>	10 ASEAN members	-	Regulatory dialogue, policy harmonisation and capacity building

Initiatives	Leader/members	Proposed budget	Financing
<b>Greater Mekong Subregion</b>	Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam	-	Regulatory dialogue, policy harmonisation and capacity building
<b>APEC Framework on Connectivity</b>	21 APEC members	-	Regulatory dialogue, policy harmonisation and capacity building
<b>Japanese-Indian Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) (2017)</b>	Japan and India	Potential sources: ADB	Proposal is considered “too broad and vague”
<b>US-Australia-Japan Trilateral Partnership on Infrastructure Investment in the Indo-Pacific (2018)</b>	US-Australia-Japan	US International Development Finance Corporation, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP), national sources (e.g. for the project in Palau)	FDI, ODA, loans, technical assistance
<b>US Indo-Pacific Economic Vision (2018)</b> <b>International Development Finance Corporation (2019)</b>	United States	USD 60 billion	FDI, ODA, loans, technical assistance

Initiatives	Leader/members	Proposed budget	Financing
<b>EU Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia (2018)</b>	EU	Multiple pillars: geographical, thematic, rapid response	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), part of the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF)
<b>EU-Japan Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure (2019)</b>	EU and Japan	EUR 60 billion, used by the EU to attract further investment from development banks and private investors.	FDI, ODA, loans, technical assistance

Source: Authors own representation based on Wilson (2020), Taniguchi (2020), ADB Institute (2018), <https://www.adb.org/about/members>, <https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/index.html>.

It is worth noting that these initiatives do not explicitly exclude cooperation with China on infrastructure development, and the international and regional context (dominated by low-interest rates, and concerns about weak economic growth or recessions) stimulates such projects (Rajah, 2020; Berkofsky, 2019). However, most of the initiatives launched as a response to the BRI have not generated a critical mass of expected results, as exemplified by the Japanese-Indian joint initiative. The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) just added to the list of initiatives considered as alternatives to the BRI. On 23 May 2017, shortly after the first Belt and Road Forum in China, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the AAGC initiative, led by India and Japan to support Africa's development. The AAGC, an alternative to the BRI, a way to bring in consonance India's 'Act East' and Japan's 'Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure' policies, and also to emphasize the solid foundations of their bilateral partnership (political liberalism, the market economy, the rule of law and democracy), has not generated the expected achievements (Taniguchi, 2020).

It is also interesting to point to the increase of various actors' presence in the Indo-Pacific, amid the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the 'Europe Team' has mobilized over EUR 800 million to fight the pandemic in the ASEAN countries. The virtual meeting of EU and ASEAN foreign ministers on 20 March 2020 and the stated objectives are pieces of evidence in this regard.

Beyond initiatives launched by the EU (as a whole) and individual countries' strategies on the Indo-Pacific, one can remark also the political will for intensification of bilateral relations. The India-Italy Joint Statement and Plan of Action 2020-2024, presented at the virtual summit between the two countries on 6 November 2020, suggested 'the importance of the Indo-Pacific region as a fundamental area for connecting Asia and Europe and stated their Countries' willingness to support all connectivity initiatives based on internationally recognised norms and standards, good governance, the rule of law, inclusiveness, transparency and level-playing field'. It was proposed also 'the establishment of Indo-Italian networks of Excellence in selected areas of mutual strength (cultural heritage preservation; renewable energy; life and environmental sciences; geo-hazards).' Spain has a strategic vision in Asia for 2018-2022. Portugal, with historical ties with India, intends to revive this partnership. The EU countries (including the Scandinavian ones)<sup>8</sup> are also courting Indonesia. Austria supports the EU Connectivity Strategy as well as the Asia-Europe Meeting.

Such examples underscore the multitude of cooperation areas and the complex network of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral agreements led by the EU and its member states in the Indo-Pacific.

## CONCLUSIONS

The presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific represent an undeniable barometer in terms of the strength of a country or a group of states. Since 2016 (when the EU Global Strategy was adopted), and culminating with the announcement by the European Parliament in January 2021 to support an EU Strategy in the region, one can remark the sustained efforts of the European Union towards acquiring a more relevant role in this space.

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<sup>8</sup> Please consult, for exemplification, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2020).



The European Union, as a strong supporter of multilateralism and a relevant normative power, as a powerful economic actor and a tough advocate of sustainable development, can play a larger role in the Indo-Pacific in the future. The conciliatory approach and enhanced efforts to generate trust among partners, freer trade, economic development (especially via the much-needed infrastructure development) and solutions 'to become a more equal partner to the United States' are high on the agenda.

Recently, the EU intensified its initiatives in the Indo-Pacific. On 1 December 2020, the EU signed the long-awaited strategic partnership agreement with the ASEAN. On 2 December 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative for European Security and Foreign Affairs issued a Joint Communication to the European Council and the European Parliament proposing 'A New EU-US Agenda for Global Change'. Even the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment was concluded 'in principle' on 30 December 2020. The EU continues to be a regulatory power, supports cooperation and partnerships for development and does not exclude cooperation with China.

Among possible scenarios of the EU exerting its influence in the Indo-Pacific, the best one is that in which the EU, the US and China would cooperate. The Belt and Road Initiative and the Europe-Asia Connectivity project should be regarded as complementary and not antagonistic, and both may support good quality growth if environmental, social and corporate governance factors are taken into account.

The European Union has an active presence in the region, even if it is missing from the overwhelming majority of strategic documents and speeches of key leaders in the region. The European Union's ties with this space are not reflected only via trade, investment, development assistance but also through its normative power (good governance, the rule of law, human rights), with intense relations with various partners. The EU's role is at multiple levels: economic, institutional and related to security. Ten strategic partners of the EU are from the extended Indo-Pacific (China, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, but also the US, Canada, Mexico, South Africa and the ASEAN). In recent EU documents, the guiding principles of cooperation with the Indo-Pacific region ('openness, prosperity, inclusiveness, sustainability, transparency, reciprocity and viability') are underscored and also taken into account future military-to-military exchanges.

France has had an Indo-Pacific strategy since 2019, detailed in two documents, where it describes itself as a 'nation of the Indo-Pacific'. Its declared goals in the region are related to settling crises and conflicts,

strengthening partnerships, offering more support for multilateralism and promoting common goods. In turn, Germany adopted its strategy for the region in September 2020, aiming at diversifying its economic relations, but also securing open shipping routes, open markets and free trade, protecting the planet, giving an impetus to the digital transformation and connectivity and countering disinformation. It refrains from criticizing its partners and has a balanced and non-biased position. The Netherlands proposed a more succinct strategy in November 2020, based on values and norms, and chose a concrete field of regional cooperation, namely digital connectivity, as part of the EU Connectivity Strategy. All three EU member states are in favour of a future EU strategy in the Indo-Pacific. Besides, others, with various economic ties with this space (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Nordic Countries and Poland, for instance) are likely to express more interest in the Indo-Pacific in the near future.

The key to the future role of the EU in the Indo-Pacific remains a common position inside the EU regarding the Indo-Pacific, China, the US, priorities and cooperation in the region, which is difficult to achieve.

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## REDEFINING RUSSIA-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS – IS IT POSSIBLE TO OVERCOME A DEEP CRISIS?

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*Abstract:* The subject of the research is the analysis of the complex relations between Russia and the EU. The article aims to present how these relations have changed from cooperation and the so-called strategic partnership to a new era in which the tension between them has reached a critical point. The current crisis is the result of relations that have been damaged over time by differing expectations on both sides and a lack of mutual understanding leading to increased tensions and geopolitical rivalries that have, inter alia, affected countries physically located between them. The conflict in Georgia made it clear that interactions between the EU and Russia have been highly complicated, but the Ukrainian crisis has become a turning point in their relations, suggesting irreconcilable differences in their regional policy and approaches to the common neighbourhood. Irrespective of such a difficult issue, it is indicated that the continuation of mutual sanctions and confrontational statements will only further weaken the prospects for resolving the current complex situation. It is concluded that cooperation between Russia and the EU is inevitable, especially when it comes to their common neighbourhood and the need to respond more

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effectively to open security threats and issues of importance for contemporary international relations.

*Keywords:* Russian Federation, European Union, cooperation, crisis, sanctions, common neighbourhood.

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Russian Federation and the European Union besides being neighbours are among the most influential international actors. These are the main reason why their relations are of great political, economic, and security significance. Unlike Russia, which is a classic sovereign state, the EU is a unique supranational organization with competences in the areas entrusted to it by the member states. Nevertheless, both sides do have strong and long-term interests to cooperate. Relations between them have changed over time – from the USSR's bilateral cooperation with some European countries, through pragmatic but stagnant relations and cooperation within the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the officially declared Strategic Partnership, through a decade in which it was clear that relations were becoming increasingly tense and mutual trust was declining. The lack of mutual understanding and differences in expectations from this relation especially affected Russia's foreign policy strategies and contacts with the West. Although relations between the EU and Russia have gradually deteriorated since the 'coloured revolutions' in the post-Soviet countries in the early 2000s, the armed conflict in Georgia in 2008 and the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, they have entered a new and very difficult confrontational phase. As a consequence, certain initiatives and forms of cooperation established over the years have been suspended and mutual sanctions imposed. The opportunity to build a real strategic partnership between Russia and the EU has been missed. Such disrupted relationships have large political, economic, military and security implications on the regional and global levels.

We often find very simplified explanations about the reasons why the relations between Russia and the EU, as well as the West in general, have deteriorated. Some of them blame either the West or Russia in general or, in particular, Vladimir Putin's policy decisions. The most common argument supporting Russian interests is that the relationship has been constantly degraded because the West has not paid much attention to Russian calls for its interests to be taken into account. In this context, the West should not have extended NATO to the East, built an anti-ballistic missile shield,

supported democracy and ‘colourful revolutions’ in the post-Soviet space, or established an EU Eastern Partnership with the post-Soviet states. Russia’s stance towards the West might be considered defensive.

The crisis in EU-Russia relations is mainly the result of a long period of stagnation, instability, and mutual misunderstanding. This kind of misunderstanding is the result of the circumstances in which both sides often misinterpret certain political actions, priorities, and strategies of the foreign policy of the other side. This paper does not support either side but seeks to analyse the complexity of the deeply worrying EU-Russia relations in order to contribute to the debate on their possible redefinition. By doing so, we should be aware of the significance and implications of relations between the Union and Russia, bearing in mind the European Union’s economic and political importance, and the reality that Russia is a Eurasian power with global interests and ambitions.

If we want to analyse important aspects of contemporary relations between Russia and the EU, we need to understand the evolution and chronological overview of the key stages in their relations. In that sense, the authors will present a historical overview of the mutual relations and the institutional and political structures that have developed over time to outline key assumptions underpinning current mutual relations. References are made to past events that the authors consider to have an impact on the shaping of current relations between the European Union and Russia. After that, the authors will discuss the limitations that have always existed in EU-Russia relations. Various explanations will be presented as well, which will explain why the relations between the EU and Russia did not develop their full potential even before the Ukrainian crisis. Finally, the possibilities for overcoming the deep crisis in the relations between the EU and Russia are pointed out, which might be beneficial for both sides, as well as the broader international community.

### **ESTABLISHING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND THE USSR AND DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN EU-RUSSIA DURING THE 1990s**

Cooperation between the European Community (EC) and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was restricted by the “Cold War” logic and approach. The EC did not particularly deal with relations with the USSR except as a leading power and the founder of the opposing bloc. The Soviet Union as well did not have an interest in developing cooperation with the EC. Moscow saw the European Community as another creation in the

interest of US policy, aimed at limiting the overall Soviet influence. (Adomeit, 1979, p. 20). The USSR was focused on economic cooperation with the socialist countries of Central and Eastern European Countries through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). The EC's economic growth was a problem for the government of the USSR, which, despite alleged modernization, failed to lead to similar economic growth. Since the 1970s, the USSR economy has been in a poor-state. The national economy has been slowly declining, and financing of the army race became ever more complicated (Jović-Lazić, 2015, pp. 31-32).

Since Gorbachev took power in the mid-1980s, there have been shifts in the USSR's foreign policy. In Checkel's view, these changes in foreign policy were the result of a complex interaction of both external factors and various domestic influences (Checkel, 1993, p. 297). The USSR during Gorbachev began to see the European Community as an autonomous international force. It began to see the European Community as an autonomous international force. Economic and political reforms became the priorities of the new USSR government, which were to lead to the strengthening of the Soviet economy and its gradual integration into the world economy. It was intended to avoid the USSR's complete economic collapse, and the European Community was a natural partner in those efforts. Cooperation with the EC was seen as a viable foreign policy option that did not pose an economic and military challenge to the USSR and opened up new development opportunities. (Trofimenko, 1991, pp. 3-27).

In 1988, a Joint Declaration was signed between the European Community and the Comecon, which marked mutual legal recognition.<sup>3</sup> This enabled the establishment of economic ties between the USSR and Western European countries and marked a significant step towards normalizing mutual relations. Mutual recognition created the preconditions for the EC and the USSR to sign an Agreement on trade and commercial and economic cooperation in December 1989, which abolished the EC's quantitative restrictions on imports of goods (excluding coal, steel, and textiles) from the USSR.<sup>4</sup> A qualitatively new framework was established,

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<sup>3</sup> Signing of the EC/COMECON Joint Declaration, 24 June 1988, retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_88\\_97](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_88_97), Accessed 20 July 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Agreement between the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on trade and commercial and economic cooperation, 1989.

removing obstacles from the EC-USSR cooperation, and ideologically based doubts were replaced by pragmatic realism.

After the Cold War's end, and the Soviet Union's fall, the military bloc that it steered dissolved, and that led to major changes in international relations. Russia, the biggest state that arose from the ashes of the Soviet Union, could hardly qualify as the successor of a similar reputation and influence. Early in the 1990s, Russia was in a complicated situation, with serious economic, ethnic, and political problems. The biggest challenge was to develop efficient state institutions capable to defend territorial integrity, stop tendencies of disintegration, and begin economic reforms. Although Russia lost its role as a global superpower, due to its size, geographical position, overall capabilities, and military and other potential, it remained a key factor in the area of stability and security. Russia, as the Soviet Union's successor state, kept the role of a nuclear superpower, Europe's largest conventional military force, and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Accordingly, Russia participated, directly and indirectly, in the political, economic, military, and the security reconfiguration of Europe that followed, although it did not play a leading role in it (Webber, 2000, p. 66). As Haukkala points out, Russia needed strong economic and political support to find its place in the new post-Cold War era. Russia was convinced that it deserved it, considering that due to its goodwill the Cold War ended with an agreement (Haukkala, 2015, pp. 25-26). Russia was acting as the so-called *pro-status quo* force because it valued its position as the successor of one of the super-powers in the Cold War. Also, its foreign policy contained elements such as conservatism and discontent with the current state of international relations. The Russian Federation, for its part, sought to keep a special relationship with the countries that emerged from the USSR's territory and position itself as a leader in the accomplishment of their key security, political, economic, and other interests. At the end of 1991, the Community of Independent States was formed, which provided a kind of political and international legal framework for the peaceful disintegration of the USSR.

While the USSR was in the transformation process, the EC Member States, on the other hand, agreed to create the European Union and to significantly improve their economic, political, security, and foreign policy cooperation. The EU since that time has become an important factor in international relations with economic strength, which allows it to promote values and standards beyond its borders. At the end of the Cold War, the Union did not consider relations with Russia as a priority of foreign policy

but as an instrument for stabilizing its external environment and offering a constructive way of solving the post-Soviet space problems.

During the first half of the 1990s under Boris Yeltsin, Russia remained pro-Western oriented, hoping that its contribution to the end of the Cold War would enable it to take its rightful place in the world.<sup>5</sup> This public attitude was based on the belief that, with the introduction of democracy and a market economy, Russia would soon develop similarly to Western Europe. In order to establish cooperation with new trading partners, Russia embarked on the path of democratization and the establishment of a market economy. However, the reforms were inconsistent and sometimes chaotic, leading to major economic, political, social, and other problems, particularly corruption and crime. The Russians perceived the situation in which Russia found itself in the 1990s as national and personal humiliation. Many attributed their troubles to the Western attempts to impose on Russia a system that did not suit Russian conditions and historical developments. (Hopf, 2006, pp. 662-705).

Despite all the problems, Russia still remained a significant political and economic partner of the European Union. Also, during the 1990s, several important documents were adopted to define and improve mutual relations. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed by the EU and Russia in 1994 had come into force, and it provided the necessary legal framework for the regulation of mutual relations and the preconditions for further development of cooperation between the two parties.<sup>6</sup> This agreement reflected the EU's efforts to promote reforms in Russia in accordance with the European values in such a manner that the problems that could possibly occur in Russia after the Soviet Union's fall would not "spill" and pose a danger to the Union's security. However, the agreement has had very

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<sup>5</sup> In the second half of the 1990s, Yeltsin began to pursue a more assertive foreign policy, seeking primarily to respond to accusations that he had sacrificed Russian national interests for the sake of concessions to the West. As part of that, he replaced former Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev with Evgeni Primakov, who called for the creation of a multipolar world (Brooks, 2020, p. 5).

<sup>6</sup> The PCA ratification process in the EU was suspended for a time due to Russia's military actions in Chechnya. Notwithstanding Russia's perception that it had every right to wage armed struggle on its territory against the rebels, EU countries unanimously condemned Russia. The ratification process was resumed after Russia, largely under pressure from the Union, found a political solution to the crisis in Chechnya.

limited success in this field. Once this agreement had expired, there were significant differences in the EU's and Russia's views on how the new basic agreement should look and what it should include. The EU was dedicated to a comprehensive and legally binding agreement that would regulate all areas of cooperation, ensure legal harmonization, and provide for the conditionality of cooperation by respecting common European values. Russia claimed that a framework agreement was adequate to regulate mutual relations, which can be complemented by specific technical agreements in other areas of cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

Important foreign policy documents adopted by the two sides in 1999 that defined basic priorities for mutual relations, cooperation, and development prospects were the Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia, and the Medium-Term Strategy for the Development of Relations between Russia and the EU, adopted by Russia. The Common Strategy on Russia was the first EU document of this kind.<sup>8</sup> This document requests a more effective, operational, and continuous political dialogue that would bring closer the positions of the Union and Russia, and encourage a joint response to security challenges. It points out the importance of preventive diplomacy in conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management, and cooperation within the OSCE and the UN. It advocates stricter control of arms exports, the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the promotion of nuclear disarmament. The EU also pointed out the need for the implementation of reforms in Russia - "a stable, democratic and prosperous Russia, firmly anchored in a united Europe, is the essence of lasting peace on the continent." (Common strategy of the European Union on Russia, 1999).

Russia responded by formulating an alternative vision of strategic objectives and perspectives for mutual relations. Thus, in 1999, it adopted the Medium-Term Strategy for the Development of Relations between Russia and the EU, which aimed to strengthen Russia's strategic role in international relations and contribute to the creation of a multi-polar world. Russia has expressed interest in the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and cooperation with the EU in this area. This was

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<sup>7</sup> Due to the Ukrainian crisis, the EU also suspended bilateral negotiations with Russia on a new basic agreement.

<sup>8</sup> The common strategy introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, as the Union's new foreign policy instrument, was supposed to contribute to the greater efficiency of the EU's common foreign and security policy.

supposed to help preserve European security without the isolation of the United States and NATO, but also without their monopoly on the continent. This document highlighted the need for ties between the EU and Russia to result in the emergence of a “pan-European system of collective security” that would enable non-NATO countries to play a greater role. ‘Russia, as a world power located on two continents, should have kept the freedom to determine and implement its domestic and foreign policy, its status and advantages of the Euro-Asian country and the largest CIS country, the independence of its position and activities abroad’.<sup>9</sup>

Although they appear to be similar, significant differences between the EU and Russia’s foreign policy strategies and priorities can be identified through careful reading of both documents. As Haukkala notices, the Common Strategy of the European Union emphasizes Europe’s values and the need for fundamental reforms in Russia. The Medium-Term Strategy of Russia emphasizes national interests, the sovereignty of the country, and special interests within the CIS (Haukkala, 2010, p. 108). These differences in the concept and understanding of the basic principles, values, and approaches of the EU and Russia are strongly present and often lead to mutual misunderstandings and differences.

The change at the helm of Russia at the turn of 1999 and 2000 made it possible to strengthen its position in international relations. When President Yeltsin appointed Putin as his successor, Russia’s domestic and international position was very weak. Although certain freedoms were established, the government was unable to control and effectively manage the territory, and other important international actors did not take into consideration Russia’s views and interests (Kanet, 2008/9, p. 5). Putin strengthened federal control and the state apparatus and announced that he would actively work on making Russia an influential state on a global scale again. Over time, Russia became financially independent in relation to the West, due to revenues from energy exports, which were high due to the increase in world prices at that time. Russia achieved a greater degree of political stability, which enabled it to strengthen its impact in the world. (Sleivyte, 2004, p. 60).

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<sup>9</sup> Russia has special interests, such as relations with the CIS, which the EU should respect, refraining from anything that could be contrary to Russia’s interests. Russia’s disagreement with, as stated, the EU’s efforts to interfere in its sovereign relations through provisions on common values is an important element of the strategy (Стратегия развития отношений Российской Федерации с Европейским Союзом на среднесрочную перспективу (2000–2010 годы), 1999)

Because of the revived growth of the Russian economy and close economic and political linkages of Russia and some EU member states, relations between Moscow and Brussels strengthened in early 2000. Also, Russia turned, above all, to pragmatic cooperation with European countries and institutions, which contributed to the further development of economic and political ties between the Russian Federation and the EU.

With the accession of new candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the border between the EU and Russia was significantly extended, which increased the number of issues on which the two sides needed to cooperate. Russia denied any involvement in the European Neighbourhood Policy, but the two sides established a “strategic partnership”.<sup>10</sup> The EU and Russia’s efforts to build a strategic partnership indicated the growing importance of mutual relationships and a shared interest in further developing cooperation. As Ferguson pointed out, the agreement about the strategic partnership was the most ambitious and downright document on the partnership between the EU and Russia. President Putin described it as the “zenith” of Russia’s relations with the EU, and at the end of the negotiations on common areas of cooperation, it was presented as a new beginning in the cooperation of those continental neighbours (Ferguson, 2018, p. 293). Russia believed that the basic idea of the strategic partnership between the EU and Russia was a mutual recognition that they considered each other as equal. In addition, it assumed that this comprehensive cooperation would be based on mutual respect and appreciation of the vital interests of the Union, as well as Russia (Jović-Lazić, 2015, pp. 29-40).

### **DECLINING CONFIDENCE AND EMERGENCE OF DISPUTES IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA**

In the early 2000s, mutual confidence began to decline despite established cooperation mechanisms and frequent meetings between the EU and

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<sup>10</sup> At the 2003 EU-RF Summit in St. Petersburg, an agreement was reached on establishing a strategic partnership in four different areas of cooperation of special interest to both sides: foreign and security policy, internal security and justice, economy/energy, education, and culture. Two years later, at the Moscow Summit, the EU and Russia adopted a strategy to operationalize cooperation in four areas defined in the strategic partnership. Specific road maps were agreed upon, setting out the objectives and specific actions necessary to further develop the strategic partnership. In accordance with sanctions imposed on Russia, the EU also suspended the strategic partnership with Russia.



Russia's political leadership. Both sides began to express increasingly different opinions on the subjects under discussion, often demonstrating opposing interests. Moscow tried to build relations with the EU that would allow it to equally engage with Brussels in key political and security decisions when it came to open issues, especially on the European continent. When Russia realized that the EU wanted to build its security and defence structure, which continued to rely primarily on NATO in planning operations and military development, it became openly dissatisfied. Post-cold War Europe was based on Euro-Atlantic structures, and Russia started to demand that its interests should also be taken into account and acknowledged.<sup>11</sup> That is why it called for a new European security framework, but it was, as Trenin noted, only offered a formal partnership with no special privileges (Trenin, 2017).

Because of this, Russia began to perceive it as a spread of influence of the United States in NATO and the EU's efforts to expand membership and develop cooperation with Eastern Neighbourhood. On the other hand, Forsberg argued that the European security architecture was not imposed on Russia, but was developed by agreements and treaties that this country signed with the EU, the US, and NATO (Forsberg, 2019, pp. 164-167).

Generally speaking, Russia's dissatisfaction with the West started in 1999 with the bombing of the FRY without the approval of the UN Security Council (Trenin, 2006, p. 233). This year was also marked by the accession of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to NATO. It continued with the US decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty in December 2002, and plans for the deployment of an anti-missile system in Eastern Europe. Most of Russia's resentment came out of NATO's relentless eastward expansion. Also, the political shifts in the post-Soviet states, expressed in 'coloured revolutions' in 2003 in Georgia, 2004 in Ukraine and 2005 in Kyrgyzstan, were seen by Moscow as a product of Western policy aimed at creating pro-Western regimes and reducing Russia's role and influence in this area (Mankoff, 2011). Following the establishment of the European Neighbourhood Policy by Brussels in 2004 and, in particular, the Eastern Partnership in 2009 aimed at developing a partnership with the post-Soviet countries, Russia began to see the EU as a threat to its regional influence and interests.<sup>12</sup> Russia's concerns

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<sup>11</sup> Russia's attitude to the post-Cold War was clearly demonstrated in Vladimir Putin's controversial speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007 (Forsberg, 2019, p. 166).

<sup>12</sup> Russia shows a clear interest in the region with which it was once strongly connected. Russia's efforts to maintain and strengthen political, economic, and

became more serious after the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008, when the US proposed membership action plans for Georgia and Ukraine. Although this was not accepted thanks to France and Germany, which were openly opposed to the proposal, a declaration was adopted at this summit that stated "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agree today that these countries will become members of NATO." (De Hoop Scheffer, 2008). This confirmed Moscow's fears that NATO might include its 'near abroad' countries in its membership, which are of crucial strategic importance to its national interests.<sup>13</sup> Just several months after the Bucharest NATO summit, in August 2008, a five-day Russian-Georgian war broke out. The armed conflict and the subsequent recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia provoked serious tensions in EU-Russia relations (Jović-Lazić, 2008, pp. 30-36). Along with gas disputes between Russia and Ukraine, which directly affected the EU's supply, these events drew attention to the major gaps between the EU and Russia's common neighbourhood priorities and ambitions and their overall mutual relations. In these circumstances, Brussels decided to strengthen its activities in the post-Soviet space by accelerating the process of launching the Eastern Partnership. This is the policy of establishing close, privileged relations with the Eastern neighbours of the EU, which were once part of the Soviet Union. This partnership, which has increased the EU's presence in the post-Soviet space, has further heightened Russia's concerns.

Thus, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, stated: "We are accused of having spheres of influence. But what is the Eastern Partnership, if not an attempt to extend the EU's sphere of influence?" (Pop, 2008). Medvedev also notified that Russia does not want "the Eastern Partnership to turn into a partnership against Russia" (Amies, 2009). Although not a geopolitical project, this partnership has geopolitical implications. By relying on multilateral agreements and legal agreements aimed at introducing reforms in the region, the Union has clearly underestimated Russia's perception of these initiatives in the post-Soviet

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military influence in the post-Soviet states stem from its security, economic, cultural, and identity interests, as well as its aspirations to preserve and strengthen regional and global influence.

<sup>13</sup> By the term 'near abroad' Russia means all the states that emerged on the territory of the former Soviet Union, with the exception of the three Baltic republics. These are Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

region. Especially because Moscow has its own project to promote the Eurasian Economic Union. These two opposing integration projects have collided in Ukraine. Ukraine is a divided country that has tried to find a balance between maintaining stronger relations with the EU and the need to avoid the antagonism of Russia on which it largely depends when it comes to energy supply and trade cooperation. Essentially, Kyiv has long tried to follow a strategy that would allow it to gain the most of its relationships with its major neighbours, the EU, and Russia. However, the clash between different and incompatible EU and Russia integration projects in the common neighbourhood has directly caused the crisis in Ukraine. This country was, as a trading partner, forced to choose between the integration initiatives of the EU and the Russian Federation.<sup>14</sup> Soon it became apparent that this was an impossible choice for a country in such a specific situation.

Koenig notes that the EU's approach to Ukraine before the crisis was not sufficiently politically thoughtful, but it was too technocratic. Because of that, the decision-makers at the EU level underestimated the geopolitical consequences of the Association Agreement (AA) with Ukraine (Koenig, 2015, p. 2). The Ukrainian government's decision to shift its policy course and to give up signing the AA with the Union led to mass anti-government protests on Kyiv's streets. These protests escalated into violence and later led to the overthrow of then-President Viktor Yanukovich, his recall by the parliament, and his leaving the country. The unexpected development of the situation in Ukraine clearly showed that the new government in Kyiv was pro-Western. Russia perceived this as a provocation and potential geopolitical defeat in the largest and most important country within its zone of influence. It became clear that Ukraine's orientation was unacceptable because Russia saw this country as a major buffer state between NATO, the EU, and Russia (Mearsheimer,

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<sup>14</sup> Ukraine negotiated with the EU on the Association Agreement and the Comprehensive Free Trade Area from 2007 to 2011. The documents were initialled in 2012, and the EU Foreign Affairs Council soon adopted conclusions confirming that the Union was ready to sign an agreement with Ukraine as soon as it made some progress in fulfilling the conditions set out in the conclusions. Ukraine's efforts to reach an agreement with the EU fuelled tensions in its relations with Russia. Russia warned Ukraine that if it signed agreements with the EU, it would not be able to maintain privileged access to the Customs Union market. At the same time, in exchange for postponing its signing indefinitely, Russia promised Ukraine a reduction in the price of gas by a third and an investment of 15 billion dollars in its government bonds. A combination of threats and economic promises shook the Ukrainian government, which accepted Russia's offer (Haukkala, 2015, pp. 33-34).

2014). Russia annexed Crimea and fuelled the armed conflicts in eastern Ukraine, which began in April 2014 after pro-Russian separatists seized the local government and security services in various towns in the Donbas. That development of situations turned the so-called EU-Russia strategic partnership into an open confrontation. (Jović-Lazić, Lađevac 2017, pp. 112-141).

In response to the Crimean annexation and Russian support for separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, the EU adopted various restrictive measures against Russia. EU leaders cancelled a meeting with Russian officials scheduled for June 2014, and EU representatives agreed to postpone regular bilateral summits with Russia as part of the suspension of political relations. Negotiations on the bilateral visa agreement as well as on the new basic agreement between the EU and Russia and preparations for the G8 Summit in Sochi were also suspended. Moreover, the EU froze the assets and prohibited certain Russian and Ukrainian officials from entering the territory of the Union. The EU also imposed broad economic sanctions on Russia, to which Russia responded with the so-called counter-sanctions. These sanctions are increasing the problems of mutual cooperation in all areas. Implementing restrictive trade and investment measures have significantly affected economic cooperation and trade policy. The EU was Russia's leading investor until recently and an important source of advanced technological expertise and achievements. At the same time, Russia was a large and dynamic importer of products and facilities of the EU with significant potential for further growth. A large proportion of Russian exports are still going to the Union, as they are primarily related to energy exports, and Russia is an important supplier of EU energy and will become even more dominant.

However, the EU has stressed its readiness to lift sanctions, renew ties and cooperation with the Russian Federation when it begins to make an active and unequivocal contribution in searching for a way to solve the Ukrainian crisis. In 2016, the EU Foreign Affairs Council set out five principles on which future relations with the Russian Federation would be based. The first of these principles explicitly ties the length of EU sanctions to the achievement success in the implementation of the Minsk Agreement about resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The second principle refers to the strengthening of relations with the EU's Eastern Partners and other neighbouring countries, including the countries of Central Asia. The third principle refers to the reinforcement of resilience when it comes to energy security and hybrid threats. The fourth principle concerns selective cooperation with Russia on issues of EU interest, while the fifth concerns the need to support people-to-people contacts and Russian civil society. (Russell, 2016).

Despite diplomatic efforts to reduce violence and ensure profound respect for the peace agreement, no permanent peace process has occurred. The two parties continuously accuse each other of breaking the agreement. In addition, the status of separatist areas in eastern Ukraine remains uncertain. Although under certain conditions, the Minsk Agreement provides for their return to Kyiv's control, the leaders of the self-proclaimed republics dismiss it as a possibility. Russia does not want to annex them, but unofficial support continues to make a certain kind of extraterritorial area, which violates the national integrity of Ukraine and prevents any possibility of Kyiv becoming part of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Such complex circumstances cause the continuation of tension and the so-called smouldering war in eastern Ukraine. (Jović-Lazić, Lađevac 2017, pp. 112-141).

#### **LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND RUSSIA**

There are different explanations for the crisis in current relations between Russia and the EU. Orenstein believes that the problem of the EU-RF relations is based on different visions of Europe, different values, different policies, and economies of the two sides. (Orenstein, 2019, pp. 2-10). Paul and Larson noticed that Russia, as an increasingly assertive power, wanted to play a more important role in the international order and be seen as an equal partner on the international stage. At the same time, like any other rising powers, Russia signals its demands for status through rhetoric, diplomatic activity, and other measures by which it seeks to show its international intentions (Paul, Larson, Wohlforth, 2014, pp. 3-30). Sakwa stated that Russia was not, as traditionally understood, a rising power and did not seek to question the current world order, but only the position in that order given to it (Sakwa, 2011, p. 199). Thus, Russia is not a revisionist power to break the basis of the international system but, as he also noted, a neo-revisionist power that wants to question the American leadership role in that system (2020, p. 19). For Nuriyev, a deep crisis in the relations between Russia and the West and the imposition of mutual sanctions are part of a geopolitical game, driven by decades of mistrust and competing interests of two sides (Nuriyev, 2018). Trenin pointed out that Russia's refusal to accept a subordinate position in its relations with the EU and the West, in general, was the main reason for their disagreements and misunderstandings (Trenin, 2017).

Even before the Ukrainian crisis, the mutually acceptable prospects for further development of the strategic partnership between the EU and Russia were not fully agreed upon. It is confirmed by the interrupted and complicated negotiations on a new basic agreement on mutual relations to replace PCA that expired in 2007. Russia has strengthened its economic and political position and does not want to enter into strong legal ties with the EU that would be based on the principles that apply to relations with countries that are in the process of joining the EU. Russia is openly opposed to the EU's normative, value-driven approach, which it sees as an unacceptable attempt to interfere in Russia's internal affairs. Despite the obvious differences in approaches regarding the possible form and content of the new agreement, the general position is that it should be harmonized with the changes that have been made in the meantime to respond more appropriately to the current interests of Russia and the Union. The EU has changed significantly, especially with the accession of new member states. Russia has also undergone significant economic and political reforms with marked ambitions at the international level. The importance and reputation of Russia as an EU partner country implies equal participation by both sides in the process of shaping and defining new relations.

Also, before the suspension of the EU-Russia strategic partnership, its successful implementation was questioned, mainly because both sides had different approaches to resolving open issues. This is the result of the different interests of the EU and Russia, as well as the expectations that both sides have of their mutual relations. It was clear that the implementation of agreed forms of cooperation would be long-term, complex, and asymmetrical and would require not only a political commitment to the development of relations and cooperation but also an even more intensive concrete commitment on both sides. This is particularly evident when it comes to energy, where there are mutual interests for interdependence-based cooperation, but also the general failure of a multi-year dialogue and negotiation. It is a consequence of the profound differences in Russia's and the Union's energy policies, which look differently at issues relating to sustainability, development, distribution, transport, and energy usage. The EU policy, which seeks to increase its resilience in the event of energy supply disruptions, aims to liberalize the energy market. It is contrary to Russia's interests, which expect the EU to provide more opportunities for its companies to invest in Europe's oil and gas distribution networks. However, despite the ongoing crisis in mutual relations, Russia is expected to remain a key supplier of energy to the EU and become even more dominant in the future. (Jović Lazić, Nikolić, 2013, pp. 64-82).

Relations with the EU are what Russia sees as an opportunity to create a new European security architecture. Moscow believes that Russia, as well as the EU, should play a more significant role in this area than before. In practice, the EU countries do not separate the issue of general European security from NATO, which Russia considers contrary to its interests. In that context, Russia wants to determine the position of an independent centre of influence, emphasizing the importance of respecting the specifics of its historical path. Russia is also particularly interested in being seen as an equal and legitimate power in international relations and to preserve its influence in the countries of its 'near abroad'. This is the main reason why it strongly opposes the EU's aims of supporting economic integration and close political cooperation with its Eastern neighbours and has its own 'near abroad' strategy and policy. Strategically speaking, Russia has always shown a tendency to surround itself with 'buffer zones' in order to protect itself from invasions and external instabilities. In this context, the interest of Russia in the neighbourhood is a consequence of concern for national security or concerns that by jeopardizing its influence in the 'near abroad' countries, a kind of barrier between Russia and possible enemies would be endangered. As Ademmer, Delcourc, and Wolczukd point out, Moscow sees them as its sphere of influence and also the last barrier to limit the spread of pro-Western ideas to Russia itself (Ademmer, Delcourc, Wolczukd, 2016, p. 2).

Thus, irrespective of the EU's motives, it has become apparent that the Eastern Partnership's strategic ramifications should be also taken into account. Russia sees this as a kind of strategic weapon in which the EU finds a comparative geopolitical edge in its neighbourhood. Assuming that the Eastern Partnership is designed to bind the eastern neighbours to the EU, keep Russia out of the region, and put the issue of their eventual EU membership off the agenda, Jarabik concludes that these goals have been achieved to a very limited extent and that the region has become neither more stable nor more secure (Jarabik, 2019). On the other hand, Cornell emphasizes that these conflicts are, above all, the result of Russia's aspirations to preserve a key influence in the region. Therefore, he raises the question of how the EU did not anticipate Russia's ability to use military force to prevent Ukraine from coming closer to it. Although he does not blame the EU for growing insecurity in the neighbourhood, he points out that it is unclear how European leaders did not understand the political and ideological consequences of the Eastern Partnership that they were gradually building (Cornell, 2014, pp. 180-181).

While Moscow's attitudes and strategies towards the post-Soviet countries are well known, the Ukrainian crisis demonstrated Russia's readiness to use force to counter the EU strategy in the region of its specific interest. Due to its position in the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea, the EU has accused Russia of violating international law provisions and imposed sanctions on it. The EU has also criticized Russia for using different tactics to control these countries' domestic and foreign affairs and impacting the right of those countries to pursue an independent foreign policy. However, it is obvious that both sides want to establish dominant influence over the common neighbourhood. It has led the region to become a kind of a testing ground for EU-Russia rivalry, their conflicting initiatives, and visions.

Despite the EU's weak commitment to the Eastern Partnership, European officials often point out that it cannot simply ignore the desires of these countries for Europeanisation, democratization, and modernization, and that turning back on such demands would mean abandoning engagement with the core European norms and values. According to this attitude, the EU is mainly interested in the fact that Russia should do its utmost to ensure that the Minsk Peace Agreement is implemented. It is not a straightforward matter, considering that there is a dispute between Moscow and Kyiv as to the next step that should be taken to ensure the implementation of this agreement.

The EU continues to extend its sanctions against Russia, even though they have not been effective. Although sanctions have badly harmed the Russian economy, Russia will keep a significant role in shaping the architecture of the post-Soviet region. Sanctions are simply a response to recent events in Ukraine, but they are not a means of achieving the EU's politically realistic strategic objectives in this country. Due to their geopolitical vulnerability, regardless of whether they are members of the Eastern Partnership and the Eurasian Economic Union, countries of common EU-Russia neighbourhoods are exposed to a kind of 'crossfire of sanctions.' The EU and Russia have a responsibility to help these countries develop successfully, without endangering their sovereignty. Despite all disagreements and differences, this is in the interests of both sides as well as the overall improvement of EU-Russia relations. Also, an effective resolution of key current and future open international issues cannot be achieved without active engagement and cooperation between the EU and Russia. The international arena offers numerous examples of where the EU and Russia have common interests and can thus cooperate (fighting against



terrorism, preserving the Iranian nuclear agreement, resolving the crisis in North Korea, ending the war in Syria, commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change, etc.). Selective participation and collaboration in this type of global problems are both necessary and likely. That is the key explanation of why attempting to isolate Russia is a mistake, irrespective of whether its position is getting stronger or weaker.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Despite the long-term dialogue, a well-developed communication system at many levels, and accumulated legal bases, the overall scope of the EU-Russia cooperation has always lagged behind political commitments and real possibilities. It is partly because Russia's relations with the EU, and with the West in general, did not contribute to its desired inclusion in the new international order which appeared after the end of the Cold War, or to the creation of a new European security structure independent of NATO. However, in the 1990s, Russia was too weak to move things in its interests and was prepared to develop pragmatic cooperation with the EU. The EU hoped that cooperation with Russia would deepen its democratic reforms and ensure acceptance of Western values. On the contrary, the EU's normative approach has caused a lot of political misunderstanding between the Union and Russia. Russia does not accept the EU's efforts to use norms, values, and achievements as the main criterion and foreign policy instrument that should ensure stability, security, and development on the European continent. When strengthened, a strong commitment to multipolarity becomes a fundamental principle of Russia's foreign and security policy. Russia has begun to openly oppose the values, principles, and policies of the EU, insisting on its right to protect its sovereign democracy and its interests in the post-Soviet region.

The competing interests of the EU and the Russian Federation are clearly expressed in their strategies towards the countries situated between them geographically. However, the Russian-Georgian armed conflict in 2008 that was followed by Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, pointed out the need for careful monitoring of the bilateral relations between the EU and Russia and their policies towards a common neighbourhood. The Ukraine crisis showed that the rivalry and opposing interests of Russia and the EU in the common neighbourhood were very strong. The future of EU-Russia relations will depend on the outcome of the

implementation of the Minsk Peace Agreement and the further development of the situation in Ukraine.

Although the possibility of restoring mutual trust is a very complex issue, it is necessary to maintain the channels of communication open in an effort to find a way to exchange information between the EU and Russia. The current situation has not only affected the interests of the EU and Russia but also have far-reaching negative consequences for international economic and political relations as a whole. The European Union and Russia have a significant role to play in preserving European security and stability, which is the main reason why they should reconsider their current mutual relations, approaches, measures, and expectations. That is the main reason why cooperation is expected to continue, regardless of difficulties, concerns, and instability.

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## **FRAGMENTING CHINAMERICA AND ITS IMPACTS ON EUROPE: MULTILATERAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE GLOBAL SYSTEM**

Marek HRUBEC<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* The main aim of the article is an analysis of the contemporary process of multilateral transformation of the global political, economic and security system, particularly the analysis of the problematic US-China interactions and their impact on Europe. It raises a research question on European consequences of fragmenting Chinamerica, i.e., the process of partial decoupling of the economic interdependence of China and the USA, which became influential mainly during the Trump administration, including trade, technological, diplomatic, military and other tensions. It has also survived in the Biden administration even if so far in a less confrontational and more cultivated form. Methodologically taken, the article includes an analysis of the current transformative trends in the political and economic reality and stresses the importance of selected documents and speeches of the strategic relevance presented in the USA, the PR China, and the European Union. The article comes to an explanation of the issue by addressing the historical process of development of Chinamerica (including dual circulation) and its following partial fragmentation (with a possible military escalation, including limited nuclear war), as well as the most recent US and China prospects for the next years and the related European dilemmas on a multilateral global approach and cyber security. The multipolar transformation of the global system is explained in relation to a bigger relative strategic autonomy of the major powers than in the past.

*Keywords:* Chinamerica, Europe, multilateral, security, transformation, global system, strategic autonomy.

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## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary process of multilateral transformation of the global political and economic system understandably has its profound impacts on Europe. This process has its harmonious parts as well as its labour pains. While the economic cooperation and interdependence between the USA and China developed since the 1970s, i.e., an integrative process of Chinamerica (Ferguson, 2008; Jones, 2010), a dramatic process of partial decoupling of the economic interdependence of China and the USA has mainly become influential since the Trump administration, including technological, trade, diplomatic and other tensions. Nevertheless, a pivot to East Asia started to play a role already before his administration, and it has survived also in the Biden administration, even if so far in a less confrontational and more cultivated form.

This article focuses on this issue in four parts. First, it analyses the historical process of the development of Chinamerica. It explains that this process has been interlinked to an idea known as dual circulation now. It shows the source of the idea in the early phases of China's reform and opening up in the late 1970s and 1980s. Then, it was developed and reformulated step by step in interactions between the domestic development in China and its activities in the global supply and demand chains, including relations to the Belt and Road Initiative since 2013.

Second, the article deals with the process of fragmentation of Chinamerica, i.e., with the US attempts of decoupling from China under the Trump administration, which also partly decoupled from Europe and other parts of the world. It focuses on an escalation of the US approach to China, which is usually explained only within a framework of trade, technological, and diplomatic kinds of war. This part of the article explains that the US strategic documents of the Trump era could also initiate worse consequences, particularly a possible military escalation, including limited nuclear war. It explains China's approach as well, which includes reactions to the US approach.

The third part deals with the most recent US and China prospects for the next years and their possible thematic overlapping. It shows the contemporary partial reconfiguration of the US approach to the world after the Biden administration took power. However, it still stresses problems with China and mostly ignores Europe, as is apparent in Biden's inaugural address and the first foreign policy speech. Comparatively, the third part also focuses on China in order to see new prospects of development from

2021 to 2025 and then to 2035, formulated in relation to the 14<sup>th</sup> 5-year plan and beyond.

In the last, fourth part, the article formulates a place and role of Europe in this complex process of partial fragmentation of Chinamerica in the world. It explains the European dilemmas in relation to its new documents on a multilateral global approach and cyber security. It also mentions the relevant contexts of other global interactions, such as the new Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in Asia, for example.

The article intends to stress representative economic, security and political strategic issues to explain the current turbulent theme of fragmenting Chinamerica and its impacts on Europe within the multipolar transformation of the global system. The contemporary reshaping of global interactions means a bigger relative strategic autonomy of major powers than in the past, on the one hand, and bigger possibilities of global cooperation, competition and tensions in other areas, on the other hand.

In this article, I take after a discourse on security and political challenges and opportunities concerning the cooperation between Europe and China and the Belt and Road Initiative which was set up by conferences and books published at the University of Belgrade (Cvetković, 2016; Cvetković, 2018).<sup>2</sup>

### **CHINA'S ROAD TO A CONCEPT OF DUAL CIRCULATION AND CHINAMERICA**

First, it is important to explain the historical process of the development of Chinamerica. This process was interconnected to an idea which later has been called *dual circulation*. I will explain the source of this concept in the early phases of reform and opening up in the late 1970s and the 1980s. This concept was developed step by step and reconceptualised in interactions between the internal development in China and its involvement in the global supply and demand chains which has its relevant impacts on China's recent development.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I have in mind particularly mainly the cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries (17+1), and activities and publications on this topic organised at the Faculty of Security Studies at the University of Belgrade.

<sup>3</sup> In the explanation in this part on dual circulation, I follow my longer analyses where I explained the transition from China's reform to reform efforts in international and global interactions (Hrubec, 2020).



Deng Xiaoping liked the idea of the four modernisations (in the spheres of agriculture, industry, defence, science and technology), and from 1978 he and his team started pursuing an approach that would be consistent with the new era of Chinese history: economic reform and opening up of China to the world (改革开放 *gaige kaifang*; reform and opening up). He pursued the reform and opening up of China by overhauling production and commerce domestically and globally. In particular, China offered its cheap workforce and factory production capacity, thereby forging pragmatic economic connections between China and Western countries, particularly with the USA and Western European countries (Góralczyk, 2018). 1978 was a very important year because China's transformation and opening up also laid the foundations for a global supply chain.

The relationship between the internally (domestic) and externally (foreign) oriented models is important here as a source of dual circulation. While many developing countries were forced to quit their own internal model and accept the Western model in order to be allowed to cooperate with it globally, China was able to integrate itself into the global economy but, at the same time, to keep and develop its own domestically more appropriate model (Nolan, 2019). Though each partner (China and the West) maintained its own domestic system, there were certain system overlaps and new common global areas. These interactions also changed the US and European economies. This specific kind of interdependence and the integration of different economic concepts yielded a new model for the transnational and global economy: great convergence (Mahbubani, 2014), even if first mainly under the Western leadership. The USA and Western Europe and other parts of the world have become part of global China and vice versa. The concept of 'Chinamerica' has stressed how deeply internally interdependent the Chinese and USA economies are, as clearly demonstrated also by problems caused by the US introduction of tariffs in the recent US-China trade, technological and diplomatic frictions.

Obviously, China was not transformed and opened up in a single day, but that required several stages in which individual elements of reform gradually proved their worth (Vogel, 2013). We can demarcate four basic stages of Chinese development in the past 40 years, with a gradual increase in global interactions. The first stage stretches back to the beginning of the reforms in 1978. The second stage started in 1992 when the market's important role was officially institutionalised, and work was genuinely launched on combining the market with planning (Wei, 2010). The third stage, from 2001, saw China joining the WTO and integrating

comprehensively into the global economy. The country became indispensable to world production and trade. The fourth stage took hold when the Belt and Road Initiative was announced in 2013 and has continued until the present. China was able to cope with various obstacles and tendencies. Overall, China not only integrated itself into the global economy but also partly changed world production and trade.

Crucially, this development triggered an unprecedented increase in the standard of living for more than a billion people in China and many other people across the world. These are not just abstract statistics glossing over the plight of the people, particularly the poor. In the past 40 years, China elevated 800 million people from poverty by 2020 and fully eradicated absolute poverty (Wang, 2015a; Wang 2015b). This was a big improvement in social rights. If we take into account that China has 1.42 billion people (as of 2019, according to UN data), i.e., 18.4% of the world population, this social development is an enormous achievement in the history of human civilisation. At the same time, the Chinese government knows that many people are still faced with more meagre standards of living, and it plans to improve the situation in the years to come.

Let's see in bigger detail several main reasons underpinning the successful transformation of China's economic system. It is possible to rely on the standard theory of convergence. Even so, the Chinese economy's rapid growth still facilitated convergence. Here, we need to find an answer to the question of what made this growth possible. The core logic behind the Chinese reform and opening up of the last 40 years was that international trade was not taking place between two countries employing the same system. The Western countries, on the one hand, and China, on the other, had different political and economic models. As David Daokui Li from Tsinghua University stresses, the fact that the Chinese government had to manage the economy in an active way has been considered a relevant factor for rapid economic development (Li et al., 2018). Socialist China had two salient features. First, as it was making significant investments in companies thanks to the rules of banks, it was reporting the large capital returns of a country. Unlike many Western-oriented countries where profit was accumulated and then often inefficiently spent, China also ploughed the profits into social development. Nevertheless, now the Chinese government believes that inequality between people has become a problem to a certain degree, which is the opposite situation to that at the beginning of the reform. Of course, a meritocratic approach has its own limits, even if it has occasioned great improvement in the standards of living of many people.

There are projects designed to improve the situation, including in parts of China beyond the well-developed East Coast, and to foster a more egalitarian approach in the future. By doing that, it will be important to avoid the middle-income trap found in South Korea and other countries.

Secondly, the Chinese economy's transformation was successful because of the 'big-country effect'. The scope of the economy in the domestic and global interactions is a determining factor. China is not just one of the successful small Asian tigers, but it is characterised by an application of a more influential model: the Flying Dragon Model. This model changed a small, cheap production and trading partner into a major force, following Hegel's developmental idea of the dialectics of the master and labourer via learning through history. A complex process of practical learning through opening up is more important here than individual aspects of reform, i.e., more than a comparative advantage in relation to the West and dependence on foreign capital and technologies (Li, et al., 2018). The Chinese meritocratic recognition of education and work plays a role here as well.

It was on the strength of this successful transformation of the Chinese economy that makes it possible to refer to 1978 as the second revolution in China. As this is a revolution that did not occur immediately but instead delivered significant changes over the course of several decades, we call it a revolutionary transformation.<sup>4</sup>

The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the consequences of that development. An initiative similar to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) might possibly have been suggested later, even without the global economic crisis as the major impetus because China's reform and opening up since 1978 was already going down that path, following the historical Silk Road. Therefore, this foreign policy and initiative adopted by China were a logical consequence consistent with Chinese developments which came into being when President Xi Jinping with his team brought it together into a new concept (Xi, 2017, pp. 543-566). When he announced it officially, he also

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<sup>4</sup> Understandably, there are also deeper historical preconditions arising before the reform and opening up and underscoring the Belt and Road Initiative. I have two specific stages in mind. First, events in the period after the Xinhai revolution, which saw the overthrow of the Chinese imperial regime in 1911, and the Republic of China from 1912 to 1949. Secondly, events in the period from the establishment of PR China in 1949, until 1978. However, these older preconditions are not the topic of this article which is limited by length.

mentioned its elements in Chinese medium and long-term history. This was a sign that it was deeply rooted in a chronological context.

The Belt and Road can be considered a new model of global interactions: Globalisation 2.0. The BRI has contributed significantly to the development, inclusion and multipolarity of the world by efforts to cooperate based on mutual recognition of participating partners, with a significant help to developing countries. Since it was announced, the BRI has been developed as a model in Eurasia and Eastern Africa, before going to other parts of the world. Since it has encompassed also Latin America, it is a global project. It fits well with the global tendencies of new alternatives. While we have recently witnessed faltering US unilateralism, at the same time we can see China and other countries introducing a multipolar perspective. This is not limited to the BRICS countries, but also includes Mexico, Indonesia, Turkey, for example, and also various kinds of macro-regional organisations, such as the European Union, the Shanghai Organisation of Cooperation, etc. Russia will continue to be a key partner, including in the Shanghai Organisation of Cooperation.

### **THE FRAGMENTING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USA AND CHINA**

While the 'Pivot to Asia', or more specifically 'Pivot to East Asia', was announced and has partly emerged already under the Obama administration, it was not really developed because the government continued to be preoccupied with wars in Islamic countries which were initiated by the previous Bush administration. As it is well known, the real pivot to East Asia, particularly a conflictual pivot to China, was fully materialised by the Trump administration. First, it created trade frictions with tariffs in order to lower the US trade deficit. However, the confrontational approach to China preferred by the Trump administration failed as the US Department of Commerce announced in February 2021: the US trade deficit climbed to 678.7 USD billion in 2020, which is the highest number since the 2008 US economic and financial crisis (American Observer, 2021). Because the results of these trade frictions are often analysed, I will focus on other kinds of tensions.

The US frictions with China also took the form of technological war and diplomatic tensions, including disputes on Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea. These territorial tensions were interlinked

to security issues. I will focus on the tensions of the highest form to show to what extent and what danger the conflicts have escalated under Trump.

Almost 30 years after the Cold War, the Trump administration revitalised the intention to include nuclear weapons into its real military plans and to create a new arsenal of nuclear weapons for the new era.<sup>5</sup> This could cause enormous direct ravages of war. It was not only a regression into a Cold War mentality. During the Cold War, even if nuclear weapons were marginally considered possible weapons of war as a last resort, their main purpose was different. They served as a deterrent against one's enemies (Gaddis, 2016). While their first use at the end of WWII at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was in fact a test of this kind of weapon of massive destruction, since then they have never been used (Rhodes, 2012). The USA and the USSR developed nuclear weapons under the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine in order to prevent war. Because of potential mutual destruction, the use of nuclear weapons was regarded as 'thinking the unthinkable' for a long time, until now. Not only the superpowers but also other nation-states started to consider their nuclear weapons as a deterrence (Brode, 2014; Craig&Radchenko, 2008).

However, under the Trump administration, we entered a new epoch of military threats. For the first time in human history, nuclear weapons started being considered practically, not only hypothetically, as real tools for various future-armed conflicts. New US strategic documents, political statements and corporate interests confirmed a change that has been under preparation over the last few years.

The important issue is the difference between the strategy of a global destructive war following classical application of standard nuclear weapons under the Mutual Assured Destruction doctrine, on the one hand, and the new strategic plan of limited nuclear war, without its global continuation, on the other. The possibility of avoiding a planetary catastrophe is redeemed here with the real intention to make nuclear war, even if only on a limited scale.

The relevant document which can explain the main strategic trends in this respect is the *National Security Strategy*, which has been issued since Ronald Reagan submitted the first one in 1987 (Pee, 2015; Suri&Valentino,

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<sup>5</sup> In a broader context, I dealt with the possible US intentions to use nuclear weapons in my analysis based on critical sociology (Hrubec, 2019). I follow it here in the following part on limited nuclear war.

2016). In December 2017, President Trump specified an application of his 'America First' mindset to security issues (National Security Strategy of the USA, 2017). He wanted to be contrasted with what he saw as Obama's appeasement and defeatism. The Strategy identified two major nuclear powers, namely Russia and China, as 'revisionist' powers that are trying to 'shape a world antithetical to US values and interests'. These countries together with several others allegedly attempt to erode US prosperity and security: 'Three main sets of challengers — the revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organisations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups — are actively competing against the United States and our allies and partners'. (National Security Strategy of the USA, 2017, p. 25). In several aspects, Trump successfully disrupted the version of the war interventionist approach pursued by the previous US administrations. However, it is clear that Trump's attempt to reverse the US Cold War strategy, i.e., to be hostile to Russia but to cooperate economically with China, failed. Trump managed to reverse the US approach to China, but the US system maintained hostility to Russia. The final result has been deterioration in relations with both countries.

There are similar formulations in the US *National Defence Strategy* issued in 2018. China is considered a 'strategic competitor' and Russia a similar challenge (both called 'revisionist powers' again) (The Summary of 2018 National Security Strategy of the USA, 2018, p. 2). The Strategy leads to a conclusion that the USA needs to 'build more lethal force', including cyber-weapons and nuclear force to counter competitors' coercive power.

The 2018 edition of the *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR) offers a detailed specification of the plan for nuclear weapons (U.S. Department of Defence, 2018), made in contrast to Barack Obama's 2010 NPR, which at least formally followed the spirit of his anti-nuclear speech in Prague in 2009 (Obama, 2013; U.S. Military, 2010). By pursuing small (low yield) nuclear weapons, the new 2018 NPR retained not only business as usual but it opened up a new groundbreaking epoch in political and military actions with an intention to make limited nuclear attacks or wars a reality. The US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was mainly a dramatic escalation of the research application of nuclear power at the end of the World War II, i.e., the first US test of nuclear weapons and not part of the real military strategy. Later, both the Warsaw Pact and NATO countries created not only large nuclear weapons but also smaller tactical ones in the form of short-range missiles and free-fall bombs (i.e., without a guidance system), etc., but these were only part of much larger, global military deterrent projects with major

strategic nuclear weapons (Brode, 2014). The smaller weapons did not play an autonomous role. And when they were considered by various nuclear nation-states in regional relations after 1989, they were also regarded as a part of deterrence.

Attempts to initiate a discussion on the autonomous use of small nuclear weapons without their inclusion in large military programmes using major nuclear weapons developed especially thanks to new technologies allowing also more precise mutual control of the activities of rivals (Larsen, 2014, pp. 3–20). Whereas since the World War II until recently, nuclear war was used only as a form of deterrence of the enemy, and overwhelmingly not as a real military option, over recent years and especially in the US strategic military documents, a limited nuclear war has started to be considered. The situation has been really serious, which is not an exaggeration because we cannot eliminate the possibility of global escalation of a local limited nuclear war.

Michael Pompeo, US Secretary of State, specified the country which is the biggest threat from the perspective of the US administration in his speech ‘Communist China and the Free World’s Future’ in 2020. The speech is considered a key declaration of confrontation with China as the main world competitor of the USA. It is a talk presented symbolically in the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, which overturns US relations with China established more than 40 years ago, which began to be negotiated by Kissinger and President Nixon already 50 years ago. While half a century ago the United States reduced its ideological worldview and began cooperating with communist China, Trump and Pompeo see today’s complex political and economic system of China as a global threat. In his 2020 speech, Pompeo said to the American people that he wanted to explain what ‘the China threat means for our economy, for our liberty, and indeed for the future of free democracies around the world’ (Pompeo, 2020).

Similar criticisms of China have already been made in Trump’s speeches and related documents, but Pompeo’s anti-authoritarian speech is considered a definitive turning point: a point of no return, at least not in the foreseeable future. In this sense, it is very extreme. Even many of China’s critics refused Pompeo’s aggressive talk by calling it ‘Pompeo’s surreal speech on China’, for example (Wright, 2020).

The US strategic and other documents and related activities stimulated understandably reactions in other parts of the world, already before Pompeo significantly exacerbated the situation. China issued *China’s National Defence in the New Era* in 2019 in order to formulate its own defence approach (China’s National Defence, 2019). This White Paper is largely focused on the

reform and modernisation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for the current and future cyber age, as well as a response to the significant transformation of the US approach issued in the National Security Strategy in 2017 and the National Defence Strategy in 2018, which I explained above, i.e., the US shift from focusing on counterterrorism mainly in Islamic countries to rivalry with China and Russia. China understands that it is the first time recently when the USA considers China the main competitor (Cordesman, 2019).

Comparatively taken, as expected, China's defence strategy is formulated in a much more diplomatic way than the US documents. Its wording is rather a cultivated policy paper, as it is typical for Chinese documents. Therefore, it opens less number of problematic issues than the USA. It is significant that the strategy starts with a description of the domestic system dealing with the building of a moderately prosperous society of a modernised socialist country, and leads to the last part which goes beyond military issues and offers a global proposal for humanity called 'Actively Contributing to Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind'.

*China's National Defence* reminds of an enlargement of NATO by stepping up deployment in former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It stresses that, at the same time, the European Union attempts to integrate its security and defence in order to be more autonomous. The USA, the main European powers, particularly France, and Germany, and other major powers of Japan and India optimise their military forces. The US activities include joint military exercises with NATO partners and others under the de facto unilateral leadership, and also institutional and technological modernisation to keep 'absolute military superiority' (China's National Defence, 2019, pp. 5-6). The White paper considers it an intensification of global military competition.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, in these global interactions, China presents itself as a stable power pursuing a nuclear policy which is described as 'no first use of nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances'; it keeps nuclear powers

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<sup>6</sup> The document also states attempts to mitigate tensions, particularly that, in 2014, the US Department of Defense and China's Ministry of National Defence issued a document on the *Memorandum of Understanding on Notification of Major Military Activities and Confidence-Building Measures Mechanism* and also the *Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Rules of Behavior for Safety of Air and Maritime Encounters* (China's National Defence, 2019, p. 32).



at the minimal level for national self-defence, 'to maintain national strategic security by deterring other countries from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against China' (China's National Defence, 2019, p. 9). It advocates the complete prohibition of nuclear powers, including their destruction.

The aim of the document is to explain the implementation of the military strategic guideline for a New Era, the innovation of military theories, and the continuation of building the military in the Chinese way in order to protect its sovereignty and security. It warns against possible conflicts in relation to Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the Diaoyu Islands as inseparable parts of China. Now in 2021, China's leadership also mentioned similar disputes related to Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong.

A part of the approach explained in the document, is a model of security partnership that stresses a Chinese concept of win-win cooperation, used also in other spheres such as economics. Together, China and Russia are considered partners that resist the US hegemony. The document also pays attention to regional security cooperation, particularly the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (China's National Defence, 2019, p. 34), the China-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Informal Meeting, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus. As for global cooperation, it is the UN, mainly peacekeeping efforts. The document acknowledged the rivalry announced by the USA, and shows that China is ready to defend itself in a new digital era.

The broader context of *China's National Defence in the New Era* is a relevant document *China and the World in the New Era* issued in 2019, the year which is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (China and the World in the New Era, 2019). Basically, it explains China's development path for new conditions and shows it as an opportunity for a better world. China presents its intention not to seek hegemony but to contribute to a prosperous world.

### **THE USA AND CHINA: THE NEW PROSPECTS FOR NEXT YEARS**

The 4-year term of the new Biden administration almost overlaps with China's 14th 5-year plan for economic and social development. Biden's strategy on relations between the USA with China for the next years will influence relations with other countries and macro-regions of the world. The US approach is formulated as an adaptation to its health crisis, economic turbulences, political turmoil, and a global decline of its reputation. I will

focus more on the US approach than China's one below because the former is more confrontational than the latter, which is essential for their mutual interactions.

Despite all of the domestic and foreign problems, President Biden, in his Inaugural Address presented in January 2021, expresses self-confident proclamation about the US leadership: 'We can make America, once again, the leading force for good in the world', 'We will lead not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example' (Biden, 2021a). The thesis on leadership was formulated also in the first foreign policy speech that Biden delivered at the State Department in February 2021, which deserves our close attention, as it has been his initial and most articulated speech on global affairs so far. He will certainly give other speeches, but this is symbolic of the setting of the initial framework for his term. Even if it was addressed mainly to the US state department and other domestic offices, it is expressed in many parts as an international speech. Biden stated, 'the message I want the world to hear today: America is back. America is back'; 'we've moved quickly to begin restoring American engagement internationally and earn back our leadership position, to catalyse global action on shared challenges' (Biden, 2021b).

Many people, countries and multilateral organisations in the world have feared that such an unrequired leadership can be pursued. They would welcome if the US first solves its own deep domestic problems and then try to improve step by step its reputation and trust in the world, and not to impose the US erratic state of affairs on others. Moreover, traditional overstated formulations about America are perceived with reservations, especially in Latin America, because as is well known, the USA is not America but only the middle belt in North America. The ambition of a leading political role in the world reveals an exaggerated self-perception and exceptionalism of the new US administration. It has its consequences also in the economic sphere: 'if we fight to ensure that American businesses are positioned to compete and win on the global stage' according to Biden (2021b).

The positive turn of the Biden administration is its proclamation of multilateralism, which will certainly limit the US unilateral approach to a number of issues and organisations. It means re-joining the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organisation, a better approach to the UN in general, overturning the discriminatory Muslim ban, etc.

However, this does not mean that the strengthening of multilateralism and the weakening of unilateralism will bring about a fundamental turn in confrontational policy towards other major powers, particularly to Russia

and China: 'American leadership must meet this new moment of advancing authoritarianism, including the growing ambitions of China to rival the United States and the determination of Russia to damage and disrupt our democracy'; it is considered 'the new moment ... accelerating global challenges' (Biden, 2021b).

The Biden administration announced a strong competition between the USA and China and, at the same time, an attempt to avoid a conflict. However, it is not valid for relations with Russia which are much more ambivalent. While the START Treaty was prolonged this year, the process of deterioration continues.

As for China specifically, Biden already has experience in dealing with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Obama times when he negotiated with him from the position of Vice-President. On the one hand, this personal knowledge could help decrease confrontational communication but, on the other hand, it is essential that Biden and his administration are in a different era. Trump's period cannot simply be erased; on the contrary, it will have its prolongation into the period of the Biden administration and probably even longer. This is also evident from Biden's statement: 'we'll also take on directly the challenges posed by our prosperity, security, and democratic values by our most serious competitor, China. We'll confront China's economic abuses; counter its aggressive, coercive action; to push back on China's attack on human rights, intellectual property, and global governance' (Biden, 2021b). This approach and perception of China as a 'most serious competitor' is a very different approach compared to the previous Democratic government, i.e., the Obama administration. Although Biden's approach seems less confrontational and unipolar in comparison with Trump, he finds himself on the border between Obama and Trump, and closer to Trump.

The new US *Interim National Security Strategic Guidelines* issued in March 2021 write about a 'strategic competition with China' and other issues in a similar way: 'China ... is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge' (Interim National Security Strategic Guidelines, 2021). On the same day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivered his first address on foreign policy when he said that China represented the 'biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century': 'Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be.' (Blinken, 2021) New technologies, including 5G, artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, with

their possible usage in the military, are the focus of the US administration in order to keep certain regulatory mechanisms to limit China in competition. Global strategic interactions between China and the USA will be based on more complex and structured cooperation with like-minded countries, regions, and macro-regions of the world.

For Biden, Russia as the former Cold War rival is one of two main adversaries in global politics. On the one hand, it is undoubtedly positive that agreement has been reached on the extension of the New START Treaty on nuclear weapons for the next five years since 2021. This 'New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty' limits the USA and Russia to deploy nuclear weapons maximally to 1,550 each. After the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty expired in 2019, the New START Treaty is the last treaty between the USA and Russia dealing with at least a formal nuclear consensus. However, because of an escalation of various diplomatic and territorial tensions over the last years, there is still a danger of nuclear war. The influential US STRATCOM (United States Strategic Command) head Charles Richard wrote in his article on 'Forging 21st-Century Strategic Deterrence' in February 2021, i.e., under the Biden administration, that 'There is a real possibility that a regional crisis with Russia or China could escalate quickly to a conflict involving nuclear weapons' (Richard, 2021).

Biden explicitly states that he wants to take a very different approach to Russia from that of Trump, saying that tolerance towards Russia has expired: 'the days of the United States rolling over in the face of Russia's aggressive actions...interfering with our elections, cyber- attacks, poisoning its citizens...are over. We will not hesitate to raise the cost on Russia and defend our vital interests and our people. And we will be more effective in dealing with Russia when we work in coalition and coordination with other like-minded partners (Biden, 2021b)'. While the contemporary direct confrontation with China probably eases a little and systemic longer-term tensions increase (even though nobody can avoid a chaotic escalation also in the short term), Biden wants to be tougher against Russia.

Therefore, what does it mean when Biden talks about a return? At first glance, it seems that the new US administration is attempting to return on position before Trump and rehabilitate earlier policies. Already in his inaugural address, Biden said it was: 'A day of history and hope. Of renewal and resolve'; 'Much to repair. Much to restore. Much to heal'. There are many such words with *re* in his foreign policy speech: re-build, re-pair, re-engage, re-store, re-assert, re-instate, re-institute, re-invigorate, etc. In summary, this is expressed in the sentence: 'It's going to take time to rebuild

what has been so badly damaged' (Biden, 2021b). However, the Biden administration will be only very partially a kind of the third term of the Obama administration. As indicated above in Biden's intentions to China and Russia, when he talks about a return, the word return here means only a direction and not a destination. It does not mean a return to the classical US pattern of relations to Russia and China but rather a partial backwards-looking redefinition of Trump's policy within the limits of the current domestic power constellation in the USA and its foreign preconditions and interactions. At the same time, the US mainstream media, the New York Times, for example, pursue a 'Pompeo-lite' approach to global issues (U.S.' continued deception, deflection, politicization, 2021).

As for Europe, Biden did not mention it in his foreign policy speech at all, which probably says more about his position to Europe than he intended. As if Europe did not exist being abolished by Brexit, only a few fragmented European countries remain in his world: the UK, Germany, France; and NATO.

When focusing on security, Biden emphasises cyberspace: 'We've elevated the status of cyber issues within our government, including appointing the first national -- Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology. We're launching an urgent initiative to improve our capability, readiness, and resilience in cyberspace' (Biden, 2021b). It is focused mainly against Russia but implicitly also against China. National security priorities and foreign policy are to be strengthened by a military presence, according to a Global Posture Review.

To conclude, the new US administration intends to make a partial return on positions before Trump and rehabilitate earlier policies. However, history will not stop. As the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said 2,500 years ago: nobody steps in the same river twice. Biden's partial return is a return to the problematic situation which Trump created. Thus, returning is not the solution but just postponing it. The 4-year Trump administration reformulated the traditional limits of cooperation, competition and conflicts for the foreseeable future. The development of the USA, as well as global development, has been in certain trajectories that cannot be completely changed but only slowed down and partly corrected. Under the Biden administration over the next years, there may also be dramatic moments that, however, would not result directly from characteristics of his administration, but rather from the deeper characteristics of the long-term development. Therefore, it would not be smart to underestimate it. There will be the three basic strategic US approaches in relations to China and Russia: cooperation

(the pandemic, climate change, some trade, etc.), competition (strategic competition in high-tech, ideology, etc.), and potential adversity (territorial issues, the military, etc.). It will have interlinked impacts on the relations to European and other countries as well. The Biden administration has the potential to be rather a temporary stagnation period, i.e., a period of waiting for history to move again in a few years. Nevertheless, it will be probably to some extent the Biden-Harris administration which can bring at least some new impulses, mainly a more cultivated approach to global multilateral interactions and domestic racial issues.

China's prospects for the next years are formulated in a much more diplomatic way in the main documents, particularly in a similar way since two of China's strategies were in relations to the parallel US documents described above. Next years, particularly from 2021 onwards, China plans to develop according to the new 14th Plan for innovative economic and social development and the long-term objectives for the year 2035. It is not only another 5-year-period of time but also the first five-year period after China achieved the first centennial objective of establishing a well-off society. It is a new phase not only for China because of global interactions.

China's cooperation within the global supply and demand chains plan to continue, now with a focus on research and innovation. It will be complemented by the philosophy of 'dual circulation' which has followed a tradition of a similar approach since the late 1970s, as I explained above. In some years, internal issues were at the centre of attention, in other years the external ones. Nevertheless, both of them were important all the time. Last years, a focus on domestic consumption is supported in order to balance domestic and foreign activities and sovereignty. Communiqué of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CPC declared that national security and military are important in this context and, at the same time, a concept of sovereignty is understood in relation to a proposal that 'technological independence and self-reliance should be the strategic support of the country's development' (Communiqué of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China., 2020).

Therefore, it deals with the relative sovereignty of core technology, which now means mainly semiconductors for the production of electronic devices. The USA was mentioned only implicitly in the main speech in the Central Committee by President Xi Jinping when he talked about the challenges of unilateralism and protectionism which were clear indications of certain country. China's concept of ecological civilisation can be in

consensus with the new US administration and the EU concerning the Paris Agreement and related issues.

The Chinese 14th Plan deals with domestic themes because it is a domestic plan, but it also partly specifies international issues, even if in most cases in indirect ways (Proposal, 2021). Nevertheless, the interconnections are there mainly thanks to the concept of dual circulation. Therefore, an important topic of the continuation in reform and opening up is formulated, first, in terms of ‘comprehensively deepening reform, and building high-level mechanisms for the socialist market economy’, for example (Proposal, 2021, 13). Then, foreign and global issues are specified in the part No. XI called ‘Putting high-level external opening up into practice, and exploiting new situations for win-win cooperation’ (实行高水平对外开放，开拓合作共赢新局面) (Proposal of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Drawing Up the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Term Aims for 2035, 2021, pp. 21-22).

The agenda is formulated as international cooperation with the aims of achieving ‘mutual benefits and win-win outcomes’. It has three points: a high-level of the new open economy system, high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative, and the reform of the global economic governance system.<sup>7</sup>

This is to be achieved by continuing to open up in a deeper way in a broader range of areas. The first aim should be a higher level of the new open economy system. The means to achieve this should be not just more conventional production with little added value, but innovation. Trade development should be innovation-based, which should then be able to withstand the competition in foreign trade.

The construction of pilot trade zones, including the Hainan Free Trade Port, will be accompanied by greater reforms of autonomy. In the Chinese model, of course, it is not only a chaotic boundless opening up, but also a regulated opening up using an administrative system. This also includes regulations to protect domestic and foreign economic actors, particularly legitimate rights and interests according to law and new improved laws and rules. These also apply to the rights and interests of foreign companies, while at the same time to the rights and interests of Chinese companies ‘Going Global’. These measures and important exhibitions, the China International

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<sup>7</sup> These points, particularly Nos. 39 – 41, create three of 60 points of the Plan proposal.

Import Expo, for example, are expected to make a more balanced trade and a higher quality of inward foreign investment. The other important point is the greater internationalisation of the Renminbi (RMB). Again, this should not be only a quantitative trend in this area but an increase in quality through new types of mutually beneficial cooperation with the free use of the Chinese currency.

The second priority of Chinese foreign interactions in the coming years is a high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative. It is clear that this activity tries to overcome the pitfalls of the last four years of the Trump administration, which were characterised by conflicts and little possibility of diplomatic communication. This point emphasises a principle of extensive negotiation in international cooperation, as well as a joint construction and sharing of benefits, pragmatic collaboration, and win-win production and supply chains, common development, etc. The traditional element of the Belt and Road is connectivity and infrastructure, now with a bigger focus on the digital economy. A new emphasis in connection with the current interdependence with the USA is the improvement of the diversified investment and financial system.

The third foreign priority is the reform related to the global economic governance system. Once again, win-win cooperation appears here as a basic premise based on equitable negotiations. China, as the most influential BRICS country, proposes to make full use of the G20 platform, which includes more countries than just the West-centric oriented G7. Strengthening the multilateral system in this way should lead, among other things, to reforms of the World Trade Organisation. China is striving for a global economic governance system that is more just and rational. The proposal not only builds on existing forms of the economic system but also calls for the creation of economic governance rules in order to deal with new and emerging economic fields, and bigger participation in the sphere of international financial governance.

Based on these formulations, it is clear that the Plan Draft is more restrained than the wording of the US future prospects and does not attack individual countries, regions or macro-regions of the world. The differences stem from several factors but the most important are, of course, the different diplomatic approaches of these major powers as well as the different characteristics of the documents of these countries.



## EUROPE IN THE ERA OF CHANGING GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

Various countries and macro-regions of the world have tried to address the global challenges in various ways last years. While the USA has chosen mainly to foster a unilateral confrontational approach and contain China by the trade war, technological war, diplomatic tensions and other measures, other major powers have taken more creative active approaches.

The EU and Japan have attempted to copy the main aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative and signed an agreement of cooperation between the EU and Japan in September 2019 in order to develop (rather symbolically) connectivity from the Pacific to the Balkans, being aware of positive contributions of China's global involvement and its impacts on the transformation of economic and social reality and related rules in Eurasia and at the global scale as well.

Other countries have chosen even more active and self-confident approaches and cooperate actively in an innovative way with the Belt and Road Initiative and other activities. Despite the external pressures from the USA, 15 Asian countries pursued an autonomous approach and finalised a new treaty in Asia. It is probably one of the two most significant China's achievements of the last year. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was signed in November 2020. It has created the biggest free trade zone in Asia, with approximately a third of global GDP and almost a third of the world's population, particularly 2.2 billion people. Member countries of China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and ten ASEAN members, which include, among others, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, decided to reduce tariffs and establish new rules in trade, e-commerce and other areas of cooperation.

The second relevant achievement of the last year is the EU-China agreement on investment, signed in December 2020. It is another milestone of the China-EU cooperation. It also shows an autonomous approach of the European Union and its members in their intention to cooperate with China, and not to be limited by the US priorities. After the new US administration took power, the EU has wanted to express that it is ready to develop multilateral relations. It presented a declaration on *Multilateral cooperation for global recovery*, which appeared on February 2021 and was signed by Charles Michel, President of the European Council; Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; Emmanuel Macron, President of France; Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany; Macky Sall, President of Senegal; António Guterres, UN Secretary-General (Multilateral Cooperation

for Global Recovery, 2021). The EU politicians are taking advantage of the momentum of change in the US administration intending to take a global initiative and reinvigorating multilateral cooperation for the future. They are trying to renew the agreement in support of an international order that would be a platform for such cooperation, including the G7 and G20.

Although traditional Western political values are also heard in the documents, the pandemic has suddenly overshadowed the classic liberal invocation of freedom. Social rights are finally at the top: 'Health is the first emergency. The Covid-19 crisis is the greatest test of global solidarity in generations. It has reminded us of an obvious fact: in the face of a pandemic, our health safety chain is only as strong as the weakest health system. Covid-19 anywhere is a threat to people and economies everywhere' (Multilateral Cooperation for Global Recovery, 2021). If health and human lives come first, now it will be indeed easier to find consensus between the European Union and other countries and macro-regions of the world, especially with countries in conflict zones and post-conflict and developing countries where poverty is often widespread. The document states that instead of the clash of civilisations and their values, common values are now emphasised, while human rights are not specified which opens up space for emphasis on social and economic rights. 'Rather than pitting civilisations and values against each other, we must build a more inclusive multilateralism' (Multilateral Cooperation for Global Recovery, 2021).

The document also focuses on the new character of interactions in today's digital age. It outlines the need for taxation of digital multinational corporations and the fight against tax competition between states which has previously proved to be a race to the bottom. It is opposed by a 'safe, free and open digital environment'. The framework of this document was given already by political guidelines for the new European Commission 2019-2024, as presented by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in *A Union that strives for more* in 2019. In the part called 'A Europe fit for the digital age', it addresses 'technological sovereignty in some critical technology areas' (Leyen, 2019, part 3).

This theme was further specified by Charles Michel, President of the European Council, in his speech *Recovery Plan: powering Europe's strategic autonomy* in 2020: 'The strategic independence of Europe is our new common project for this Century ... European strategic autonomy is goal number one for our generation. For Europe, this is the real start of the 21st Century' (Michel, 2020). Then, he continued in his talk *Digital sovereignty is central to European strategic autonomy* in 2021 (Michel, 2021).

Strategic autonomy is a manifestation of cyber security which represents digital sovereignty as European strategic autonomy.<sup>8</sup> The concept of 'strategic autonomy' 'means more resilience, more influence. And less dependence. We want greater autonomy and greater independence in an open and global environment. This means reducing our dependencies, to better defend our interests and our values. We want a more level playing field and more fairness in today's globalized world. Interdependence is natural, even desirable. Over-dependence, however, is not. So, strategic autonomy has nothing to do with protectionism. On the contrary' (Michel, 2021). Some other European politicians support a similar idea as well. In military issues, there has been a discussion on the EU strategic autonomy since the Balkan war in the 1990s and the Iraq War in 2003 when various countries in Europe criticised these illegal US interventions. Last years, discussions went beyond defence and security issues and dealt also with economic and technological autonomy. It is an attempt to adapt to the worse global conditions caused by the US trade frictions with China and the pandemic trade shortages. However, it is not only a reaction to negative trends. It is also a general tendency to integrate into a new digital level of global technological development and secure the positions of the countries and macro-regions.

There is an effort to pursue strategic autonomy in the internal development within the EU and, at the same time, develop a balanced relationship with other partners beyond the EU in global interactions. The concept of strategic autonomy in a narrower sense can be understood as a parallel to the above-mentioned Chinese concept of sovereignty in technological independence and self-reliance, and, more broadly, in relation to the 'Made in China 2025' program. This can be also considered a part of the European version of dual circulation, therefore, not limited to the topic of technological or digital sovereignty but also applied to production, trade and other spheres of the European Union.

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<sup>8</sup>There is a connection to the previous digital regulation: the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from 2016, and the proposed Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act. It can also be considered in connection to the construction of autonomous satellite systems: the European satellite network Galileo and the GSA is of the EU autonomy in relation to GPS operated by the USA. China has developed its own navigation satellite system (BDS) BeiDou in a parallel way; Russia has made GLONASS, etc. perceived as a source.

Dependence in the digital sphere is also perceived here due to the danger of 'the abuse of personal data'. It is formulated in relation to large digital corporations, due to 'the overexploitation of data ... in pursuit of profit' (Michel, 2021). In this context, nevertheless, it is not explicitly mentioned that this means mainly US companies and the US government which stands for them abroad, including Europe. Concerns are also expressed about the political use of data by China, which, however, is explicitly mentioned. Unfortunately, the double standard is still being enforced.

The concept of strategic autonomy has been already partly misused in political, economic and other areas in the EU. Following the US-China trade and technological frictions, there have been problematic strategic tendencies in the sphere of health, for example. In the European Union, the current problems, which are related to high-tech in connection with vaccination against COVID-19, on the one hand, can be seen in the West-centric ideological blockade of non-Western companies which also have made research and production of vaccines. The ideological limitations and the profits of firms based in Western countries had a higher priority than human lives and health when the vaccination process started in the EU. On the other hand, this bias has not been present in all European countries. Some EU countries (Hungary, Italy, for example), as well as some non-EU countries (Serbia, for example), have called for an open multilateral approach and negotiations with several countries around the world that have been able to invent and produce COVID-19 vaccines, including Russia and China. After Western big pharma-companies were even unable to use their oligopoly position and failed to deliver vaccines in the promised required numbers, fortunately, these European countries began to act multilaterally in order to negotiate the approval of vaccines made by Russian and Chinese companies and their supply in the EU in order to save human lives. This is certainly a good sign for overcoming the Eurocentric and West-centric world and, conversely, for strengthening multilateralism in Europe and on a global scale.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC), which are involved in the 17+1 Cooperation with China, play a positive role in promoting multilateralism. The ninth Summit of the 17+1 Cooperation proved it. Originally planned for 2020, it had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, it took place online in February 2021 and showed good results of the previous period, and new prospects for the future. The total trade volume between China and CEEC exceeded 100 billion USD for the first time in 2020. The Summit presented cooperation in various areas: trade, environmental issues, research, health care, including the delivery of

medical equipment and products such as face masks and vaccines. Serbia, Hungary and other countries of the 17+1 Cooperation have been really active also in the pandemic times, pursuing cooperation via 'cloud diplomacy' in online meetings. The countries of Central, Eastern and Western Europe, which are involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, have also played a similar cooperative and multilateral role.

## CONCLUSION

The main contribution of this article is an analysis of several relevant points, which are usually less stressed in other analyses. It shows the historical process of building *Chinamerica* and following *fragmenting Chinamerica* when the Trump administration brought technological, trade and diplomatic frictions as well as the ultimate threat of military escalation via an establishment of political and technological capabilities of *limited nuclear war*. It explains the origins of the Chinese concept of *dual circulation* and its update which is in relation to the ambivalent concept of *strategic autonomy* used by the European Union and similar concepts used by other major powers. It plays an important role in the *multilateral* adaptation of major powers to the worse global conditions set up by the Trump administration. The article illuminates these trends by its focus on new documents and speeches presented by representatives of the USA, China, and the EU.

Specifically, the analysis of *fragmenting Chinamerica* and its global consequences with an impact on Europe brings more light on the current process of multilateral transformation of the global system, mainly its political, economic, technological and security aspects. The reality and the key strategic documents and speeches presented by representatives and organisations of the USA and China show how a turn from a historical process of development of *Chinamerica* has taken place. It also partly decoupled the USA from Europe and other parts of the world, and worsened global interactions, including a possible military escalation, ultimately *limited nuclear war*, with the US rivals. The Trump administration's trade, technological, diplomatic and other tensions have partly survived in the Biden administration (China as the 'most serious competitor', trade tariffs, territorial interferences, etc.) even if in a more cultivated and more multilaterally oriented way. This transitory US period defined by the term of Biden's administration starts at the same time when China enters a new period of development from 2021 to 2025 and to 2035.

To conclude, more complex global interactions than in the past will probably appear in the next years. It means neither greater linear globalization nor de-globalization but a complex development. We can expect new specific coopetition, i.e., a new version of the joint cooperation and competition within the new strategic limits. These limits are expected to be defined not by Trump's confrontational unilateral tendencies, as was originally the case, but by more intersubjective interactions among more players. The lines, enforced first by the USA, then reformulated by China, and later also by the EU, are reflected and specified also in other parts of the world now. The more complex global relations based on more organisational levels include a bigger relative strategic sovereignty of major powers and other countries in one of these levels. It can be articulated by a concept of *strategic autonomy* if we use the European term. Strategic autonomy, which recently stems from an idea of sovereignty in cyber security and other security areas, is close to the Chinese concept of sovereignty in *technological independence and self-reliance* and, in a more general way, to the concept of *dual circulation* which also operates with internal and external spheres of activities. It is a call of the major powers for more resilience and less strategic dependence but within global cooperation and competition.

European countries, the USA, China and others learned the value of sovereignty which fully or partly lost but won again during World War II. China knows the value of sovereignty based on another event in its history as well. This year 2021 is Xin Chou in the Chinese lunar calendar, commemorating a significant anniversary. Exactly two full cycles (a cycle repeats every 60 years.) of the Chinese lunar calendar ago, i.e., 120 years ago in Xin Chou in 1901, China lost its sovereignty in the anti-imperial Boxer Rebellion against the Western powers. But then the waves of modernisation began in China in 1911, 1949, and 1978, and China got its sovereignty again. Last four decades, China was able to do both: to make internal development and engage successfully in global interactions even if it was not easy. After the decades of the West-led globalization, particularly since the 2008 global economic and financial crisis which showed the lack of inclusivity of this version of globalization, the relationships between domestic and global development have been in the painful process of redefinition in many parts of the world again, especially last years. The USA, China, the EU and others have learned step by step in this process how to keep its own strategic sovereignty in economic, political, technological, security and other disputes and how to develop shared sovereignty in other areas in the new digital level of global interactions.

Even if strategic autonomy has been also misused in order to limit cooperation, there are good possibilities to develop *multilateral cooperation* between China, the USA, the European countries and other parts of the world based on mutual recognition. Win-win economic, political, technological, research, ecological and intercultural kinds of cooperation can be pursued by the European countries within the bilateral and multilateral relations, specifically within the United Nations, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the 17+1 Cooperation. There are also other organisations that play a positive role in developing multilateral cooperation, such as the Shanghai Organisation of Cooperation, the Eurasian Union, etc. Moreover, it is not limited to Eurasia. In global interactions, the Belt and Road Initiative is developed also in Africa by the means of FOCAC, in Latin America by the means of China-CELAC Cooperation, etc. Nevertheless, the new strategic lines of global interactions with various tensions will require overcoming challenges and crises in the post-pandemic times.

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## **POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES DURING THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY**

Miloš PETROVIĆ<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* The focus of this research was the growingly challenging political relationship between Germany and the US during the presidency of Mr. Donald Trump. The first research aim is to examine the evolution of the US-German partnership from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards and to depict the instrumental role of the United States in shaping Germany's foreign policy. The second research aim is to consider which aspects of their cooperation were the most affected during the presidential term of Donald Trump. The author identifies several levels of political dissension between two sides during the Trump presidency: firstly, diverging perspectives on integrative processes and international organizations, secondly, discrepancies in the political narratives domain, and thirdly, disparities in the bilateral domain, including the geopolitical and trade distinctions. Through the historical approach, the author clarifies that German international political interests have been strategically embedded in the integration processes within the European Union and other international organizations. Realist theoretical basis is used to scrutinize the evolution of contemporary US-German political cooperation, including the sovereigntist and unilateral tendencies during the Trump administration. The author concludes that not only the US-German but also the US-EU strategic cooperation was significantly impaired during the Trump presidency. Although it might be too early to make predictions, President-Elect Joseph Biden has announced the need for restoring the

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transatlantic privileged relations, which would also reflect on Germany, whose foreign policy is deep-seated in international integrative processes.

*Keywords:* Germany, the US, integrative processes, Trump, bilateralism, sovereignty, partnership.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, relations between the United States of America (USA) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) have been almost inextricably intertwined with the broader integrative initiatives. The US actively encouraged the evolution of integrative processes in Europe through NATO and European Communities, which also included the FRG and was beneficial for that country's post-war international 'rehabilitation' (Rappaport, 1981, pp. 121-122; Smith, 1995, p. 1). For the US, partnership with Germany represented a part of a larger change of its external policy, which aimed to establish partnerships directed against the Soviet threat (Schwartz, 1995, p. 554). Likewise, the US leadership believed that the inclusion of the FRG into integrative processes would contribute to its post-war stabilization and pacification (Rappaport, 1981, p. 122). The dissolution of the socialist system across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) which ensued after 1989 was decisive for the FRG on two grounds: firstly, it facilitated the decades-long goal of national reunification, and secondly, it marked the triumph of the 'Western' liberal political and economic model in Europe's heartland. Likewise, the absorption of the former German Democratic Republic into the FRG (in the further text also: Germany) also led to its inclusion in numerous international processes.

Reunited Germany emerged as the EC's leading economic power with around 30% of its GDP, containing also the bloc's largest population, skilled and equipped military force, and a strong national currency (Smith, 1995, pp. 1-2). Drawing from its recent national history and in congruence with the US, the FRG advocated the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) enlargements. Although diverging stances towards international military campaigns at times burdened the trans-Atlantic relations, the two countries remained committed to maintaining and advancing their cooperation. There are also views that the interventions across the Middle East also served as a learning experience for the US decision-makers to commence putting greater effort to engage European support, in order to secure more favourable outcomes (Pawlak, 2011, p. 68). The reluctance of nations like Germany to participate in the 'War on Terror' also coincided with the

growingly autonomous awareness of the expanding EU. Ambition towards a more influential and 'ever closer union' required advancing the strategic cooperation between Germany and France, which has for decades constituted a cornerstone of Berlin's foreign policy, along with the European and transatlantic integration processes (Mahncke, 2011, pp. 85-86, 90). Nevertheless, the US-German cooperation was challenged on numerous occasions during the past years (from the 'War on Terror', through complicated relations between the EU and Russia during the Caucasus and Ukrainian crises, to the Brexit process and, finally, the lack of affinity of US President Trump towards preservation of privileged transatlantic partnership).<sup>2</sup>

As part of the aforementioned context, this paper aims to analyse the growingly challenging political relationship between Germany and the US during the presidency of Mr. Donald Trump. The first research question - how has the US-German partnership evolved since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, introduces the topic of the two countries' political cooperation, interpreting it in the recent historical context. As for the second question, it builds upon the first and considers which aspects of the US-German cooperation were the most affected during the administration of President Trump. The author identifies several aspects of political dissension between the two countries, ranging from diverging perspectives regarding the role of international organizations and initiatives, over political and ideological differences and deviating narratives, to trade and bilateral dissonances. The argumentation was also analysed through theoretical underpinnings, primarily the realist approach, combined with the historical perspective, to place contemporary developments in the context of a broader evolution of the US-German cooperation.

## **PARTNERSHIP FORGED DURING THE COLD WAR**

*'Foreign policy sets the limits to the possibilities  
of German economic and social policy.'*<sup>3</sup>

Following the demise of the Nazi dictatorship, the territory of contemporary Germany found itself in ruins, politically and otherwise

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<sup>2</sup> Some additional author's research which also addresses the domain of US foreign policy include: Petrović, 2019; Petrović, 2020, pp. 532-565.

<sup>3</sup> Post-war social-democrat Kurt Schumacher, criticizing the 'pro-American' decision-making of the Adenauer cabinet (Schwartz, 1995, p. 561)

estranged from neighbours and divided among the Allied powers. By 1949, tensions between the two contending superpowers, the USSR and the US, have gradually solidified the separation into the two distinct blocs. The border between the First and the Second World went through Germany and was expressed through the existence of the two German states: the Federal Republic of Germany in the west and, to the east, the German Democratic Republic. These territories assumed the role of the political battleground throughout the Cold War.

The absorption of the FRG into the Atlantic community represented one of the foremost US political achievements during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schwartz, 1995, p. 549). Continuous US support to the international 'rehabilitation' of the FRG has been decisive, including its contribution to overcoming the past disputes with France, as an imperative for broader integrative processes in Western Europe (Rappaport, 1981, p. 141). Multifaceted US assistance to the FRG consisted of support towards the establishment of the democratic system and sustaining the claim for national reunification, economic aid through the European Recovery Program (also known as the Marshall plan), and closer security bonds through the NATO and maintenance of the largest contingent of US troops in Europe.

However, the integration of the FRG into the 'Western' political community was occasionally also marked by suspicion. Whereas some non-German experts contemplated that US support could reignite German nationalist behaviour and inevitably lead to its political dominance, some German analysts questioned the dedication of US partners to the German reunification goal (Schwartz, 1995, p. 550). The latter proved to be unfounded, having in mind the unequivocal support of the US administration of George Herbert Walker Bush to unification efforts and his close cooperation in that regard with Chancellor Helmut Kohl (Casdorff, 2018).

US support to the FRG needs to be considered in the context of the Cold War rivalry in Europe against the USSR. According to Thomas Schwarz, closer US-German cooperation also contributed to the deepening of the Cold War anxiety and augmentation of the security dilemma (Schwartz, 1995, p. 550). Decades of the Cold War antagonisms largely unfolded over the borders of two Germanies. The Berlin citizens witnessed several major international events: the Soviet-led Blockade (1948-1949), the construction of the Wall (1961), the fall of the Wall (1989), the acceding to the Federal Republic of Germany (1990) and the retrieval of the capital-city-status. Following a momentous Cold-War-event – the erection of the Berlin Wall, US President John F. Kennedy delivered one of the most notable political

speeches, expressing solidarity with inhabitants of West Berlin: '*All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words "Ich bin ein Berliner"*' (Eichhoff, 1993, p. 74).

As part of its strategy of strengthening Western Europe against USSR expansion, the US supported the reconciliation efforts between the FRG and France, which was occasionally ambivalent towards such steps (Hitchcock, 1997, pp. 625-627; Lynch, 2004, pp. 117-118). French cooperation was additionally encouraged by substantial aid through the European Recovery Program, aimed at post-war reconstruction, developing and upgrading industrial performance, fostering closer economic relations, etc. (Hitchcock, 1997, p. 612). The economic and political stabilization which ensued as a result of US-backed policies also provided a favourable context for the realization of Jean Monnet's political project, which was supported by the French foreign minister Robert Schuman and the FRG Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. The establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950, according to Mr. Schuman, entailed a noble purpose to '*make the conflict between nations of Europe not simply unthinkable, but materially impossible*' (Hitchcock, 1997, p. 603). The signing of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community in Rome ensued in 1957 (Drake & Reynolds, 2017, p. 111). Likewise, the intensification of French-German cooperation resulted in the Élysée Treaty of friendship, signed by President Charles de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in 1963, which still represents the foundation of their strategic coordination.<sup>4</sup>

Even following the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the subsequent reunification, the US-German strategic interests remained largely corresponding. Even though the demise of the Soviet military threat significantly reduced Germany's dependence on US patronage, cooperation through NATO still remained as one of Berlin's priorities (Mahncke, 2009, p. 81). Despite early signs of trans-Atlantic dissonance appeared as the newly-proclaimed EU began to gradually develop its more autonomous identity, its ambitions turned out to be unrealistic already during the period of the Yugoslav wars, for which it failed to develop its own peace strategy. Also, this period was marked by a rare example of reunited Germany's one-sided action, which, unsatisfied with the EU's prolonged response, unilaterally recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, thus setting an example for other countries to 'jump on the same bandwagon'.

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<sup>4</sup> Treaty between the French Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany on French-German cooperation (22 January 1963).



However, as the conflict escalated further, eventually the US intervened, highlighting the EU's strategic deficiencies (Marolov, 2012, p. 15). The lack of a common EU approach was, therefore, 'sobering' for Germany in two ways: firstly, it encouraged the FRG to reconsider its own national interest and its ability to act independently when deemed necessary, and secondly, to focus on supporting a more unified and strategically autonomous EU, even if it implied some distancing from the US (Smith, 1995, p. 19). In the context of the 'War on Terror', the US expected a greater military and political engagement from its EU and NATO partners, whereas Germany considered the armed forces to be insufficient for conflict resolution in countries like Afghanistan (Mahncke, 2009, p. 87; Rühle, 2009, pp. 2-5). Moreover, Germany looked back upon its conflict past to pursue a more restrictive approach to interventionist projects and accentuate the necessity for peaceful conflict resolution whenever possible in international affairs, including within NATO (Snyder, 2011, p. 182). The transatlantic rift over the Iraq intervention exposed the reluctance of European partners to align with the US 'by default' (De Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 5). This especially applies to Germany, which, although it remained anchored to NATO and EU strategies, has also been attempting to lead a somewhat more autonomous foreign policy during the past two decades, although with mixed results (Pribičević & Miljuš, 2012, p. 406).

As Dieter Mahncke noted: *'While the United States has consistently called for a more active Europe, Washington time and again has displayed an ambivalent attitude towards European projects, concerned about what effects this might have on NATO and concerned about maintaining American leadership'* (Mahncke, 2009, p. 89). The occasionally ambivalent relations could have resulted from the earlier US perception of the European integration project as a mode to strengthen the continent against a foreign threat, rather than an instrument to challenge the American political and economic hegemony (Rappaport, 1981, p. 121).

Differences in opinion occasionally placed a strain on otherwise advanced strategic transatlantic cooperation during the past several decades. However, following the 2016 election victory of the Republican candidate Mr. Donald Trump, who had no previous government service experience, the otherwise advanced transatlantic cooperation commenced to be challenging in numerous domains. The 'Trump era' was marked by changes and discontinuity in various aspects of US-German cooperation compared to the previous period.

### THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY: TESTING THE PARTNERSHIP'S LIMITS

*'The countries we are defending must pay for the cost of this defence, and if not, the US must be prepared to let these countries defend themselves. We have no choice.'*<sup>5</sup>

In January 2017, during a joint press conference with the British Prime Minister Theresa May at the White House, the recently inaugurated US President Donald Trump praised the pro-Brexit vote as a 'wonderful thing' and a 'blessing for the world' (Langlois, 2018, p. 13). These words sharply contrasted with the statement of Mr. Barack Obama, who during his own visit to London only several months earlier underlined that *'no man was an island ... even an island as beautiful as this'*, implying that the United Kingdom's possibilities would be reduced in case of withdrawal from the European Union (Schuppe, 2016). Mr. Trump's support for Brexit, including the option of a 'no-deal' withdrawal, raised concerns in Germany regarding the President's general stance towards the European partners (Sandle & Addison, 2019).

President Trump also expressed disregard for the history of the European integration as a peace process by stating his opinion that the 'EU was formed, partially, to beat the US on trade', adding that to him 'it didn't matter whether the EU remained together' or dissolved (Langlois, 2018, p. 22). Mr. Trump also labelled the EU as an instrument in the hands of Germany (Lopandić & Bogdanović, 2017, p. 2). 'European partners' have never before witnessed such a high level of criticism from their American counterpart (Langlois, 2018, p. 24). Likewise, Mr. Trump's presidency appeared to be dissociated from a predictable political ideology but rather marked by a lack or absence of a coherent strategy (Trapara, 2017, pp. 62-64). President Trump time and again displayed a lack of interest in the established facts, historical background and activities that could shape a consistent plan (Sloan, 2018, p. 222). Trump's governing principles included protectionist and anti-globalist tendencies, with reduced interest for past historical experiences and a lack of predictable and transparent cost-benefit logic in certain domains (Ninkovich, 2018, p. 400). His governance encapsulated the phenomena such as populism, nativism (a narrower form of nationalism), authoritarianism, but also Christian Evangelical narratives

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<sup>5</sup> Statement of the presidential candidate Donald Trump in 2016 (Sloan, 2017, p. 226).

and interpretations (Alder & Schäublin, 2020, pp. 1-2; Kuvekalović-Stamatović, 2019, p. 40). The president's aversion towards a more structured and traditional political approach, coupled with a largely undiplomatic manner of communication represented a political discontinuity and gradually raised concern in Germany and elsewhere in Europe regarding further US commitment to their partnership.

The disinclination of presidential candidate Mr. Trump towards multilateral organizations and traditional partnerships manifested through the designation of NATO as an 'obsolete' entity that required restructuring and additional emphasis on fighting terrorism (Sloan, 2018, p. 225). Once in power, Mr. Trump maintained his narrative that US allies from NATO should be more committed to the joint mission, including the financial aspect. The first meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel in March 2017 was characterized as unusual, as depicted not only by the absence of a handshake but also in President Trump's rhetoric that 'NATO allies needed to pay their fair share for the cost of defence', and that their alleged debt was 'very unfair to the United States' (Sloan, 2018, p. 228). The alleged debt the US President was mentioning actually represented a German defence expenditure which during the period 2014-2019 amounted to below 1.5%, comparing to the NATO-targeted 2% of GDP (NATO, 2019, p. 3).

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that at the time the vast majority of NATO member-states, including not only Germany but France, Italy, and others, did not comply with that requirement, although that somewhat improved towards 2020 (NATO, 2019, p. 3). The first international participation of Mr. Trump in NATO and G7 Summit in Europe in spring 2017 was also marked by his criticism over the partners' unsatisfactory defence spending and a call for NATO to formally enter the anti-ISIS coalition (which it did, although its member-states already participated bilaterally) (Sloan, 2018, p. 231). Mr. Trump also used the opportunity to declare that the German car industry functioned 'very badly' and damaging towards the US, which -among other things - led Chancellor Merkel to state that 'the days when Europe could rely on others (was) over to a certain extent' (Sloan, 2018, p. 231). When referring to 'Europe' in her statement, the Chancellor also implied 'Germany', having in mind the centrality of the European and transatlantic integrative processes for that country. And vice-versa: when President Trump was denouncing European partnerships, even when not singled out, Germany emerged as the most likely subject of criticism (Franke & Leonard, 2017). Germany ceased to be treated as the primary US partner in continental Europe during Mr. Trump's mandate.

There are several aspects for consideration in the context of the severance of the transatlantic political partnership during Mr. Trump's presidency, which particularly affected Germany as one of the leading EU and NATO members.

Firstly, during Mr. Trump's presidency, the perceptions of integrative processes and the role of international organizations diverged between the partners. As addressed earlier, through the virtue of international integrative processes supported by the United States, the FRG 'rehabilitated' its international reputation, overhauled its economy, political system and improved its relations with neighbours and wartime opponents. Apart from its international reintegration, active participation in a variety of transnational organizations also served as a mode to exert German influence abroad, in a structured way which would be clearly dissociated with its wartime reputation (Snyder, 2011, pp. 181-182). The US confrontation with the EU during the Trump mandate had several critical points, ranging from the abandonment of the Trans Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership ('TTIP', negotiated with Mr. Obama's administration), to supporting the unilateral UK activities during the Brexit process (against the EU), to a disagreement regarding the functioning of global initiatives (as portrayed by the abandoning of the United Nations agencies like UNESCO or the World Health Organization (WHO) at a sensitive time during the 2020 CoVid-19 pandemic). The TTIP was envisaged to further liberalise trade rules in a variety of domains in the northern transatlantic region (which already accounts for one half of the global production), and growingly influence the trade globalization processes, which would especially benefit the German corporations' exports (the US being the most valuable market and the most attractive 'third country' for German investments) (Auswärtiges Amt, 2020).

Repudiation of further US-German (and EU) coordination in international initiatives and processes deeply affected the dynamics of their political cooperation and economic relations during the administration of Donald Trump. These developments directed Germany and the EU towards a more autonomous action in international affairs while attempting to maintain as much traditionally privileged transatlantic cooperation as possible.

Secondly, the political narrative between the transatlantic partners has diverged. On the one hand, democratic concepts in the domains of governance, human rights, combined with liberal economic norms and integrative processes, have propelled not only the European but also other

transatlantic and broader international integration processes and ideas. Other important aspects, such as climate change and migrations remained the political priorities of the EU and Germany. However, Mr. Trump's administration formally distanced from such notions, preferring the sovereignist approach which sometimes resembled policies of interwar administrations that opted to be less engaged in international affairs (Ninkovich, 2018, p. 398).

Unlike any president since the end of the Cold War, Mr. Trump's narrative reflected deep distrust towards decades of privileged cooperation with European partners. His anti-immigrant rhetoric, previously used in the context of the US-Mexican border issue, was applied in the context of the European migrant crisis, serving as additional reasoning for Brexit and for public dismissal of Chancellor Merkel's stance during that event. According to President Trump, the migrants from the Middle East and Africa have 'strongly and violently changed European culture' and 'Europe should not have allowed them in', adding that Germans were 'turning against their leadership' and making analogies between migrations and alleged increased crime rates in that country (Stone, 2018).

Apart from enthusiastically supporting the border fence built in Hungary, designed to halt immigration, President Trump also deepened relations with other 'sovereignist' EU countries like Poland, which was criticized by international bodies over its conservative trends in the domains of rule of law and the judiciary (Ágh, 2018, p. 33). Apart from the visa-waiver for the United States, Mr. Trump has announced the deployment of NATO troops in Poland, as well as investments into several strategic domains (White House, 2019). These actions should not be interpreted solely as Mr. Donald Trump's support to likely-minded leaderships in Europe, but also in the context of encouraging political and other divisions within the EU, which the US president perceived as a trade rival, and perhaps even a political opponent. The weakening of the EU in that regard would also weaken Germany as the bloc's export hub.

Thirdly, the US-German cooperation was also affected in bilateral terms, due to strategic and trade reasons. One of the largest causes of contention, apart from the insufficient NATO defence expenditure, was the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline across the Baltic Sea, linking Russia and Germany. Although the project is multinational, Germany as the continent's leading energy consumer would be the most affected in case of its delay or non-realization. Perhaps unsurprisingly, according to a 2020 poll, Germans largely supported the completion of the pipeline with Russia, despite the

two countries' troublesome relations.<sup>6</sup> German participation in the Nord Stream 2 project actually represented another (infrequently seen) example of that country's ability to act independently in securing its national interest, even if it implied aggravating the neighbouring countries, as well as its traditional transatlantic partner.

Large geopolitical controversies have surrounded the Nord Stream 2 project, especially a perceived intention to bypass Ukraine as an unreliable transport country (Noël, 2019, p. 90; Šekarić, 2020, p. 121). This view is shared by Ukraine's Baltic neighbours, objecting to the project, which might further increase Russian influence and marginalize EU's eastern parts. German relations with Russia in the context of Nord Stream 2 have developed into a divisive topic both within the EU and in transatlantic relations. Whereas President Trump condemned the German-Russian energy cooperation at the NATO Summit in 2018, the Polish authorities compared it to the 'Molotov-Ribbentrop' pact, directed against a European country (Noël, 2019, p. 92). The Trump administration announced sanctions for constructors and other participants in the Nord Stream 2, denouncing the project not only because of worsened relations with Russia but also due to increased production of natural gas, which the US intends to distribute to Europe on a larger scale (Dezem, 2020). However, the European Commission's official stance in the context of the US embargo was that many EU companies have been engaged in the Nord Stream 2 project, and their sanctioning was not being considered provided that they functioned in accordance with the *acquis* (McDougall, Reisinger & Greenwood, 2020). Apart from Russia, the US also scrutinized the EU's trade relations with China, which has officially been recognized as a rival power. Germany and other EU countries have been pressured to side with the US over China in trade disputes (Kärnfelt, 2020). US protectionist logic served a dual purpose: to deter European partners from deepening cooperation with China and to influence them to grant trade concessions.

As elaborated above, under the Trump administration Germany came under criticism in numerous aspects, ranging from the denunciation of its export-oriented economy, over disapproving the political decisions and beliefs of its decision-makers, to questioning the international role of German-supported integrative processes and initiatives. These

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<sup>6</sup> Based on the results published by Civey on a representative sample of 5.090 Germans in 2020, 55.2% of the respondents opted in favour of putting into operation the Nord Stream 2 pipeline (Civey, 2020).

disconfirming US activities challenged the German institutions' intentions to maintain the scope and functioning of their strategic partnership, as well as their ability to cooperate through other organizations.

## THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

*'The United States played a central role in the Federal Republic's history, influencing almost every aspect of its development.'*

(Schwartz, 1995, p. 550)

The US-FRG political partnership has been in force for over seven decades. The Western European and transatlantic integrative processes, which included Germany, have redesigned the paradigm of international relations, moving its focus away from the security-related aspects towards domains such as human rights and economic cooperation (Schwartz, 1995, pp. 552-553). However, the victory of Mr. Trump under the 'America First' slogan and his untraditional foreign political leadership led to a perception that the new U.S. president would be inclined to radically transform the transatlantic strategic cooperation (Keylor, 2018, p. 322).

This segment analyses the evolution of US-German cooperation through the realist theory, which perceives states as predominant international actors. Throughout the Cold War, two states – the US and the USSR – contended over political hegemony in international affairs. For the US, a partnership with the FRG was pivotal in efforts to deter and eventually defeat the Soviet ambitions in Central Europe, primarily through making (West) Germany the economic pillar that anchored and strengthened the European and transatlantic integration processes (Schwartz, 1995, p. 556). The US hegemony in that region was maintained through closer cooperation with Western European countries, just as the Soviet supremacy persisted in Eastern Europe. Both Germany and the US perceived strategic cooperation to be in their national interest. According to the former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the partnership with the US was of 'existential importance' for the FRG (Schwartz, 1995, p. 555). For the FRG, this cooperation represented a twofold opportunity: to strengthen its international position through the integrative processes, and to advance its claim for national reunification.

For Hans Morgenthau, the concept of owning power should not be reduced solely to military capacities, but also to the influences exerted through political strength (Guzzini, 2018, p. 14). In post-war Europe, the

'hard power' of American troops contained the potential recurring of German nationalist ambitions and guaranteed predictable development and realization of US strategic goals. However, apart from that, the US also assisted in redesigning the German political and economic system through the Marshall Plan and supporting reconciliation efforts in Western Europe. An economically strong FRG that stationed NATO troops represented a steady deterrent for the expansion of real-socialism westwards, and, after 1989, served as a backbone of the 'Eastern enlargement' processes. Despite some other differences in the foreign policy domain following the 9/11 attacks in the US, both countries remained committed to further evolving their bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Since 2016, President Trump governed in accordance with the 'America First' slogan. The mentioned catchphrase, however, differentiated from its original use by President Woodrow Wilson to denote his intention to preserve as long as possible US non-involvement in WW1 Europe (Keylor, 2018, p. 322). Apart from focusing primarily on the structural argumentation, political thinkers like Kenneth Waltz also noticed a certain relevance of the human nature aspect in international political processes, and indicated potential correlations between the leader's personality and political preferences in foreign policy decision-making (Jervis, 2018, pp. 3-4). President Trump was an exceptionally distinct political figure, who, unlike his predecessors, did not put a large emphasis on foreign policy elements like traditional partnerships, support to transnational institutions and current international order, increasingly liberal and global international trade, and human rights preservation (Jervis, 2018, p. 4). Trump's policy rather manifested through scepticism towards multilateral initiatives, support to sovereignist and anti-globalist activities. The decreased willingness for multilateral cooperation with Germany and other European partners during the 'Trump era' was even highlighted by political thinkers such as John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, who called for 'handing over NATO to Europeans' (Keylor, 2018, p. 325).

However, having in mind that Mr. Trump's disinclination towards a paramount US role in maintaining the current international order was confronted with constraining effects of domestic and international institutions, radical shifts in international order were averted, although some changes definitely occurred. The historical institutionalism explanation suggests that institutional memory represents an important factor in constraining future political and other activities, regardless of whether the decisions are made based on cost-benefit analysis or sometimes even 'by



default' (Greener, 2005, pp. 62-63). The challenging aspect of Trump's administration was his limited regard for historical understanding and diplomatic history, and affinity for decision-making by 'gut feeling' (Ninkovich, 2018, p. 399). Some even suggest that Mr. Trump was not interested in historical or traditionalist considerations (Langlois, 2018, p. 68). President Trump's tendency towards spontaneity and occasional indifference towards scientific and other facts stood in contrast with the traditional functioning of institutional and other procedures.

Firstly, President Trump aimed to circumvent the institutional and procedural influences in the foreign policy domain when deemed necessary. However, it would not be fair to attribute that tendency solely to Mr. Trump, having in mind that the US Congress' oversight of US foreign policy has been declining for decades (Goldgeier & Saunders, 2018). Nevertheless, political polarization and the sidelining of US institutions, including its skilled bureaucracy, deepened and intensified during the Trump presidency (Goldgeier & Saunders, 2018). Despite their authority, institutions are also prone to changes and redesign. In line with the historical institutionalism postulates, the changes might lead future institutional actions to some altered direction. In foreign policy terms, President Trump applied this logic through influencing the institutional functioning (for example, calling for higher NATO expenditures or its greater focus on combating terrorism), and also through withdrawing from agreements, thus further reducing or altering their influence on the implementation of US policies. However, having in mind the extraordinary political influence of the United States, such activities (withdrawal from UNESCO, the WHO, the Paris Agreement (2016), etc.) also affected other international actors, including Germany as one of the leading multilateral actors. Nevertheless, the strength of earlier institutional procedures and arrangements hampered a more radical discontinuance with previous policies and the possibility for enforcing arbitrary decisions.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, President Trump also resisted institutional procedures by recruiting politically-or-otherwise-close and loyal persons. For instance, Mr. Trump's appointment of Mr. Richard Grenell as US ambassador to Germany resulted in undiplomatic activities like the envoy's criticism over its migrant

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<sup>7</sup> President Trump's inclination towards averting the institutional procedures was not only present in the foreign policy domain. Namely, during November and December 2020, Mr. Trump also made an unsuccessful attempt to dispute the outcome of 2020 US presidential elections before the relevant institutions and voiced unwillingness to hand over his post to the President-Elect Biden.

and other internal German policies, which made Mr. Grenell an unpopular representative in Berlin (Riecke, 2020). Likewise, some other instances might also include the appointing of Mr. Trump's daughter Ivanka and his son-in-law Jared Kushner for advisory positions in his cabinet (Blake, 2019). During his mandate, Mr. Trump also made over 200 judicial lifetime appointments (constituting one-quarter of the entire federal judiciary), out of whom a majority of conservative candidates, which was sometimes interpreted as an intent to secure a more enduring Republican influence in the polarized US institutions (Wise, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, President Trump called for modifications of numerous agreements with partners (for example, NAFTA). However, the depiction of Mr. Trump's sovereignism is that he almost exclusively sought to improve the apparent damaging parts for the US, while remaining disinterested to advance those sections which could have been beneficial to other countries (Jervis, 2018, p. 5). Although the checks and balances, accompanied by strong institutional procedures, neutralized the possibility for fundamental institutional changes, Mr. Trump's *modus operandi* in political practice was more unilateral and occasionally without regard to previous experiences and partnerships. As noted by Robert Jervis: *'In questioning the value of America's alliances, at least as they are presently structured, and in doubting the value of other multilateral institutions, Trump has articulated a narrower conception of the American national interest than that held by any previous president'* (Jervis, 2018, p. 4).

In a somewhat realistic manner, President Trump abstained from conducting foreign interventionist campaigns and favoured the reduction or withdrawal of US troops from countries like Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria (Jervis, 2018, p. 5). Apart from the non-interventionism, the US governance during the 'Trump era' considerably adhered to the concepts such as sovereignty and the centrality of the state (Stirk, 2015, p. 5).<sup>8</sup> Mr. Trump's fondness towards more 'Westphalian' interstate relations might derive from the president's impression that the US benefits could have been maximized through individual agreements rather than multilateral cooperation. His administration's aversion from multilateral initiatives was somewhat counterbalanced by the greater emphasis on some interstate relations.<sup>9</sup> For

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<sup>8</sup> For theoretical considerations regarding the notions of state power, sovereignty and political decision-making, consult: Stirk, 2015, pp. 1-15.

<sup>9</sup> For example, President Trump attempted to 'reset' relations with North Korea, advance cooperation with the UK, Poland and other countries.

instance, Mr. Trump had advocated a 'massive new trade deal' with the UK after Brexit which could have been 'far bigger and more lucrative than any deal that could be made with the EU (Gallardo, 2019). The disinclination towards multilateral diplomacy and affinity towards bilateralism might be considered retrogressive, having in mind not only the globalist world order but also the decades-long US efforts in making the world such. The US president's rhetoric and policies significantly diverged from the liberal and democratic peace postulates, which favoured further deepening of multilateral alliances as a means to strengthen the US global role. Mr. Trump's administration also diverged from international priorities like the fight against climate change (exemplified by the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement), trade freedoms (suspension of regional initiatives such as the TTIP) and questioning further NATO participation (including its 'solidarity clause' in case of external threats). The foreign policy paradigm shift during the Trump administration diverged from the interests of Germany as one of the closest US partners, which reflected negatively on their relations.

## CONCLUSION

Already in the mid-1990s, long before the inauguration of Mr. Trump as US President, Prof. Thomas Schwartz questioned further perspectives of the US-Germany relations, deliberating on whether the two countries would retain their partnership and cooperation in international affairs, or would they rather diverge towards different goals, which would likely encourage unilateralism and instability (Schwartz, 1995, p. 568). Several decades later, the latter occurred, with Mr. Trump's administration drifting apart from the strategic partnership with Germany.

Apart from the sovereignist narrative, President Trump's disinclination towards the integrative processes and the role of international organizations, combined with protectionist and anti-multilateral measures and preference towards bilateralism, signalled a paradigm shift in transatlantic and US-German relations. Mr. Trump's inclination towards bilateralism represented a somewhat anachronistic perception about states constituting the primary influential international actors, which was analysed through a realist approach. On the other hand, organizations like NATO have endured Mr. Trump's criticism while providing enough room for cooperation. Despite the challenges and perhaps the lowest ever interest in organizations like NATO by an incumbent US president, the Alliance was territorially

expanded to encompass new countries in the Western Balkans, and member-states like Germany pledged to increase their defence spending.

Arguments presented in this paper lead to a finding that German policies were criticized on several levels during Mr. Trump's presidency, ranging from disapproving its trade surplus, over questioning official political measures in various domains (the migrant crisis, energy projects, below-target defence expenditures), to broader discontent regarding the development of international processes. These activities were not conducive for maintaining the strength and direction of the US-German strategic partnership, nor have they been helpful to their cooperation within international initiatives. The CoVid-19 pandemic and the sudden shutdown of US borders for the Schengen area countries illustrated the lower degree of solidarity and transatlantic cooperation. As an unnamed European diplomat pessimistically noted: *'We feel there should have been cooperation rather than action that targets one continent'* (BBC, 2020).

The unprecedented challenges posed by the CoVid-19 pandemic and the Brexit process, coupled with different layers of bilateral and multilateral dissonances in relations with the US, turned Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2020 into a daunting task. The above-quoted statement from a European diplomat might have also reflected the failed hopes of the German government for more solidarity with the US partner. Unsurprisingly, it was during the aforementioned Germany's Presidency that the Council of the EU adopted its conclusions on EU-USA relations, reaffirming the strategic importance of the transatlantic partnership.<sup>10</sup> The 'timing' was very important, having also in mind the announced withdrawal of Ms. Angela Merkel from politics following the completion of her fourth Chancellorship in 2021. As the President-Elect, Mr. Joseph Biden called for the restoration of partnership with European partners, it is expected that the US and German leaderships begin to gradually tackle the previously accumulated disagreements and challenges, which due to their complexity and multi-dimensionality, might make the process more challenging than originally envisaged.

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<sup>10</sup> Council of the European Union, 2020, 7 December 2020, Council conclusions on European Union – United States relations.

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## SLOVENIAN DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLES AFTER THE EU ACCESSION

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*Abstract:* In the third wave of democratic changes in the early 1990s, when the Central and Eastern European (CEE) political landscape changed radically, and democratization processes started in the eastern part of the continent, Slovenia was one of the most prominent countries with the best prospects for democratic growth. Slovenia escaped the Yugoslav civil wars, and at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was already on the path towards stable and consolidated democracy with the most successful economy in the entire CEE area. After gaining independence, Slovenia had a simple and straightforward political goal to join the EU and consolidate its place among the most developed countries within the region. This goal was accomplished in a big enlargement to the EU in May 2004. But has what happened after Slovenia managed to successfully achieve its pair of major political goals? We are searching for answers in this paper when analysing why Slovenian voters are increasingly distrustful not only towards political institutions, why so-called new political faces and instant political parties are very successful and why Slovenian democracy lost the leading place among consolidated democracies in CEE.

*Keywords:* Slovenia; European Union; membership; public distrust; democracy.

### INTRODUCTION

Ever since having declared its independence from former Yugoslavia in 1991, the Republic of Slovenia has expressed its willingness and objective, both in its strategic development documents and at the highest political

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levels, to become a full member of the EU (EU).<sup>2</sup> As the crucial developmental documents<sup>3</sup> indicate, the optimum long-term development of the Slovenian economy is inextricably tied to Slovenia's full membership in the EU. Thus, soon after the country's independence, membership in the EU became one of Slovenia's key objectives. In June 1996, a treaty on the integration of Slovenia into the EU was enacted, enabling Slovenia to start negotiations on full membership in the EU, along with some other former socialist states from CEE. The treaty enabled political dialogue, increased commercial co-operation, established the grounds for technical and financial support from the EU and also supported the integration of Slovenia into the EU. All parliamentary political parties with a single exception (far right Slovenian National Party), supported the integration and signed a joint treaty on co-operation for this purpose. The National Assembly passed a decree on the priority of discussing European legislation, thereby accelerating the adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire*. Membership in the EU became the national interest (Fink-Hafner & Lajh, 2005, p. 55–56). Accession negotiations between Slovenia and the Union were completed during 2002, and in April 2003 the Treaty on Accession of Slovenia to the EU was signed. Hence, on 1 May 2004, Slovenia became part of the European family of nations. In this manner, the *Acquis Communautaire* became part of Slovenian legislation and European affairs became internal affairs of Slovenia.

The support for EU membership was quite stable during the accession process, resulting in good turnout (60.4 percent) and support (89.6 percent) at the referendum on joining the EU, which was carried out on 23 March 2003 (Haček et al., 2017, p. 150). The referendum was more or less just a formality due to the high level of public support, which did not dissipate over the years but even increased when the accession date approximated (Velič, 2003). Among the ten countries joining the EU in spring 2004, the highest support for the membership was recorded in Lithuania (52 percent of survey respondents saying it was good for their country to become a member of the EU), followed by Malta (50 percent). Slovenia, at 40 percent, was on the lower end, surpassing only Latvia (33 percent) and Estonia (31

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<sup>2</sup> We will uniformly use the term EU (EU) in this article, acknowledging the term European Communities pre-1993.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Slovenia's Economic Development Strategy, The Strategy of International Economic Relations of Slovenia, Strategy for Improving the Competitiveness of the Slovenian Industry, etc.

percent). However, the citizens of Slovenia (64 percent), Hungary and Lithuania (both 58 percent) most often expressed expectations of certain benefits as a result of their country's membership. In the period from spring 2003 to spring 2004, the trend of support for EU membership in Slovenia reflected the average for the new Member States at the time of the referendum on Slovenia's accession (spring 2003), when support reached its peak (57 percent), followed by a trend of decreasing support. In the period 1999-2002, support in Slovenia was continuously below the average for the new Member States (between five percent and eleven percent). However, the percentage of inhabitants of Slovenia who maintained that EU membership would be detrimental to Slovenia was consistently lower as well, ranging from seven to 17 percent (Eurobarometer 62, 2004, p. 18; see also Haček & Kukovič, 2014, p. 106).

The goal of this paper is not, however, to analyse and evaluate the processes of the Slovenian accession process to the EU, but to analyse and evaluate the main political, societal and economic developments in far less known and analysed period, i.e., the period after the Slovenian accession to the EU that influenced the democratic development of the country in both positive and negative ways. We are searching for answers to the basic question, which firstly focuses on the three periods, i.e., the EU accession, the right-wing Janša's government and the beginning of the global economic crisis (2004-2009), the global crisis (mis)management and politico-economic consequences (2009-2014), and the recovery period (2014-2020). The analysis is searching for an answer to the questions why Slovenian voters are increasingly distrustful not only towards national politics but also towards the EU *per se* and EU institutions, why so-called new political faces and instant political parties thrive in Slovenia, and why Slovenian democracy took some damage and lost leading place among consolidated democracies in CEE.

## **THE EU ACCESSION AND EARLY YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP**

Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, welcomed the 75 million "new fellow citizens" on 1 May 2004 as he attended celebrations marking the expansion of the EU to ten new members in Nova Gorica. He was joined by Slovenian Prime Minister Anton Rop, who in turn welcomed Europe. Just a month and a half after the entry, Slovenia was faced with the first major EU event, as the first European Parliament elections in Slovenia were held on 13 June 2004. There were 91 candidates (42 females) for the

seven Slovenian seats in the European Parliament. Candidates were grouped into 13 candidacy-lists among which there were seven parliamentary parties and six non-parliamentary parties or other groups. European parliamentary elections 2004 were marked by the worst turnout to date – 45.7 percent. The turnout even decreased in the ‘old’ member states of the EU (compared to the 1999 elections), but what was the most alarming was the turnout in the new member states. Slovenia and the Czech Republic both had a 28.4 percent turnout, which only outperformed Estonia and Slovakia – in the latter, it was as low as 17 percent. Such a poor turnout was interpreted as the result of the insufficient appraisal of the importance of these elections and the European Parliament’s work (Haček et al., 2017, p. 147). But those were not the only reasons, as the poor electoral turnout in Slovenia was also caused by growing dissatisfaction with politics, the general disinterest of the public and its incomprehension. The key factor in electing Slovenian representatives was the candidate’s personal charisma and popularity. This was clearly visible by the election of Borut Pahor (SD) through preferential voting, even if he was the last name on the list. Elections to the European parliament were a clear indicator of coming political changes, as four out of the seven elected representatives were on the opposition lists.

Regular parliamentary elections were held on 3 October 2004 and brought substantial political shift as twelve-year long reign of Liberal Democracy ended, forecasted already by the retreat of long-term Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek to the post of President of the Republic in 2002 and the results of the elections to European Parliament a few months before. For the first time, the winner of the elections was the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), which received 29.1 percent of the votes and formed a centre-right coalition government under the leadership of new Prime Minister Janez Janša. The new centre-right government had three big challenges ahead (Haček et al., 2017, p. 202–205), all three closely connected with the EU.

The first one was the adoption of the Common Currency. Slovenia introduced the Euro on 1 January 2007 and joined the Eurozone as the first new Member State. The transition from Slovenian Tolar to the Euro mostly ran swiftly and smoothly, causing no major problems as the population had been informed of the new currency in advance, people had a very positive attitude towards the common currency and were expecting mostly positive effects.

The second challenge was entry into the Schengen Area on 22 December 2007, when Slovenia ceased to execute border control of internal land and

maritime borders with the EU Member States. By entering the Schengen Area, Slovenia abolished border control on its borders with Austria, Italy and Hungary, while intensifying control on the border with Croatia, which became a Schengen external border.

The third challenge seemed like the most demanding one, as Slovenia took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU and led the community uniting 27 Member States and almost half a billion people. Slovenia grasped an exceptional historical opportunity, as this was the first Presidency of a Member State that entered the Union in the 2004 enlargement and the first Council of the EU Presidency of a Slavic state ever. The Presidency of the Council of the EU turned out to be one of the most demanding and complex tasks in terms of contents and a challenge in the organizational and logistical sense at the same time.

The next regular parliamentary elections were held in September 2008 and were again very politically intense, and once again brought a complete political U-turn, as the right-wing ruling coalition suffered defeat and one of the coalition parties (NSi - New Slovenia-Christian People's Party) even failed to reach four percent parliamentary threshold.<sup>4</sup> The political U-turn has already announced itself beforehand: a) with the win of formally non-partisan, but in political reality left-wing adored, mayor of national capital Ljubljana, Zoran Janković at local elections in 2006 (Kukovič, 2018a, p. 88); b) the unexpected defeat of coalition-candidate Lojze Peterle, president of the first democratically elected government in the 1990s, at presidential elections in 2007 when the election campaign took an extreme ideological turn; c) the emergence of a new left-wing political party ZARES-New Politics that surfaced from the once major political force Liberal Democracy and became the second power on the left side of the political continuum. The reasons for the defeat of the centre-right government after a relatively successful and stable term in office are multi-layered. In large part, the result of the profound socio-political cleavage in Slovenian society, originating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century political cleavages that intensified to shocking civil-war-like proportions during the Second World War and failed to subdue even to this very day. The results of this political cleavage are also constant political, economic and societal conflict between the so-called left-

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<sup>4</sup> New Slovenia-Christian People's Party is also the only political party in modern Slovenian history to bounce back at the next parliamentary elections (held in December 2011), where they managed to get 4.9 percent of the votes to re-enter the parliament.

wing political forces that are more closely connected and supported by the NGOs and major media outlets, and mostly less influential right-wing political forces, which failed to seize the opportunity presented to them during the democratic transition period after the end of communism to make up for the half-century deficit between the 1940s and 1990s.

### **THE PAINFUL YEARS OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS AND DEMOCRATIC REGRESSION**

Almost immediately after the new left-wing government took over in November 2008, the impact of the world economic crisis hit Slovenia hard. It was visible to the Slovenian public and the opposition that the government had great difficulties dealing with the crisis. As it appeared, not only with the major economic crisis but also with the major political crisis, followed by the inability of the then Prime Minister Borut Pahor to effectively steer the government away from the crisis. Instead, the government appeared to be a weak, indecisive, ineffective, and above all, disunited, contributing to the growing distrust of Slovenians towards politics in general and especially towards political parties.

A few months after the shift of political power, the second European Parliament elections since Slovenian membership to the EU was held on 7 June 2009. Just eight months after losing national parliamentary elections, now the leading opposition party Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), won the elections conclusively, with three elected Members of the European Parliament (MEP), followed by the ruling party of the time, the Social Democrats (SD) with two MEPs, and with ZARES – New Politics, the Liberal Democratic Party (LSD) and the non-parliamentary New Slovenia-Christian People's Party (NSi), each with one elected MEP.

The period of elections to the European parliament was already influenced heavily by the deteriorating economic conditions that also continued into 2010 and 2011. The government prepared several economic reforms to revitalize the economy and again generate economic growth; the most important reforms were retirees reform (Pensions and Disability Insurance Act) and reform of the labour market (Prevention of Illegal Work and Employment Act). The government failed to present and label the reforms as economically necessary and positive to the general public, and consequently, the reforms were met hard by the unions and political opposition, that demanded several corrigenda in each of the reforms and threatened with the referendums, if the demanded corrigenda would not

be implemented. As neither side was prepared to bend, a triple referendum was held on 5 June 2011 for the first time in recent Slovenian history. The referendum was initiated by the unions and opposition parties, and greatly contributed to the fall of the government three months later. The most important of the three referendums was the referendum on the Pension and Disability Insurance Act,<sup>5</sup> containing retirement reform. The government put all their efforts and political weight on winning at least this referendum, only to fail completely, as all three legislative acts were rejected persuasively (70.9 to 75.4 percent of the votes against with 40.5 percent voter turnout). The defeat only added fuel to the ongoing political crisis, and the government consequently failed to get the vote of confidence in the National Assembly in September 2011 (Haček et al., 2017, p. 176).

Pahor was more successful in the bilateral relations with neighbouring Croatia that was in negotiations to enter the EU as the latest member state and the second one from the Western Balkans. He negotiated the Arbitration Agreement with Croatian Prime Minister Kosor over the border dispute that originated in the early 1990s when both countries gained independence but failed to agree on the exact border line on land and especially on the seacoast. The border dispute was always useful fuel for internal political squabbles with numerous, sometimes violent incidents, especially in Piran Bay. The Slovenian government managed to sign an arbitration agreement with Croatia in 2009, which determined that the dispute will be resolved in front of the five-member Arbitration Court, established for this case only. The decision made by the Arbitration Court should have been obligatory for both sides. A referendum on the Arbitration Agreement with Croatia over the border dispute between the countries was called by the 86 MPs and carried out in June 2010. With the relatively low turnout (42 percent), surprisingly 51.5 percent voted for the Agreement and only 48.5 percent against it, effectively opening European doors for Croatia to enter the Union.

Triple referendum defeat resulted in the first precocious parliamentary elections, held on 4 December 2011. We also witnessed at-the-time novice political phenomena, as several new political parties were established in the sixty days prior to elections, and two of them<sup>6</sup> played a critical role in the

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<sup>5</sup> The other two being referendums on the Prevention of Illegal Work and the Employment Act and Protection of Documents and Archives and Archival Institutions Act.

<sup>6</sup> The first one is the Civil List of Gregor Virant, founded by Gregor Virant, former minister of public administration in the right-wing government from 2004 to 2008;



elections and coalition-building procedures that followed. Precocious elections were surprisingly won by Positive Slovenia (PS) that manage to overtake long-time favourite Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), but PS leader Zoran Janković failed to understand that in the proportional system he actually needs a ruling coalition in order to be able to get elected as Prime Minister. PS could not form any kind of coalition, and after several political turns, a new right-centre coalition emerged, led by the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and Prime Minister for the second time, Janez Janša. But the coalition proved to be short-lived, as three coalition partners, namely Citizen's Alliance of Gregor Virant (DLGV), DeSUS and SLS abandoned the ruling coalition in the first months of 2013 following the political impacts of the report issued by the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC). In the report, Prime Minister Janša and opposition leader Janković were accused of violation of financial disclosure obligations, namely both systematically and repeatedly violated the law by failing to properly report their assets to the CPC, according to the CPC. Janša rejected the calls for resignation and the ruling coalition of two right-wing parties (SDS, NSi) was left to rule with only a minority of votes (30) in the National Assembly.

On 27 February 2012, the majority of MPs in the National Assembly supported the vote of no-confidence to the Prime Minister Janša, and at the same time also elected a new Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek from Positive Slovenia; her election was supported by the centre-left coalition (52 MPs), comprised of Positive Slovenia (PS), Social Democrats (SD), DLGV and the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS). There was considerable haste in assembling the new government since the National Assembly appointed the new government only in 22 days. The government had to act quickly in an extremely unstable period, marked by a multitude of political and economic affairs and scandals, resulting in particularly frequent changes of ministers, interpellations, serious economic decline and a serious banking sector crisis. However, the government consequently did not fall because of such instabilities, but because of internal discords. Zoran Janković rather surprisingly resumed leadership of the largest coalition party, Positive Slovenia, in April 2014, after he had to retire from the same position the previous year due to incriminating the Commission for Prevention of Corruption's report. For this reason, tensions emerged within the ruling

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second is Positive Slovenia, founded by the Mayor of the national capital city of Ljubljana, Zoran Janković, who was always presenting himself as a non-partisan figure, but was also always very strongly in favor of left-wing political parties.

coalition, which led to the resignation of Alenka Bratušek as Prime Minister, her retreat from the party and the establishment of her own party (Alliance of Alenka Bratušek). All this led to second consecutive early parliamentary elections, which were the first time held during the summer holidays in independent Slovenia on 13 July 2014 with a visibly negative impact on voter turnout (51.7 percent compared to 65.6 percent in 2011).

Amidst the most serious political crisis up to date in modern Slovenian history and just 49 days prior to another early election to the National Assembly, the third European Parliament elections were held on 25 May 2014. The winner of the election (24.8 percent) was again the largest opposition party, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), which won three MEPs, a joint list of Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and New Slovenia - Christian People's Party (NSi) won two MEPs, while centre-left parties of Social Democrats (SD), the Democratic party of pensioners (DeSUS) and "I Believe!" list each got one MEP.

## THE ECONOMIC CRISIS RECOVERY

For the second time in a row, a newly formed political party won early parliamentary elections, this time the Party of Miro Cerar (SMC), which was officially established only 41 days prior to elections. The SMC was concentrated mostly around the personality of Miro Cerar, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Ljubljana and long-time expert legal advisor to the National Assembly. The SMC designed its campaign to advocate for the rule of law, higher ethical standards in politics, sustainable development, social responsibility and human dignity, while the new party extensively used voter dissatisfaction with the existing political climate in the country. The Party of Miro Cerar, which in 2015 was renamed into the Modern Centre Party, won 36 mandates and quite easily established a new governing coalition, consisting of the Modern Centre Party (36 MPs), the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS; 10 MPs) and Social Democrats (SD; 6 MPs). At the time of appointment of the government in the National Assembly in September 2014, the new coalition had a total of 52 MPs.<sup>7</sup> Due

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<sup>7</sup> In the first two years of the 2014-2018 term, the number of coalition MPs has shifted quite a bit. In March 2017, the Party of Modern Centre (SMC) had 35 MPs, the Slovenian Democratic Party 19 MPs, the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS) 11 MPs, Social Democrats (SD), United Left and New Slovenia - Christian Democrats each had six MPs, and there were five unaligned MPs (two former

to the extremely high number of acquired mandates, the SMC had superiority also inside the government with nine ministers, and both coalition partners had seven ministers between themselves.

Despite bringing a higher degree of political and economic stability to the country and working in more favourable economic conditions in comparison with previous governments, Slovenia remained mostly static in the period of Cerar's government. The government and public authorities faced general distrust due to the ruling coalition's low effectiveness in dealing with systemic problems of capture by influential lobby groups, a continuing trend from the previous periods, despite the ruling Modern Centre Party (SMC) promises of a "different politics of higher ethical standards." Distrust was also chronic with regard to the judiciary and the fight against corruption because the progress that would, for example, allow the prosecution of important individuals, was insufficient. Financial dependence and political capture continued to hamper civil society and the media. Due to internal divisions and a lack of political will, the centre-left coalition was ineffective in tackling the country's major problems, such as the inefficient public healthcare sector and the irresponsible management of the state assets (Lovec, 2018, p. 2–3).

In the term of Cerar's government, the recovery from the economic recession of 2008–2014 continued. The country's robust economic growth, reaching about five percent in 2017 and 2018, helped reduce the fiscal deficit and resulted in a strong decline in unemployment. At the same time, however, the favourable short-term economic situation reduced the pressure on Cerar's government to move on with policy reforms. Although Slovenia features the largest long-term sustainability gap of all EU members, the announced comprehensive health care reform was left to the next government. As for pensions, the Cerar's government eventually agreed with social partners upon the broad outline of pension reform to be adopted in 2020 but refrained from taking any controversial decisions. The tax reform eventually adopted in summer 2016 has been more modest than initially announced, and minor changes announced by the minister of finance for 2017 were only partially implemented. The promised privatisation of Telekom Slovenia, the largest communication company in the country, fell

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members of the SMC, two former members of the Alliance of Alenka Bratušek and one former member of the SDS). The Alliance of Alenka Bratušek became the first parliamentary party in modern Slovenian history to lose all (four) MPs to other political groups.

victim to political opposition from within and outside the governing coalition. The same happened with the promised privatisation of NLB, the largest Slovenian bank (Haček et al., 2019).

In March 2018, Prime Minister Cerar surprisingly resigned pointing to increased criticism from public-sector unions and the strong opposition to the government's high-profile project of a second railroad track to the port of Koper. In yet another early parliamentary election in June 2018, Cerar's Modern Centre Party (SMC) and most other traditional centre-left parties lost votes. However, the rise of a new centre-left party, the Party of Marjan Šarec (*Lista Marjana Šarca*; LMS), a comedian turned mayor who came second in the presidential elections in 2017, allowed the centre-left parties to refuse to even discuss the possibility of forming the ruling coalition with the winner of the elections, the centre-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) of Janez Janša which got twice as many votes as its nearest rival. In September 2018, the five centre-left parties succeeded in forming a minority government tolerated by the far-leftist Levica party, making Marjan Šarec the new Prime Minister (Haček et al., 2019).

The quality of democracy continued to suffer from widespread corruption. While the Cerar's government implemented the Anti-Corruption Action Plan adopted in January 2015, and the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption managed to upgrade its supervisor web platform and launch its successor ERAR in July 2016, doubts about the political elite's commitment to fight corruption were raised by two developments in particular. The first involved the non-transparent management of a government project in which a second railway track is to be constructed between Divača and the port of Koper. The second involved investments by Magna Steyr, a Canadian-Austrian company that received large subsidies and unconditional support from the government for a plan to build a new car paint shop close to Maribor but failed to manage things transparently and deliver on its promise of bringing several thousand new jobs to the region. The differences in opinions between the government and civil society organisations on the financial construction of the second railway track project resulted in a referendum being called in September 2017 and repeated because of transparency irregularities on the government's side in May 2018. Nonetheless, the project was not halted as turnout levels for both referendums were too low to render the vote binding, despite the fact that votes opposing the government's plan slightly outnumbered votes in support of the plan in May 2018 (Haček et al., 2019). The dormant conflict between the government and local communities over constitutionally

guaranteed autonomy of the latter intensified under the Cerar's government (Kukovič, 2018b, p. 185).

During the term of Cerar's government, the first time since the fall of the Berlin wall and democratisation of CEE, Slovenia lost its leading place in the Freedom House's measurement "Democracy Index". This actually happened in 2016 when the Slovenian score dropped substantially for the first time since the early 2000s and Slovenia was overtaken by improving Estonia. The trend, that was not only the result of the failure of Cerar's government, but also of previous governments, also continued in 2017 and 2018, when Slovenian score regressed, and Slovenia was caught up by yet another Baltic country, this time Latvia. The areas where Slovenia especially struggled compared to other most successful countries of democratic consolidation are mainly independent media and judicial framework, which is also consistent with the analysis above.

But by far, the most important event in Slovenian foreign relations in the period of Cerar's government was the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling on the border dispute with Croatia. However, the Croatian delegation refused to respect the Court's findings, citing revelations that in 2015 the Slovenian delegation to the Court had inappropriately received confidential information from a judge sitting on the panel. The publication of the Court's decision in June triggered another set of tensions between the two countries, which included blockades and hostile rhetoric by some political actors in Slovenia. The final decision came against the backdrop of disputes related to the delays created by the strict implementation of the Schengen border controls, which Croatia interpreted as Slovenian pressure over the arbitration issue. Slovenia declared that it would block Croatia's accession to the OECD for its supposed lack of respect for international law and sue Croatia in the Court of Justice to the EU over the breach of European law (Lovec, 2018, p. 3, 5). Slovenia submitted a letter of complaint against neighbouring Croatia to the European Commission on 16 March 2018 after Croatia refused to implement an arbitration decision on their border dispute in the Adriatic Sea. The letter submitted by Slovenia contained over a hundred pages of alleged violations of European law that Slovenia says stem from Croatia's refusal to abide by the arbitration court's ruling. According to the procedure, before an EU member state initiates a court proceeding against another member, it must first refer the matter to the Commission. But to the Slovenian disappointment, the Juncker Commission did not support the Slovenian position and decided to remain neutral. The Commission's decision disappointed many in Slovenia and fuelled anti-EU

sentiment. The decision was widely interpreted as politically motivated, favouring the right-wing coalition that is ruling Croatia and disregarding the rule of law as one of the EU cornerstones at the same time.

The fourth and latest elections to the European Parliament were held on 26 May 2019. Voter turnout was slightly higher than in 2009 and 2014 (28.9 percent), with lower turnouts than in Slovenia recorded only in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic. The winner of the election was once again the largest opposition party Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) that had a joint list with Slovenian People's Party (26,3 percent), which won three MEPs. Social Democrats (SD) received two MEPs, the leading ruling coalition Party of Marjan Šarec also received two MEPs, while New Slovenia - Christian People's Party (NSi) received one MEPs.<sup>8</sup> A low turnout at the European elections in Slovenia, which characterize all four elections in the past fifteen years, is primarily due to disillusionment with politics in general, the lack of interest among voters and also lack of understanding about the EU among the electorate. A key factor in the selection of candidates for MEPs among Slovenian voters is the individual's charisma and popularity, which can be seen with the election of all eight candidates through preferential voting in the 2019 elections.

TABLE 1: SATISFACTION WITH THE DEMOCRACY (IN PERCENT)

Year	SATISFIED	UNSATISFIED	NO REPONSE
1998	31	58	11
1999	39	49	12
2000	40	48	12
2001	42	46	12
2002	44	46	10
2003	38	55	7
2004	41	51	8
2005	34	59	7
2006	39	51	11

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<sup>8</sup> Source: National Electoral Commission, available at <https://volitve.gov.si/ep2019/#/rezultati> (28 November 2020).

Year	SATISFIED	UNSATISFIED	NO REPONSE
2007	36	58	6
2008	39	55	6
2009	32	62	6
2010	11	86	3
2011	12	84	4
2012	12	85	3
2013	8	87	5
2014	8	87	5

Source: Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov (2014). Data from the last conducted survey in each calendar year is shown. After 2014 the survey was discontinued. The question was: »Are you generally satisfied or unsatisfied with the development of democracy in Slovenia?«

Globally, public opinion polls show that new democratic systems are faced with a relatively high degree of dissatisfaction with democracy and therefore also with democratic institutions. Additionally, we also see clearly that satisfaction with democracy is a highly unstable phenomenon. Slovenia does not differ much from this general framework. Rather the opposite, since on average more than half of the citizens are constantly dissatisfied with the democratic regime after 2008. In Table 1, we can see that the level of discontent substantially through the years, but especially after 2008 due to the growing impact of the global economic crisis and a sense that the politics is being ineffective in dealing with the crisis. In 2013 and 2014, the level of dissatisfaction with democracy was the highest ever, namely 87 percent. The question is, how high can frustration tolerance actually be and how much can the “fragile” post-socialist democratic political system withstands, before the high levels of dissatisfaction transfer into the denial of the legitimacy of the democratic political system and its key institutions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The latest research asking about satisfaction with democracy was conducted in 2020, and 9 percent of respondents were very satisfied with how Slovenian democracy performs, while an additional 23 percent were satisfied (Slovensko javno mnenje 2020).

To conclude our analysis of the economic recovery period 2014–2020, we should devote some attention also to the coronavirus pandemic crisis of 2020, which effectively ended any economic recovery and growth not only in Slovenia but also globally. In Slovenia, the pandemic coincided with the new government formed in March 2020, just a day after the epidemic was declared. Of course, the new government would not be possible if Prime Minister Šarec did not unexpectedly resign in late-January 2020 because of political scandals, resignations of key ministers, own inabilities to deal with deepening multi-policy crisis and continuous coalition squabbles. A new centre-right government was formed, led yet again by Janez Janša, winner of 2018 parliamentary elections. The new government was not only greeted by the major global health and economic crisis, but also by protests from far-left activists that started even before the government was formed and the state of constant political conflict, fuelled continuously by total distrust of opposition parties, publicly financed NGOs and major media outlets under influence of opposition parties. The government's response towards the coronavirus crisis was especially positive in the first coronavirus wave in spring and summer 2020, which is also reflected from the Eurobarometer 94 survey, where 64 percent of respondents in Slovenia expressed their satisfaction with the government's response to the coronavirus crisis.<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper, we posed some seemingly simple and straightforward questions that should reveal political development after Slovenia managed to successfully enter the EU. As our extensive analysis clearly shows Slovenia walked a rocky and steep political and economic path during the last 15 years that was not only leading upwards but in some periods also downwards in the dark alleys of democratic regression.

To understand the character of contemporary Slovenian democracy, it is necessary to look back into recent political history. Two key factors, which as a political constancy have determined this development and also largely marked Slovenian political culture, can be identified. The first is ideological exclusivism as an expression of great differences in ideas, while the second one is collectivistic corporatism which, with its tendency to unity, not only

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Eurobarometer 94, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/90882> (3 January 2021).



expressed resistance to political conflicts but also resistance to differences and competition because that could hurt social harmony. Here originates the strong tendency to overcome the divisions in the political space through the creation of grand coalitions, which was the characteristic of the first decade of Slovenian independence. This practice changed after entering the EU in 2004 into a more competitive and conflict mode of policy, which is constituted by a distinction between authority and opposition. Accordingly, the different ways of narrowing the possibilities to express and confront opposite opinions and positions do not benefit the development of parliamentary democracy. But they partly match the prevailing tendencies to narrow the possibilities of direct democracy and spread the influence of governing political parties on non-governmental stakeholders, such as media and NGOs. Also, the reanimation of populist rituals and ideology which co-exist with decreasing sentiments towards the EU and its institutions should not be overlooked, with both tendencies holding back the development of the liberal-democratic characteristics of Slovenian democracy.

Experience Slovenia has had in its construction of a democratic political system since entering into the EU has been subject to varying assessments. The most negative assessments of the Slovenian political system are related to the persistence of authoritarian behaviour patterns and manipulation with democratic institutions that have found their way into the structures of political parties, to the partocracy resulting from this and the bureaucratic sprawl (Haček et al., 2017). Until the mid-2010s, different surveys placed Slovenia among “consolidated democracies” usually with the highest total marks among the CEE countries. However, in 2015 this changed and Slovenia began to regress. The problems of the Slovenian political system, that were further exposed with the inability of the ruling political class to effectively battle the economic and political crisis in the period from 2008 to 2014, are related to various forms of nepotism, clientelism and corruption, the implementation of the rule of law and the insufficiently developed democratic culture and with it, the culture of public and tolerant dialogue. Democracy cannot be effective unless it is underpinned by the rule of law and a well-functioning judicial system, and those are the areas that have become most problematic after the political and economic crisis ended in 2014. As the EU and its institutions are often the ones bringing attention to the issues mentioned and the ones demanding the construction and implementation of reform programs, and as Slovenian politics has grown into a populist partocracy without any sense of democratic accountability towards the electorate since the EU accession, one cannot wonder that the EU is no longer seen as political and societal fairy-tale honey-land that will

solve every possible problem in a heartbeat. On the contrary, it is very evident and clear even to an average Slovenian voter that Slovenia today has very little influence in the EU, mostly because of its own miscalculations, politicization of merit bureaucracy and lack of consistent foreign policy.

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## THE BELARUSIAN ISSUE IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

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*Abstract:* Belarus – an East European country, but actually located in the geographical centre of Europe – in 2020 topped the agenda of political affairs on the continent by facing the biggest political crisis since its independence, triggered by President Lukashenko's election fraud and massive citizens' protests that followed. Though domestic in nature, this crisis has huge implications for broader European affairs, due to the geopolitical position of Belarus between Russia and the political West. However, the explanation of the essence of the Belarusian issue which culminated in the mentioned presidential crisis – which is the central research goal in this paper – cannot rest solely on issues of geopolitics and authoritarianism. It requires a deeper historical analysis of the identity of the state of Belarus and Belarusians as a nation, as well as consideration of the role of Lukashenko in this context. The main thesis of the paper is that Belarus has an unusually weak and unfinished national identity, close to Russia, but marked by a long period of detachment from it. The secret of Lukashenko's longevity in power is a congruence of his political philosophy with this identity and a wider obsession of Belarusians with political stability and personal well-being. Namely, his failure to deliver these values led his political fate to a dead-end in 2020 and stressed the significance of the Belarusian issue for wider European affairs. Yet, Lukashenko's possible resignation does not bring a solution because the weak identity of Belarusians would still make them victims of the ongoing European geopolitical divide.

*Keywords:* Belarus, Lukashenko, 2020 presidential crisis, national identity, geopolitics, authoritarianism, Russia-Western relations.

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## INTRODUCTION

Belarus, a 10-million country located in East Europe, was not the main focus of many international relations researchers since its independence in 1991. For comparison, neighbouring Ukraine has always attracted much greater attention. Some facts about Belarus are widely known and usually taken for granted, without further examination, such as: that it is 'the last European dictatorship' ruled by its strongman Lukashenko since 1994; that it is the most loyal ally of Russia, with which it forms a monolith anti-Western geopolitical bloc. The geopolitical position of Belarus between Russia and the West is a commonsense reason why the West has always been loud in criticizing its authoritarianism, while being mostly silent when it comes to even more autocratic regimes from the post-Soviet space, such as those in Azerbaijan and Central-Asian states (Ioffe, 2014, p. 87). However, the Belarusian issue in European affairs is too complex to be reduced only to geopolitics, or the questions of autocracy/democracy. Recent events, related to the presidential crisis of 2020, brought this issue to the top of the international relations agenda. This paper aims to explain how and why it happened, which requires a deeper analysis that would go to the issue's very roots – by answering the questions about how the state of Belarus came to exist as a separate entity in the first place, and how Belarusians think about themselves and the world? This is the only context in which it would be possible to consider the role of Lukashenko and its quarter century-long rule, as well as the seemingly dead-end position in which he found himself after the last elections. That said, the structure of the rest of the paper can be easily revealed: firstly, the identity of Belarus and Belarusians is examined using the historical method; secondly, the phenomenon of Lukashenko is put into this context; thirdly, the presidential crisis of 2020 is analysed starting with what previously was determined, which leads us to the essence of the Belarusian issue and its prospects.

## WHAT IS BELARUS AND WHO ARE BELARUSIANS?

Pre-history of the formation of contemporary Belarusian statehood and national identity leads us to the early medieval period and the Principality of Polotsk, which – especially during the reign of Rogvolod (10<sup>th</sup> century) and Vseslav (11<sup>th</sup> century) – managed to achieve a significant degree of prosperity and autonomy inside what was then known as Kievan Rus' (the cradle of modern Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples, as well as their respective states) (Wilson, 2011, pp. 3-10). The term Belarus' (literally 'White

Russia') originated in this period, with two possible explanations for such etymology: people of Polotsk received Christianity in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (together with most of the rest of Kievan Rus'), unlike Baltic tribes in 'Black Russia' (the territory around contemporary Belarus-Lithuania border); Polotsk remained outside the reach of the Mongol Golden Horde after it conquered Kiev in 1240 (Wilson, 2011, pp. 19-20). However, modern Belarusian nationalists failed to establish a Belarusian national identity on the Polotskian myth; it was rather used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Russian Slavophiles as proof that Western parts of the Russian Empire were Orthodox at the moment of the Great Schism of 1054 (Wilson, 2011, p. 17).

Contemporary Belarusian nationalism was, in fact, far more influenced by a five century-long period during which the complete territory of what is today Belarus rested within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (since 1569 a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). This was the time when Belarus and Belarusians were cut off from Russia both politically (belonging to a separate political entity which even fought several wars against the Grand Duchy of Moscow and later Russian Empire) and culturally/religiously (residing inside a Catholic-dominated state since Grand Duke Jogaila's conversion to Western Christianity in 1386/1387, while most of Belarusians – who were then, alongside with Ukrainians, called Ruthenians – accepted the Union of Brest from 1596) (Wilson, 2011, pp. 18-27, 33-38, 42-49; Marples, 2012, pp. 19-20). From *Nasha Nyiva* ('Our Field') magazine at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the Belarusian People's Front (BNF) at its end, the Belarusian national movement claimed that the Grand Duchy was actually Belarus, citing peaceful incorporation of the Belarusian lands into a new state, numerical advantage of the ethnic and linguistic Belarusian population over nominal Lithuanian, and common use of the Belarusian language in state affairs (Wilson, 2011, pp. 25, 27, 83-84, 141). The *Pahonia* emblem (a horseman wielding his sword above his head), used as a coat of arms of Belarus on three occasions of its independence from Russia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also (alongside with white-red-white flag that accompanied it) by anti-Lukashenko protesters – is actually the Grand Duchy's (the contemporary state of Lithuania also uses its variant).

After it entirely absorbed the territory of Belarus in three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian Empire did its best to prevent (or at least slow down) the process of Belarusian national awakening. It started with phased, but complete eradication of the Uniate Church from Belarusian soil (Wilson, 2011, pp. 58, 64). For comparison, Ukrainians remained Uniates in Galicia, which became

a part of the Habsburg Empire, out of Russia's reach, and would serve as an epicentre of later Ukrainian nationalism (Trapara, 2020, pp. 166-167).<sup>2</sup> St. Petersburg supported an alternative version of nationalism in the shape of 'West-Russism' which, although popularized the term Belarus, in fact, negated separate Belarusian identity (Wilson, 2011, pp. 69-76). Moreover, societal obstacles for the development of the authentic Belarusian national movement were numerous: fluid language, spoken mostly by the peasantry, low literacy, education and mass communication, absence of the middle class, the domination of minorities (mainly Jews and Poles) in the cities, etc (Wilson, 2011, pp. 85-87; Marples, 2012, p. 20; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 62-63). Nor was there anything similar to the Ukrainian Cossack myth to serve as the foundation for Orthodox national identity, but separated from the Russian (Wilson, 2011, pp. 62-63). Nevertheless, the contours of the Belarusian national movement started to appear at the crossing between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in several forms, among which the aforementioned *Nasha Nyiva* was the most prominent (Wilson, 2011, pp. 77-88). This process was firstly interrupted, but then in a perverted way stirred up by World War I.

During the war, German occupiers reluctantly supported the Belarusian national movement; after the Brest-Litovsk peace agreement with the Bolsheviks in March 1918, they did the same with the short-lived Belarusian People's Republic. The internal divisions of its leadership and later German defeat prevented this first-ever state under the name of Belarus and with white-red-white flag and *Pahonia* as national symbols from living longer (Wilson, 2011, pp. 91-96; Marples, 2012, pp. 22-25). Thus, the first real embodiment of the Belarusian national movement's aims actually became BSSR (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), created as one of the federal units of the Soviet Union after the Bolsheviks' victory in the civil war. In the first decade of its existence, the process of 'belarusization' – encouragement of the use of the Belarusian language in public communication and education – was stronger than ever before or later. Belarusian national identity was being formed 'from above', with the Communist ideological coating, and inside the broader Soviet political community (Wilson, 2011, pp. 96-105; Marples, 2012, pp. 25-29). Yet, this has also been short-lived – already in the 30s, Stalin saw a separate Belarusian national identity as a 'bourgeois element' and a threat to the Soviet state, so he reversed the process of belarusization and purged most of the Belarusian intellectual elite

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that Galicians, unlike Belarusians, did not accept the Union immediately, but resisted it for a century (Wilson, 2011, pp. 48-51).

(Marples, 2012, pp. 29-32). World War II additionally compromised the Belarusian national movement (and its national symbols) because of its collaboration with the Nazis (Wilson, 2011, pp. 108-110; Marples, 2012, pp. 39-41). Moreover, a new myth appeared, which even more closely attached Belarusian identity to the broader Soviet one – that of Partisan movement liberation struggle, which was especially strong in the territory of Belarus (Wilson, 2011, pp. 110-115).

Namely, two members of the Partisan movement were the most prominent leaders of the Communist Party of Belarus (its official name during the Soviet period was Byelorussia) after the war: Kirill Mazurov (First Secretary from 1956 to 1965, then moved to a higher position in Moscow) and Piotr Masharov (1965-1980, when he died in a suspicious car accident). This was the time of fast industrial development of what used to be a rural society (Wilson, 2011, pp. 115-116; Marples, 2012, pp. 43-44, 46-47). Belarus even acquired international subjectivity with a seat at the United Nations, but its leadership never actually separated loyalty to their homeland from that to the Soviet Union; a new wave of russification was also on the rise during the Brezhnev years (Wilson, 2011, p. 117; Marples, 2011, pp. 45, 49-50). This resulted in Belarus being probably the most 'Sovietized' of all Soviet republics during 'perestroika', with the majority of its citizens not wanting national independence (Wilson, 2011, pp. 142, 150). The independence, nevertheless, ensued. In fact, the decision to dismantle the Soviet Union was made on Belarusian territory, with Belavezha agreement, signed in December 1991 by the presidents of Russia and Ukraine, Yeltsin and Kravchuk, and the Chairman of Belarusian Supreme Soviet, moderate nationalist Stanislav Shushkevich (Wilson, 2011, pp. 152-153). The communists led by Vyacheslav Kebich supported Shushkevich, adopted the white-red-white flag and *Pahonia* as national symbols of a newly independent Belarus, as well as the law which made Belarusian the official language and degraded Russian to a 'language of inter-ethnic communication'. They did all this in order to appease opposition nationalists, seeing this as necessary for staying in power (Wilson, 2011, pp. 124, 148-149, 151-154; Marples, 2012, pp. 101-103, 109). However, they did not want to cut ties with Russia (actually, Yeltsin's Russia was the one to be more sceptical about the projects of integration), refused to perform 'shock therapy' transition, and hesitated with the adoption of a new constitution which would transform Belarus into a presidential republic (Wilson, 2011, pp. 150, 154-155, 159; Marples, 2012, pp. 64-68, 106-109).



At the beginning of the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Belarus for the first time became an independent and internationally recognized state under its real name. However, this independence was unwanted by most of its population, and its leaders were not ready for it – thus, it was yet another ‘false start’ in Belarusian ‘start-stop’ history, as Andrew Wilson suggests (Wilson, 2011, pp. 140-141; Marples, 2012, pp. 94-95). The bitter division in the leadership that erupted between Kebich and Shushkevich was certainly not helpful for nation-building (Marples, 2012, p. 105). The ‘umbilical cord’ with Russia was never cut (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 3-4). Those who favoured it were extreme nationalists represented by the Belarusian Popular Front led by Zianon Pazniak.<sup>3</sup> Their views that Russia and the Soviet Union were actually barbaric occupiers who separated Belarus from the West, where it has belonged since the time of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, were shared only by a minority of Belarusians (Wilson, 2011, pp. 137, 138, 141; Ioffe, 2014, p. 63). Nevertheless, Belarus was different from Russia in many ways, from its people mentality to the economic system it adopted in the post-Soviet period; also, due to its geographical position, it never had reason to doubt its ‘Europeanness’ (Ioffe, 2014, p. 76). It would be a paradox that the leader who at first negated the need for separate Belarusian national identity became the greatest nation-builder in the history of Belarus.

### THE LUKASHENKO PHENOMENON

To remove Shushkevich from the post, Kebich co-opted his former rival on all-Soviet elections, Alexander Lukashenko. Lukashenko chaired the anti-corruption commission, whose report was used against Shushkevich when the parliament finally brought him down in 1994 (Wilson, 2011, pp. 156-158). However, this anti-corruption narrative gave Lukashenko an enormous rise in popularity during the next few months, after which he would sweep his opponents in the first and the last free and fair presidential elections in Belarus so far – the result of the second round was 80:14 percent against Kebich (Wilson, 2011, pp. 164-166; Marples, 2012, p. 118; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 127-131). Lukashenko was born in a village in Eastern Belarus and had a typical Soviet carrier – he served in the military as a border guard, and later assumed the position of a collective farm manager (Wilson, 2011, p.

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<sup>3</sup> Pazniak firstly became known as the archaeologist who discovered mass graves of the victims of Stalin’s purges in Kurapaty in the late 80s (Wilson, 2011, pp. 144-145; Marples, 2012, pp. 86-89, 95-97).

148; Marples, 2012, pp. 118-119; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 120-123). He became interested in politics during 'perestroika' and used the confusion in the elite and the people during the first two and a half post-independence years to get to the top (Wilson, 2011, pp. 159-163; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 123-127). After this, he did everything to make sure he would never come down again. In two referendums in 1995 and 1996, he gave his presidential function almost absolute prerogatives, including the ones in the legislative branch of power, and in 2004 removed the limit of consecutive presidential terms (Wilson, 2011, pp. 174-184, 207; Marples, 2012, pp. 122-127, 152-156; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 133-136). He systematically eradicated all checks and balances in the political system, after which he overwhelmingly won four more presidential terms – in 2001, 2006, 2010, and 2015. These elections were of course far from free or fair; but even if they were, Lukashenko would win them, at least in the second round, for he always kept his rating between 30 and 50 percent, far above any opposition politician – he would falsify the results up to 70 or 80 percent in order to show how dominant he was compared to any opposition (Wilson, 2011, pp. 198, 218-221, 233-235, 258; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 80, 144-147). How did he manage to sustain significant popular support for 25 years?

The key element of Lukashenko's success was the congruence of his economic policies with the mentality of the common Belarusian people. In the beginning, Lukashenko had an idea to liberalize the Belarusian economy, but quickly abandoned it when he saw the expected consequences (already experienced in neighbouring Russia and Ukraine) as a threat to his popularity (Wilson, 2011, pp. 169-170; Marples, 2012, pp. 69-71; Ioffe, 2014, p. 44). Instead, he went even further than his Communist predecessors in retaining state control over the economy and refusing mass privatization and the free market (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 26-27). His strategy was successful – Belarus passed from a negative into positive GDP growth before Russia and Ukraine did, after which its economy constantly grew until 2014 (minimal growth was present even in 2009 when Belarusian neighbours had sharp decline due to the world economic crisis) (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 29-30). Moreover, although Belarus was certainly not as wealthy as Russia, its wealth was far more equally distributed among its citizens – there were no enormously rich oligarchs and the majority of poor people (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 12-13, 33). Lukashenko's Belarus had a decent education and health care system, and a very low level of criminality (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 33-37). Thus, this was a sort of paternalistic 'social contract' between Belarusian citizens and their president, in which Lukashenko was *Batka* (literally father) who provided well-being for his people, while they accepted his authoritarian behaviour in return (Ioffe, 2014, p. 177). To Lukashenko, power and authority were

more precious than personal enrichment; to most Belarusians, the personal standard of living was far more valuable than democracy (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 52-53). Yet, democracy was not the only depreciated value in Belarus.

Lukashenko came to power as a Russophile and Soviet-nostalgic man who did not see the need for a separate Belarusian national identity.<sup>4</sup> However, it was not only up to his personal feelings – he recognized that most of the Belarusian people shared his view and that the BNF's radical national project was not acceptable to them (Wilson, 2011, p. 139). Up to 70 percent of Belarusians used Russian as the language they normally spoke at home, not Belarusian (Wilson, 2011, p. 123). Thus, Lukashenko removed the existing law on languages and started restricting the use of the Belarusian language (during the first years of his reign, the number of schools and media in Belarusian dramatically fell). He also replaced state symbols (and even banned white-red-white flag and *Pahonia*) with a new flag and coat of arms, which were actually old BSSR symbols, but without Communist elements (Wilson, 2011, pp. 124-125, 174). And even before the end of the 90s, he completely eradicated the BNF (whom he considered fascists) from Belarusian political life (Wilson, 2011, pp. 171-172; Marples, 2012, pp. 137-138). From the imposition of the authoritarian system during the middle of the 90s onwards (at least until the most recent events), nationalists would be the ones to lead all anti-Lukashenko protests, a common feature of which would become namely these symbols. However (again until the most recent events), most Belarusians would still – in both symbolic and essential way – be much closer to Lukashenko's vision of national identity (weak and inseparable from the Russian, as it is) than to that of his nationalist opponents.

Yet it was not only Lukashenko's personal Russophilia and his Russian-speaking voters that drew Belarus closer to Russia. Enormous subsidies from Moscow, especially those in the form of discounted oil and gas prices, were essential if the Belarusian regime wanted to preserve the level of people's well-being on which it founded its own stability (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 46-48; Suzdaltsev, 2020, p. 69). Yet, there have been many ups and downs in Russia-Belarus relations. Institutional foundations of the integration between the two states were laid down in the late 90s, culminating with the creation of the Union State of Russia and Belarus. However, it was a single

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<sup>4</sup> Allegedly, he was the only deputy in the Belarusian Supreme Soviet who voted against the Belavezha agreement, thus against the independence of Belarus (Marples, 2012, p. 119).

state only in its name – it neither had state symbols, nor single currency, while both countries retained their sovereignty (Marples, 2012, pp. 171-182). It was Lukashenko, who at first was in favour of unification, hoping to become the president of the vast territory from Brest to Vladivostok; namely out of fear from this scenario, Yeltsin's Russia blocked further integration (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 138-139; Wilson, 2011, p. 173). After Putin came to power in Moscow, the tables turned: Lukashenko gave up on his dream to enter the Russian political scene and started to emphasise Belarusian sovereignty; Russia became the one who pushed for closer integration (Ioffe, 2014, p. 140).<sup>5</sup> Lukashenko's relations with Moscow were good during most of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when Russia strongly supported the survival of the Belarusian regime in the face of its growing isolation from the West, including sanctions; Belarus was successfully used as a testing ground for strategies against 'coloured revolutions' (Wilson, 2011, p. 212). Things started to complicate after the Russia-Georgia War in 2008.

Even before 2008, Russia and Belarus had some economic disagreements, starting with Lukashenko's refusal to treat Russian investors preferentially, and continuing with several energy crises, when Minsk always had to accept increases in oil and gas prices (Wilson, 2011, pp. 186, 200, 222). But Russia's intervention in Georgia and recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia presented Lukashenko with a prospect of similar violations of the sovereignty of Belarus and a threat to his own political survival if Moscow decided so. Thus, he started first to diversify his energy supplies (with oil shipments from Azerbaijan, Iran and Venezuela), economic (strengthening ties with China) and then political relations (Wilson, 2011, pp. 223; Ioffe, 2014, p. 49). Western countries soon realized that improvement in relations with 'the last European dictator' (as then US state secretary Condoleezza Rice called Lukashenko) could be geopolitically beneficial in the face of a new confrontation with Russia (Wilson, 2011, p. xi). Some sanctions were lifted and high-level contacts between Belarus and the EU and its members were renewed (Wilson, 2011, pp. 226-228; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 90-95). However, violence against opposition protesters in Minsk in late 2010 alienated the West again (Wilson, 2011, pp. 229-235; Ioffe, 2014, pp. 100-105). Moreover, the financial crisis that struck Belarus in 2011 showed Lukashenko how much he was dependent on Russia economically, but this settlement was quite temporary (Ioffe, 2014, pp. 41-44, 84-85).

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<sup>5</sup> Putin wanted Belarus to join the Russian Federation, not as a single federal unit but each of its six regions separately (Ioffe, 2014, p. 149).

The Ukraine crisis in 2014 was a more serious kind of threat. Russia's readiness to use force to annex the territory of its own and Belarus's East Slavic neighbour alarmed Lukashenko more than ever before, for it also opened the possibility of involving Belarus in a conflict between Russia and the West (Lanoszka, 2017, pp. 81-83; Astapenia and Balkunets, 2016, pp. 6-8). Yet, he has used this as an opportunity to actually improve the international position of his country and himself. He managed to act as a kind of mediator in the conflict, hosting the delegations of the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian rebels from Donetsk, but also to thaw his relations with the West once again, without abandoning the Russian vector as well. This was also the imperative for one additional reason – as a result of Western sanctions and decrease in oil prices, Russia's economy started to shrink together with its ability to subsidize Belarus, whose economy also fell in 2015 and 2016, for the first time in 20 years (Kuleszewicz, 2016, pp. 37-38). In order to extract more economic benefits from cooperation with the West (Belarus also started improving its ties with China), Lukashenko had to soften his authoritarianism at home, which proved successful in 2015, when he won yet another partly falsified elections, but sustained himself from the crackdown against opposition protesters, who were less numerous than before anyway (Crabtree et al., 2016, pp. 2-3). But he could not completely avoid Belarus's dependence on Russia, who was determined to keep Belarus in its sphere of influence. Lukashenko's 'sitting in two chairs' annoyed Moscow, while – due to the mentioned economic crisis in Russia – it was less and less ready to give him money and getting nothing in return. So, during the second half of the last decade, Russia employed a two-pronged strategy for disciplining Lukashenko: it started to support some opposition circles, and also lead a false-flag propaganda campaign against anti-Russian nationalism in Belarus, the actual goal of which was to provoke nationalists to act against Lukashenko and make his position more difficult; it presented Belarus with ultimatums to accept closer integration if it wanted further subsidies, knowing that Lukashenko's rating started to crumble because of the economic crisis (Leukavets, 2017, pp. 2-4; Klysinski, 2017, pp. 5-8; Nizhnikau and Moses, 2020, pp. 48, 57; Suzdaltsev, 2020, pp. 73-76).

Nevertheless, the Belarusian president is too experienced to retreat so easily. Ahead of new presidential elections, it seemed that he tamed Russian pressure by promising greater integration, but delaying concrete concessions – including the establishment of a permanent Russian military base on Belarusian soil – at least for some time (Suzdaltsev, 2020, pp. 75-76). On the other hand, he improved ties with the most powerful country in the West – the United States, whose state secretary Mike Pompeo visited Belarus in

February 2020, after which the US ambassador returned to Minsk and shipments of American oil to Belarus began (Nizhnikau and Moses, 2020, p. 49). However, Lukashenko's biggest success was probably achieved in the domestic arena, where he really managed to present himself as a greater defender of Belarusian sovereignty and nation-builder than nationalists could become. The majority of the Belarusian people still valued economic well-being and political stability more than democracy or becoming a Western nation that would turn against Russia – they saw very well what the price for this was in Ukraine (Kuleszewicz, 2016, p. 35; Wilson, 2016, p. 81). Winning yet another five-year presidential term in a similar fashion how he did it five times before was expected, and it would enable Lukashenko to provide himself with additional time to settle disputed things both internationally and domestically. Nevertheless, the achievements in Lukashenko's struggle against man-made challenges were soon annulled by the forces of nature, which brought the Belarusian issue to the fore of European affairs.

### **WHAT DOES THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL CRISIS BRING?**

When Pompeo visited Minsk, a new coronavirus was ravaging China and making its way into many other countries. But at that moment, no one expected the unprecedented state in which the whole world would find itself only a few weeks later – after the World Health Organization declared the pandemic on March 11. In order to halt the spread of a deadly disease called COVID-19, governments throughout Europe and the world started imposing harsh measures of social distancing on their citizens, including quarantines, curfews and lockdowns, which actually threatened to cause similar if not worse damage than the virus could, especially to the economy. Only a few countries chose a different approach, and one of them was Belarus. Lukashenko at first negated that the virus was so that dangerous to require any extraordinary measures, but it is also possible that he had calculated ahead of the elections that his popularity could fall should he impose restrictions on his people. His calculations were wrong.

On the contrary, afraid for their health and lives, the Belarusian people got an additional reason to feel as they were betrayed party in the social contract with Lukashenko (Racz et al., 2020, p. 2; Dobrinsky, 2020, pp. 9-10). The opposition used networks for helping doctors and patients which civil society started to form to mobilize its supporters (Zahorski, 2020, p. 2). Three potential presidential candidates came to the front: Viktor Babariko, the

director of BelGazprom Bank; Sergey Tikhanovsky, blogger; and Valery Tsepkalo, a former diplomat. Independent polls showed that Babariko's rating was the greatest (around 50 percent) (Zahorski, 2020, p. 4). Lukashenko's regime did not stand idle in the face of this challenge. All three opposition candidates were banned from participating in the elections: Babariko and Tikhanovsky were arrested on fabricated charges, while Tsepkalo's signatures were declared void, after which he fled to Russia to escape arrest (Racz, 2020, p. 2; Zahorski, 2020, pp. 2-3). After Babariko's arrest, Sergey's wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya entered the presidential race. The regime allowed her to compete, for it obviously did not take her as a serious candidate, but this also was a wrong assessment. Babariko and Tsepkalo's staff (led by Babariko's campaign manager Maria Kolesnikova and Tsepkalo's wife Veronika) immediately rallied behind Tikhanovskaya, and soon did the majority of now extremely anti-Lukashenko oriented people (Zahorski, 2020, p. 3; Racz, 2020, p. 2). Independent exit polls on the election-day in August showed an overwhelming victory for Tikhanovskaya (75 to 80 percent of the votes, while Lukashenko got 13 to 18), but the official results were 'standard' – 81:8 percent in favour of Lukashenko (Zahorski, 2020, pp. 16-17).

Once the official 'results' were announced, huge crowds of people got to the streets, carrying white-red-white flags, shouting anti-Lukashenko slogans and getting beaten by the police in what Sergey Tikhanovsky called 'anti-cockroach revolution'. At the moment of writing, these mostly peaceful protests but more massive than ever, spread all over Belarus, and followed by industrial workers' strikes, have been ongoing for several months (Racz, 2020, p. 1; Racz et al., 2020, pp. 2-3; Challis, 2020, p. 1). The political outcome is not yet in sight, with a new wave of the regime's repression forced Tikhanovskaya to flee to Lithuania, while Kolesnikova joined the ranks of the arrested opposition leaders. The 'honeymoon' between Lukashenko and the West is certainly over – the US and the EU refused to recognize the outcome of the elections and imposed new sanctions (Racz et al., 2020, p. 4).<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Russia (although maybe somewhat surprised by the quantity and the persistence of the protests) seems to get what it wanted –

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<sup>6</sup> This makes the situation in Belarus comparable with the presidential crisis in Venezuela, but with one important difference – unlike Venezuela's Juan Guaido, Tikhanovskaya is not recognized as a legitimate president by any Western country (with exception of Lithuania); her election victory cannot be determined for certain (Dobrinisky, 2020, pp. 10-11).

extremely weakened Lukashenko, who is now ready to accept any Moscow's ultimatum in return for its help to keep him afloat (Racz et al., 2020, pp. 3-4).

In short, what new to the Belarusian issue in the context of Belarusian domestic and wider European affairs does the presidential crisis 2020 bring? As already said, the social contract between Lukashenko and the Belarusian people is broken, due to economic setbacks and (in the eyes of the people) poor handling of the corona crisis. Lukashenko's days are most probably numbered – he can thrive for some more time relying on force and conditional Russian help, but some kind of transition is inevitable. It is not certain this transition would lead to real democracy in Belarus, but at least its political life could become more pluralistic. Belarus remains a country with a weak national identity – carrying disputed national symbols as fashion items still do not make most of the protesters more nationally aware. Some of the opposition leaders (including Tikhanovskaya) indeed look for support in the West, but none of them advised cutting ties with Russia. On the contrary, Babariko and Tsepikalo are closely connected to Moscow.<sup>7</sup> The West is too passive compared to Russia, and the protesters are really much aware that the Maidan-style revolution could bring more harm than benefit to them, like it did in neighbouring Ukraine. All this does not mean there is an easy way out of the crisis; if there was, writing about the Belarusian issue would not be as challenging as it is.

## **CONCLUSION**

So, what is the essence of the Belarusian issue in European affairs? It certainly has a geopolitical dimension – the country is situated at the very geographical centre of Europe (if it is considered as a continent that stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals). As such, it has always been some kind of a 'highway' of the continent, but also its 'doormat' over which antagonistic powers from both west and east regularly stepped during their conflicts over European mastery (at the current epoch, these powers are, of course, Russia and political West – the US, the EU and its most powerful members, NATO) (Wilson, 2011, pp. 136-137). Yet, it is not only about geopolitics, but also identity. Countries with a similar geopolitical position, such as Finland, Poland or Baltic states, have a strong and united feeling of national identity

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<sup>7</sup> There was also an incident at the end of July when more than thirty Russia-based Wagner contractors were arrested in Belarus (Racz, 2020, p. 3).



and awareness of belonging. On the other hand, Ukrainian identity is sharply divided between those in favour of belonging to the West and those who consider themselves a part of the Russian world (Trapara, 2014, p. 36). Neither of these two is true for Belarus, whose historical development left it with a weak national identity, closely attached to Russia, but with an undeniable five-century long tradition of belonging to a distinct Western polity and its cultural influence. Hand-in-hand with this goes the mentality of the Belarusian people who prefer political stability and personal safety and well-being to democracy and a stronger national identity. An average Belarusian looks for *Batka*, a paternalistic leader who would provide him with his basic needs – the function successfully performed by Lukashenko for a quarter of a century.

Moreover, the affinity of the Belarusian people towards foreign powers also seems to be affected by their basic needs. As long as Russia is providing subsidies for the Belarusian economy and ensures the living standards of its people, they do not see the need to resist closer integration with its Eastern neighbour. But if and when Russia's ability and/or willingness to continue this arrangement comes into question, the temptation of Belarusians – who never doubted in their unambiguous belonging to Europe – to turn the other way becomes natural. However, their reluctance to make such a turn is also natural given their mentioned troublesome history, for they would not like to become the first line of defence of the West against their Russian brethren – the same way they refused to play Russia's first line of defence against the West during recent Lukashenko years (Wilson, 2011, pp. 138-139). And the third option, however it may be natural for a country of such geopolitical position – acting as a mediator between the East and the West, which Lukashenko actually tried to achieve – is unlikely to be successful, given the asymmetry in power between Belarus and the powers in question, as well as the bitterness of their confrontation.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we may conclude that – although it certainly has Belarusian domestic societal roots – the Belarusian issue in European affairs is actually an image of the divisive state of these affairs in general. Rather than expecting that Belarus could overcome the problem with its *self* (no matter how big the energy of the protesters on its cities' streets is) to help Europe unite, the more pessimistic version is probably true – without overcoming the conflict between European Eastern and Western *self* and *other*, possible post-Lukashenko consolidation will be yet another 'false start' for Belarus.

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<sup>8</sup> U.S.-Russian confrontation could actually even get worse after Joseph Biden's victory in U.S. presidential elections.

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**III**  
**TWO FACES OF EUROPE:**  
**UNITY OR DIVISION**

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## EUROPEAN (IN)SECURITY IN MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE OR SHORT HAPPY LIFE OF THE EU

Andrey FURSOV<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* Global Europe is becoming less Europe, less wealthy and less secure: global means 'everybody's', but 'everybody's' means 'nobody's'. Formally, the EU will persist. But in substance, it will be divided into inner (the 'Carolingian Europe') and outer parts.

Our world is stepping into a period of post-global macroregionalization. Among major possible macroregions, the EU is the most questionable: it lacks inner coherence; 'Europes of different speed' are unlikely to become healthy and competitive entities, especially if one remembers two possible projects of the US, which can become an alternative to 'old Europe' – a new edition of the Rzeczpospolita and neo-Ottoman Turkey. 'MacroPoland' can also be used by the Anglo-Saxons as a counterweight to Germany and the German-centred part of Europe, and as a means to isolate Russia and China from Western Europe. It is no coincidence that, having in mind the competitive weakness of the US, Great Britain left the EU and is likely to try to organize its own macroregion based on the Arab world.

While European problems connected with the macroregionalization of the world have to do with geoeconomics and geopolitics, the most serious aspects of European (in)security are determined by geoculture. Yet, the geocultural dimension of European (in)security is a cover and simultaneously a manifestation of class and social problems acquiring cultural, racial, and ethnic forms. Here we are stepping into the sphere of multiculturalist politics of Atlanticist ruling groups in Europe that make Europe less competitive on the world scale, less secure as a society, and less European and Christian as a civilization.

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The main research question is: which factor is the most dangerous for the existence of the EU as a Union and as a European one?

*Keywords:* Europe, insecurity, globalization, macroregionalization, geoculture, elites, multiculturalism, migration.

*We do like this job – to call things  
by their real names.*

**Karl Marx**

*“I wish it need not have happened in my times”, said Frodo.*

*“So do I”, said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see  
such times. But that is not for them to decide.*

*All we have to decide is what to do with  
the time that is given us”.*

**J.R.R. Tolkien**

*The world is not as we want it to be –  
this is my message. But one  
should not kill the messenger.*

**Immanuel Wallerstein**

## I

According to a popular saying, there is only one step from sorrow to joy and from joy to sorrow. When we look at the history of the EU during the last 30 years, it is precisely this saying which comes to mind, at least to my mind. Instead of hopes of the radiant future and euphoria of 1989–1991, today we can see the feelings of insecurity, unsafety, uncertainty. And these feelings began to develop long before the COVID-19 affair. The point of ‘no return’ is situated between the economic crisis of 2008 and the migration crisis of 2015. It seems that the ‘happy life’ of the EU, first, was imaginative or at least not so happy, and secondly, was evidently very short – a kind of a short happy life of Francis Macomber from the famous story by Ernest Hemingway. Could it be different? I doubt it strongly. The entire European history since the fall of the Roman Empire has been the struggle for unification: Charles I, the Emperor against the Pope, Charles V, the wars of Louis XIV, the Napoleonic Wars, the World War of 1914–1945. In the course of these

attempts, two projects are distinguishable: the Guelph ('aristocratic') and the Ghibelline ('democratic') ones. Napoleon's and Hitler's abortive European Unions were of Ghibelline nature while the last one – of Guelph nature.

The initial success of the 'last EU' had to do with two factors: 1) the position of the US pushing the globalization project through; 2) the weakening and demise of the USSR as the form of historical Russia. It is no coincidence that both globalization and the EU as part and parcel of it emerged simultaneously with the demise of the USSR in 1986–1991. The famous Russian poet, diplomat, and geopolitical thinker Feodor Tyutchev wrote that, after the rise of the empire of Peter the Great in Russia, the 'empire of Charles the Great' in Europe became impossible (Tyutchev, 2003, p. 197). It is so, indeed. It was Russia who defeated both Napoleon and Hitler as the unifiers of Europe. The interest and the strength of the US and the weakness of Russia (the USSR) were the preconditions of the emergence of global Europe in the form of the EU. The new formation was planned as secure, European, global, and, of course, enjoying a secure and happy life. In the beginning, it seemed to be so indeed. But the happy life proved to be very short. As early as in the 1990s, Europe saw the first military conflicts since the end of the Second World War; we witnessed the NATO aggression against Serbia. After that rose the economic problems of the ex-Soviet zone of Eastern Europe, the crisis of 2008, the decline of West European middle class, the Islamist terror, the migration crisis, the crisis of traditional European values responsible for making Europe a distinct civilization, i.e., Christianity, labour ethics and family.

'Unionized' Europe is global Europe (or even Globoeurope). Becoming global means automatically being vulnerable to all global crisis tendencies. The global world, as it emerged in the 1980–1990s (not to confuse globalization with such old phenomena as integration and internationalization), was a highly insecure world stepping into a crisis of which the destruction of the USSR was the first and decisive act. A ticket to a brave new global world is a kind of a ticket for the *Titanic*. And if somebody buys one, this person must take into account, firstly, that apart from the luxurious first class there are less pleasant sections; secondly, one has to pay for any section; thirdly, there are more chances to drown together with *Titanic* than to be saved - the first to be saved are always the persons from the first class.

## II

It is hardly arguable that the world is becoming – with greater and greater speed – not even less secure, but more insecure. Europe is a part of



this crazy world. European (in)security can be analysed under different angles – geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geocultural. In this article, I will largely speak about the geocultural aspect of European (in)security. There are at least three reasons for that: 1) geopolitical and geoeconomics dimensions have been better and longer studied; 2) geocultural dimension is very important because it is a good cover for social, political, psychological, etc. actions that use (geo)culture both as a mask and as a weapon; 3) current geoculture is closely tied with such – anti-European, to my mind – phenomena as multiculturalism and tolerance; together with such questions as race and ethnicity it became a kind of ‘red light’, ‘danger sign’ for researchers.

Yet, I will start – shortly – with geopolitics and geoeconomy. There is a sharp contradiction between the geopolitical and geoeconomics statuses of the EU. Being a giant, from the economic point of view, (geo)politically it is characterized – as often as not – as a dwarf. At first glance, it can seem strange. But, if we look carefully and without emotions, we will see that such characteristic has a solid foundation. The strength of Western Europe used to be based on three great powers: Great Britain, France, and Germany. But Britain has left the EU; Germany, being economically the strongest European country, is actually an American protectorate – a country under various kinds of occupation: military, political, and spiritual.

De facto, the only state in Europe, which can be formally called a ‘great power’, is France. First, it has nuclear weapons, in fact, independent from NATO. Secondly, it has a solid, energetic base due to atomic electric stations, they provide 78% of energy in the country (*Produire une énergie*, 2019). This contrasts France to Germany, where the government and the Greens killed atomic stations. It is precisely atomic energy that is necessary, though not sufficient for state and political sovereignty. Yet France has at least two serious weak points. The first is that its political elite can function normally only on the basis of so-called *Françafrique* – the informal network of ties between French politicians, diplomats, businessmen and intelligence men and their counterparts in former French African colonies. France often lacks finance. For example, during François Hollande’s presidency, he had to go to Qatar to ask its Emir to help finance the French fleet in the Mediterranean for two weeks because France itself had no money for that (Cohen, 2013; *La dixième arme*, 2019, p. 154). The story of the Sarkozy – Qaddafi affair, which cost the Libyan leader his life, is well known. The second point is that the French army is professional, but it is not enough for French geopolitical and military needs. Many voices are heard about the

necessity to return to a conscript army. But French generals say definite 'no'. The argument is more than serious: in such a case, due to ethnic/race tensions between 'white' and 'coloured' (Arabs, Africans) segments of the French society, there would be a permanent civil war in the barracks. After all, this being taken into consideration, we can conclude that France can only formally be considered a great power and a driver of Europe – pas du tout.

One more thing became clear during the two crises – the migration crisis of 2015 and the COVID-19 crisis of 2020. It is the lack of unity that easily translates itself into a lack of security in the EU. The two crises were enough to demonstrate that. The lack of unity is also manifested in the course of the macroregionalisation of the current world (which sometimes is also called 'deglobalization'). This process led to a competition in which the EU is far from being a single entity; its different members, first, compete with each other in different regions of the planet and, secondly, try to create their own macroregions and not a common macroregion for (and of) the EU.

Thus, Great Britain, long before Brexit, was trying to organize something like AngloArabia (Wearing, 2018) – a macroregion comprising Great Britain (or at least England) and a larger part of the Middle East. France is trying to create its own macroregion with its ex-colonies in Africa. Germany is striving to perform by economic means what Hitler tried to do militarily – to put Eastern Europe under control. But here, Germany is confronted by both Great Britain and the US. The Anglo-Saxons want to realize the project of neo-Rzeczpospolita as a weapon against both Russia and Germany. Another anti-Russian project of the British is the Great Turan with Turkey as its core. The two projects are tightly interconnected and directed against the so-called 'Old Europe', Russia, and China. It goes without saying that both projects undermine the security of the EU and Europe as a whole. But the most dangerous processes to European security develop in the sphere of geoculture.

### III

These processes are tightly connected with demography and sinister cultural-propaganda triad 'multiculturalism – tolerance – political correctness'.

The first question is: to what extent current Europe (I mean first of all Western Europe) is ethnically Europe? Let us begin with Great Britain: here, the Immigration Act was passed in 1948. Ten years later, 75% of Britons gave their voice for stricter control of immigration (Murray, 2017, p. 15). It was precisely in 1968 when John Enoch Powell made his famous 'Rivers of

Blood' speech. He warned the British people of the dangers and conflicts that immigration brought with it. Though Powell was supported by 74% of the population (Murray, 2017, p. 16), the shadow Prime Minister (and not so shadow paedophile) Edward Heath ousted Powell from the shadow cabinet, paving the way for 'milk snatcher' Margaret Thatcher.

Under Thatcher, and especially in the Blair years, migration was in full swing. It is no coincidence that according to the British journalist A. N. Wilson one of the main results of Thatcher's premiership was the fact that Britain 'ceased to be anybody's home' (Wilson, 2008, p. 9). Now, the result is the following. In 2012 only 44.9% of Londoners defined themselves as 'white Britons'. In 2014, women born outside of Great Britain gave birth to 27% of children in England and Wales. Nowadays, in 23 out of 33 London's boroughs, white people constitute a minority. Also, 32 million Britons define themselves as Christians and 2.7 million as Muslims (Murray, 2017, p. 13). But as A. Einstein used to say, the world is not a quantitative notion but a qualitative one. Muslims are much more active and faithful in their religious feelings than Britons and Western Europeans in general; they are better organized and ready to engage in conflicts and violence.

Local autochthons Europeans are poisoned and frightened by the official course of the so-called 'tolerance' and multiculturalism. One of the best definitions of multiculturalism belongs to S. Huntington, who wrote in the book *Who We Are* that multiculturalism was in its essence anti-European civilization. It is basically an anti-Western ideology (Huntington, 2004, p. 171). I define tolerance as a deliberate suppression of the Europeans' will to resist the alien aggressive cultural influence. Tolerance is a kind of cultural masochism, a culture of self-victimization. Both multiculturalism and tolerance are being imposed by the Western European (Atlanticist) governments on the population, making it submit to culturally alien minorities. In case of conflicts, the authorities - be it in Great Britain or any other Western European country - take the side of Muslims, of migrants, as in the infamous case of 'Luton parade' in England in 2009, court hearings in the Old Bailey in London (Pakistani rapists) in 2011 or the 'Rotterdam affair' in 2014. One can cite hundreds of cases (Murray, 2017, pp. 237-239).

Reacting to changing ethnic and religious situations, the British ruling class makes definite steps in the direction of Islam. In April 2018, *The Economist* published an article *Is the Caliph a Queen?* with the subtitle: *Muslims Consider Queen Elizabeth's Ties to the Prophet Muhammad* (2018). According to the article, Elisabeth II is the descendant of the Prophet in the 43 generations. In reality, one cannot definitely state whether Elisabeth II is related to

Muhammad or not, but it is very indicative that *The Economist*, which is owned by several richest families in Great Britain (including the Rothschilds), published such an article. Must we be surprised that some representatives of English aristocracy adopt Islam? It is quite understandable from the point of view of global political economy: post-Brexit England needs the Middle East, especially its Arab part as an important element of its invisible financial empire. AngloArabia is a reality. Hence the current position of the British authorities towards Muslim migrants.

The situation in Sweden is even more striking. The dominant group of migrants who have been coming to Sweden since 2015 are young men, largely illiterate. The largest part of Muslim migrants in Sweden lives in the third-largest city in the country – Malmö, comprising 30% of its population; it is the official number, the real number is higher (Kirchick, 2017, p. 137). Present-day Sweden is a country with the largest Iraqi population after Iraq itself. Migrants do not want to work and to be integrated into Swedish society. They are often aggressive, especially towards police and women. In 2014, Sweden occupied second place in the world by such a gloomy indicator as the number of rapes per head – 6620 (in 1975, the number was 421) (Murray, 2017, p. 251).

Though migrants are very aggressive and antisemitic, certain parties, such as the Greens, support them. J. Kirchick warns about the danger of a 'red and green union'. And he is right – this summer, we saw this kind of union in the US – the BLM movement, which some observers called 'red and black fascism'. Despite migrants' behaviour, Swedish government officials support them, praising the Muslim culture at the expense of the Swedish one. Some European politicians are ready to accept aliens' rules of the game. In 2006, the Dutch Minister of Justice Piet Hein Donner said that when Muslims become a majority in the Netherlands, they would want to change the legal system onto sharia, and if they do it in a democratic way, that is OK. The fact that Muslims within two-three generations will really become a majority or, at least, a dominant minority is openly recognized. For example, in Belgium, in his speech in Europarliament (25 April, 2016), Koen Geens warned that very soon Muslims would quantitatively overcome Europeans (Stevens, Dougherty). There was no reaction.

The 14<sup>th</sup> April issue of *The Economist* in 2018 was devoted to Germany (Cool Germany, 2018). As one of the main achievements of the 'Merkel epoch', the magazine praised 'new German identity' – a multiethnic, multicultural, inclusive, and tolerant one (tolerant first of all to aggressive minorities). This new identity is reflected in different spheres, from sports to

politics. During the European Cup games, the German 'national' team comprised five players from the South (in 1990, when the Germans became world champions, there were none). In 2009 Bundestag members with a 'migrant background' amounted to 3%, while in 2017 – 9%. The real representation percent of German citizens, who have no German roots, is 23%, almost a quarter of the population. *The Economist* cites the book *New Germans* by H. and M. Münkler, who wrote with evident satisfaction that 'static Germany' with fixed (stark) national borders and old identity dissolves in the past, while a new identity is a diverse and open one (Cool Germany, 2018). At the same time, the magazine stresses that the new Germany became more alarming and nervous, full of stress. So, they fix that new identity, in contrast to the old one, brings feelings of uncertainty and nervousness, and the politics of multiculturalism, which in fact encourages migrants' aggressiveness and, hence, the destruction of the European geoculture.

On the eve of Christmas 2015, in Köln and some other German cities, there was a massive sexual assault of migrants (largely of Arab and Afghan origin) onto German women. The police could do nothing, but when some political groups like PEGIDA tried to organize a demonstration of protest to this assault, they were severely suppressed by the police. I suspect that, at that moment, the Germans had to evaluate as quite correct Thilo Sarrazin's book *Germany Abolishes Itself* (*Deutschland schafft sich ab*) published in 2010 (Sarrazin, 2010). The ex-senator and the member of the Executive Board of the Deutsche Bundesbank showed that migrants would not integrate themselves into German society because they did not want to do it in principle. Though 47% of the Germans think that Islam is alien to Germany and its culture as Sarrazin does, his own Social Democratic Party, in a cowardly-like manner, did not support him (Murray, 2017, pp. 95–96).

Even worse is the situation in France. Officially, Arabs and Africans represent not more than 12% of the French population. But there is a trick here. According to the French tradition, those who live in France for five and more years automatically become 'French'. From this point of view, as one of the most distinguished demographers of France, J.P. Gourevitch states that 32% of the French population are not really French (Gourevitch, 2019). The French philosopher R. Camus called the process of replacement of native French by Arabs and Africans 'le Grand Remplacement' (Camus, 2011). It was predicted as early as 1973 by the French writer and traveller J. Raspail in his novel *Le camp des saints* (Raspail, 1973). Later, in 1985, Raspail in co-authorship with the famous French demographer J.F. Dumont published an article in *Le Figaro* under the title *Will France be French in 2015?*

(Dumont, Raspail, 1985). The authors maintained that the growth of the non-European population in France constituted a grave danger for French culture and values.

French political establishment leveled Raspail and Dumont a severe if not hysterical criticism. Yet, the critique was weak and self-defeating. The ex-minister of social affairs, G. Dufoix, wrote that Raspail and Dumont gave wrong numbers of immigrants – 59 000 per year. But statistics corrected her: 62 000. It was 1989. In 2006 it was 193 000 and in 2013 – 235 000 (Murray, 2017, p. 119). In 2016, 32.2% of schoolchildren in France defined themselves as Christians and 25.5% as Muslims, but only 50% of non-Muslims and 22% of Catholics fixed religion as something important to them, while for 83% of Muslim schoolchildren, religion meant a lot (Murray, 2017, p. 121). There are so many Muslims in Paris that the quantity of mosques is not enough. At the same time, many Christian churches are being closed in Paris and France as a whole.

A strikingly symbolic fact can be seen in Saint-Denis. In fact, this 93rd department of France is the suburb of Paris. According to French police, it belongs to the class of so-called ‘sensitive zones’, which means ‘highly criminal and dangerous’. 30% of the population are Muslims, 15% – Catholics, yet even in Catholic schools, 70% of children are Muslims. 10% of all mosques are concentrated in Saint-Denis (Murray, 2017, p. 110). It is also a place where Charles Martell, who in 732 defeated Arabs in the battle of Poitiers, was buried in the Basilique. When the messes are served here, they are being guarded by soldiers in full armament.

Thus, in reality, multiculturalism is the retreat of the European culture, its demise under aggressive pressure from two sides – the aliens and the governments, the North Atlantic establishment. Do these ‘establishers’ understand the real nature of multiculturalism and its effects? At first glance – they do. But the first glance is not always a correct one.

#### IV

As early as October 2010, *Bundeskanzlerin* Merkel publicly said in Potsdam that the politics of multiculturalism in Germany and Europe failed. In February 2011 in Munich, British Prime Minister David Cameron proclaimed the same thing; several days later, French President Nicolas Sarkozy repeated these words. The Australian and Spanish Prime Ministers J. Howard and J.M. Aznar followed the lead (Murray, 2017, p. 97). Many observers considered these confessions to be the end of multiculturalism. It

is far from it. The politicians criticized only a concrete form of multiculturalism, not the concept and the goal itself, for which migration as a means of creation of ethnically and culturally diverse society is a kind of a sacred cow. The proof is simple: while in 2010 there came 48 589 migrants to Germany, in 2015, their number rose to 1 500 000 (Murray, 2017, p. 123). It happened after the famous Welcoming Speech of Angela Merkel, which contrasts with the attitude of the rank-and-file Europeans to migrants, especially to those from Muslim countries. In 2013, 77% of the Dutch expressed their negative attitude to Islam, and in 2015, 55% said they were against the Muslim presence in the Netherlands. In France in 2015, 67% claimed that Islamic values were incompatible with the European ones, while 73% expressed a negative attitude towards Islam (Murray, 2017, pp. 318–319). Commenting on these statistics, D. Murray poses a question: if everybody understands that Europeans cannot become Arabs, Indians, and Africans, why should we believe that Arabs, Indians, and Africans can become Europeans? Another question should be posed here as well: why globalist/Atlanticist elites have been pushing multiculturalism through despite negative results and the negative reaction of the European population at large?

There are several answers to this question, and they have to do, not with culture, but with the political economy of the capitalist world system and with the interests of dominant (ruling) classes of its North Atlantic core.

Firstly, in present conditions, the Western European governments simply have no possibilities to solve the problems arising with migration – they have neither the wish or/and the will nor the means to improve the situation.

Secondly, immigration policy is a kind of a social war of the Western European bourgeoisie against their working and lower classes. By means of migration a new underclass is created. The social conflict between it and the ‘locals’ enlarges the space for manoeuvre for the ruling class, distracts attention from class problems, and allows presenting them rather as race and culture problems. So much for the core of the capitalist system.

As for the periphery, western migration policy is also profitable for the dominant classes of this zone of the capitalist system. The most active and socially energetic, predominantly masculine part of the Global South’s population leaves it. This social pressure onto dominant groups and, hence, social tension becomes weaker. Money sent by working migrants to their families in Arab and African countries helps them to survive and thus also diminish the will of the lower classes to resist local oppressors.

Paradoxically, migration helps to reproduce most parasitic, bandit-like regimes in the Afro-Asian world. At the same time, by the very fact of their existence, working migrants help the reproduction of the Western plutocracies. By creating a new underclass, they push away, replace European local classes. The same politics is, in fact, promised by the new semi-legitimate president of the US, J. Biden. Having less developed class consciousness than the European working and lower classes, and being ready to work for much lesser money, they, in fact, lower vertical class tension, supplanting it by horizontal infraclass tension, which takes the form of ethnic, race, or religious conflicts. And here, dominant classes are on the side of the less-paid migrants defending their positions with 'multiculturalism' and 'tolerance' as political technologies.

But every acquisition is a loss, and every loss is an acquisition. Being a kind of solution in the short run, the migration policy cum multiculturalism brings grave medium and long-term problems which the Western European governments will not be able to solve; they can just postpone them in the manner of Hatter in 'Alice in Wonderland'. Class conflict will emerge, but in much acute form – racial and ethnic one. The only question is timing.

In 1974 in his speech at the UN General Assembly, the Algerian President Houari Boumediene said prophetic words: 'The day will come when millions of people will leave the Southern Hemisphere to burst into the Northern one. But they will do it not as friends. They will come as conquerors and will conquer this hemisphere by means of such weapons as their children. Victory will come to us from the wombs of our women' (Fallaci, 2006, p. 256). We are witnessing today what Boumediene spoke of almost half a century ago. But – and this should be definitely added – 'Boumediene's programme' is implemented not by Afro-Asian hordes all by themselves, but by Atlantic transnational elites using migrant hordes as their instrument.

## V

And here, we may encounter one more thing, which explains us both multiculturalism and migration policy (and migration as an ethnic or mass migration weapons) (Greenhill, 2010). The clue is given to us by two representatives of globalist/ Atlanticist elites – Obama, for example. During his visit to London in 2011, Obama said that the 21<sup>st</sup> century might be the time of the formation of new nations (The White House, 2011). Nowadays, the only means of formation of new nations is a mixture of old ones. So with



the migration and migration crisis, we face a deliberate course towards the annihilation of old European nations with their histories, historical memory, etc., and the artificial construction of new nations in Europe on a largely non-European basis. It is a kind of historical-cultural sterilization. And the main field of testing this ethnic weapon is Germany: it accepts more migrants than any other European country; 51% of its migrants are being covered by 'integration programmes' – in contrast to Sweden (34%) or Greece (11%) (Murray, 2017, p. 247). So, it is Germany that became the *locus operandi* for the social engineering experiment of constructing 'new Europeans' via 'new Germans' – the population with fragmented de-ethnicized and de-historized identity. But it is precisely what the Americans were planning for Germany in 1943–1945.

At the very beginning of 1943, Professor E. Huton from Harvard University proposed to change German heredity by means of forced metisization of German women (Fursov, 2020, p. 187–188). According to Huton's plan, German men – 10–12 million prisoner officers and soldiers – were to be led out of Germany and confined in concentration camps. German women staying in their country were to marry soldiers of the occupation armed forces and (attention) with specially brought immigrants, a kind of ethnic weapon.

One can say: hey, it was just a crazy American professor, a bad boy from James Bond movies. Not at all. In 1944, the US President F.D. Roosevelt told his Minister of Finance G. Morgenthau (and the latter fixed it in his diary): we must either castrate all German population or treat it in such a way that it would not be able to produce people capable to act in the manner the Germans did (Fursov, 2020, p. 187).

I have a question: what is the difference between what Roosevelt said and Hitler's plan 'Ost' for the annihilation of the Russian people? According to Morgenthau's plan, Germany was to be deindustrialized, its population to be diminished to 25 million, and a significant part was to be physically destroyed. In fact, it was Stalin who saved Germany and the German people. His principle 'Hitlers come and go, but German people stay'.

So in some respects, the current globalist migration policy in Europe, especially in Germany, reproduces the features of certain American plans of 1943–1945. The difference is that the latter was directed against the Germans, against their 'spirit of Schiller' – not let to it be reborn, as Churchill is said to write in one of his letters in 1940, while current globalist plans have all Western Europeans as their target.

All this being said, we can state that there is one more long-term aim of the ethnic-cultural transformation of Europe by globalist elites. It is also of the class nature, but, first, it is long-term; secondly, it is being implemented as social, cultural and demographic engineering eliminating European civilization and its personificators.

Some people claim that the weakness of Europeans derives from their 'tiredness of history' (in Germany, there is even an expression *Geschichtsmüde*), as they have no energy for patriotism, etc. But I have a question: why are some Europeans tired of History while some are not? The French, British, Western Germans are tired? OK. But why the Eastern Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Serbians and some others are not? Their history was not less, and, perhaps, even more tiresome than that of France, Britain, or the western part of Germany. The weakening of patriotism is not the result of tiredness; it is the result of deliberate politics and propaganda of globalist elites trying to supplant patriotism with cosmopolitanism. These elites are trying to deprive the Western European peoples of their historical memory, of cultural reason. Being set in motion, this process becomes total, covers the entire society, including its elites pushing into degradation not only lower, but also upper groups, the ruling class. Born and pursued by class interests, multiculturalism cum tolerance politics is being transformed into a kind of general degradation, cultural dementia.

## VI

In 2018 in London was published a book by D. Andress *Cultural Dementia*. It begins with the words: '...recent political events place the UK, France, and the USA in a state of catastrophic cultural dementia', a kind of 'social Alzheimer'. 'Our current dementia takes the form of particular kinds of forgetting, misremembering and mistaking the past. In that sense, it is not nostalgia... Nor is it... a simple matter of amnesia. In most cases, the amnesiac is aware that they do not remember; and knowledge of that lack – and of the potential to fill it from external information – is something to cling to. The dementia sufferer is denied the comfort of knowing they do not remember' (Andress, 2018, pp. 2–3).

Dementia deprives persons (and peoples) of their anchorage in the past, in history. This is precisely what is happening with (and to) former great European powers: political attention to History is disappearing. But one should make some correction here: it is not so much disappearing as is being eliminated with different degrees of intensity – up to a frenzy,

demonstrated by the BLM movement and its largely white curators/ masters in the US. In fact, we should speak of the deroutinization of European history, of its un-writing.

Today, it has to do, not only with the terminal phase of the systemic crisis of capitalism, but also with the crisis of the European civilization, of the West. The latter has already been transformed into PostWest; multiculturalism as 'the weapon of the strong', of globalist elites, is an important tool in and of this process. The European civilization was based on three pillars: Christianity, labour ethic, and family. Today, we definitely witness a family crisis – the number of divorces, homosexuality and other perversions, etc., is hard evidence. The Europeans prefer not to work, letting migrants do so – far from the labour ethic which gave birth to capitalism and the rise of Europe. As for Christianity, it was not even fixed in the EU Constitution. I do not even speak about such quixotic things as the integration by the Sovieto- and Russophobic Pope John Paul II of the ifu/voodoo cult into Christianity as one of its confessions – my congratulations.

The French philosopher Chantal Delsol compares a contemporary European with Icarus, having survived his fall and turned into an invalid. As she stresses, an invalid state is, first of all, present in the heads of the Europeans (Delsol, 2003, p. 46). What is important, this state is being developed and strengthened by the Western mainstream social science, by the established intellectual. They formulate the agenda and control the discourse. In his pathbreaking book *The Strange Death of Europe* (2017), D. Murray depicts a conference at the University of Heidelberg in which he participated. During the conference, he writes, 'the full catastrophe of modern German thought suddenly came' to him. (As a participant in many conferences across the world, I must say that we can freely change 'German' into 'French', 'British', 'American', etc. – into any country where scholarship is dominated by politically correct newspeak and where Big Brother is not outside a person's mind, but is instilled in it.) A group of academics, – writes D. Murray, – and others had gathered to discuss the history of Europe's relations with the Middle East and North Africa. It soon became clear that nothing would be learned because nothing could be said. A succession of philosophers and historians spent their time studiously attempting to say nothing as successfully as possible. The less that was successfully said, the greater the relief and acclaim. No attempt to address any idea, history or fact was able to pass without first being put through the pit-stop of the modern academy. No generality could be attempted and no specific could

be uttered. It was not only history and politics that were under suspicion. Philosophy, ideas and language itself had been cordoned off as though around the scene of a crime. To any outsider the edges of that scene were clearly visible. The job of the academics was to police the cordons, all the while maintaining some distractions in order to at all costs prevent wanderers from stumbling back onto the terrain of ideas.

All relevant words were immediately flagged and disputed. The word 'nation' was an obvious problem. 'History' was another word that caused the immediate interruption. When someone was so unwise as to use the term 'culture', the event ground to a halt. The word had too many different connotations and disagreements around its use to be able to be used. The word itself could not be allowed to signify anything. The aim of this game – for a game it was – was to maintain the pretence of academic inquiry while making fruitful discussion impossible. As in so many academics and colleges across Europe this game continues to the satisfaction or relief of its participants, and the frustration or indifference of everybody else.

If there remains any overriding idea it is that ideas are a problem. If there is any remaining commonly held value judgement it is that value judgements are wrong. If there remains any remaining certainty, it is a distrust of certainty. And if this does not add up to an attitude: shallow, unlikely to survive any sustained onslaught, but easy enough to adopt.

Yet, most people in their lives seek some form of certainty. Religion, politics and personal relations remain among the very few ways to try to create such certainty before the chaos we see all around us. Most people outside Europe – or the cultures we have influenced – share none of these fears, distrusts or doubts. They do not distrust their own instincts or their own actions. They do not fear acting in their own interest or think that their own self-interest or the self-interest of their kind should not be furthered. They seek to further their own lives, aspire to standards of living they see others having attained. And they have, in the meantime, a whole range of ideas, often just as numerous as Europe's, which draw them to other conclusions' (Murray, 2017, pp. 224–225).

Unfortunately, this last phrase fixed that free (meaning real) scientific thought and real human life leaves Western Europe and the US and move to other places – to Latin America, India, etc. I can say that Russia now is the least politically correct and hence the freest country in many respects, including the scientific one. Is this really *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*? In the 1830s, Russian diplomat and geopolitical thinker Fyodor Tyutchev (he is also one of the most famous Russian poets) wrote about Austria that it

was like Achilles with one distinction – it had heels everywhere. What happened to Europe during the last 60–70 years is Austro-Hungarization. It became the sick man of the world. It is highly insecure from within. It reminds me of the Roman Empire of the V<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The greatest danger for it is the social union of globalist elites and the underclass of non-European origin. Both are interested in the annihilation of the European civilization, of European values, of almost everything European. Europe now is in the most insecure position in its history – if its present condition can be called History. But *dum spiro, spero*.

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## EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF GLOBAL IDEOLOGY

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*Abstract:* Radical ideologies originated in Europe, but have spread worldwide. Since radical religious movements emerged in the late Middle Ages and the Reformation, ideologies have dominated and defined modern European history. Today's most salient ideologies differ from the past. While extreme nationalism and socialism dominated the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, extremism today comes from outside Europe, mostly based on religion. This is reminiscent of Europe's less recent past. Religious ideology and connected ideological innovations introduce complex dynamics into European politics. Islamism has provoked European controversies over immigration and national identity. But more, a new polarity has emerged, with Russia's bid to lead global Christianity against Western secularism. This makes East-West polarisation cultural as well as political. External religious ideologies also intensify existing European controversies over family-sexuality. Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), though largely free of radical ideology today, is again caught between major powers and ideologies. A global ideological polarity running along lines of religion and connected issues makes CEE once again pivotal, given the importance of religious values there. While these values are traditionalist and not radical, religious radicalism from outside creates tensions between CEE and its European Union (EU) partners. All this gives CEE importance above its size, potentially making it a broker between East and West (or even West and South). With Hungary and Poland pushing back against some western and EU innovations, the internal tensions and ambivalences in CEE countries can have repercussions for the larger alignments both within Europe and externally. Expanding the EU with new members from Southeastern and Eastern Europe could further fuel this dynamic.

*Keywords:* ideology, religious radicalism, Central and Eastern Europe, European Union, Islamism, sexual politics, Puritanism.

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It is humbling to write on ideologies in East-Central Europe. Hardly can there be a region that has suffered more from the ravages of ideology. Richard Weaver's phrase, 'ideas have consequences,' is hardly one that must be pleaded in this part of Europe.

But I want to discuss newer ideologies than what most of us are accustomed to studying because ideology today is taking new forms. Like generals condemned to fight the previous war, I fear we are still responding to the ideologies of yesteryear rather than those confronting us today.

I will suggest that recent ideological realignments worldwide are exerting pressure on the internal politics of East-Central Europe (CEE), a region long recognized to be pivotal geopolitically (Mackinder, 1904). This bears some similarities to the twentieth century when the region was polarised, first by totalitarian ideologies and then by the Cold War. But the impact of today's ideologies is more complex. Though CEE itself is largely free of radical ideology, its relationship with western political structures, especially the European Union (EU), is being tested by new ideological pressures, largely external, though some are also felt in the internal politics of individual states. These tensions are well known, and I will not describe them here. My aim is to elucidate the larger ideological context in which CEE now finds itself.

### **THE APPEARANCE OF IDEOLOGY**

The radical ideologies of the last century politicised two broad areas of life: fascism politicised ethnicity or, in its extreme form, race; and communism politicised economic and social relations. But while today's ideologies have their origins in those of the past, they are different. After the Second World War, scholars like Hannah Arendt, Carl Friedrich, and Zbigniew Brzezinski defined and debated these totalitarian ideologies. A notable feature of this scholarship was a counterintuitive emphasis on the affinities between ideologies whose content seemed diametrically opposed – from the far right to the far left. (Mussolini's mutation from socialist to fascist, or the Hitler-Stalin pact are the most-cited manifestations, but there are others.) This kind of scholarship has had something of a renaissance following the collapse of Communism in 1989.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tismaneanu, 2014 represents a renewal of this style of scholarship.

I will not re-engage with those debates from the past except to say that when I speak of ideology, I emphatically do not accept the loose sense often used today to mean any form of political or other belief so that everyone is said to subscribe to some ideology or another. This sleight-of-hand serves certain current political, indeed ideological, agendas, specifically those that aim to politicise everything.

Rather, radical ideologies are a historically specific phenomenon. They did not exist in ancient or early medieval politics. They emerged in early modern or late medieval Europe at the earliest (Walzer, 1965). The point of my argument is that radical ideologies have changed in form and content. Since the beginning of modern history, we have seen ideologies in various forms. Broadly categorised:

- religious (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries)
- republican (18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century)
- nationalist (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>)
- socialist (late 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>)
- more extreme and totalitarian forms of these that are Fascist, Nazi, and Communist (20<sup>th</sup>)

Recently, some have coined the term 'Islam-ist' and 'Islam-ism' to refer to politicised and terrorist forms of Islam in our own time – Islam as a political ideology (Hansen&Kainz, 2007).

The advent of Islamism has changed the game and confused the terms of debate significantly, and it did so by bringing religion back into the equation. Conventional wisdom dates the appearance of ideological politics to the secularism of the French Revolution. But this is arbitrary and arises because many scholars are, for different reasons, uncomfortable confronting the issue of religion and have formed tacit collusion between the left and right to avoid it.<sup>3</sup>

For it is plausibly argued that modern political ideologies originated in the radical religious movements of the late Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup> While movements like the Cathars and Bogomils lacked the overtly political aspirations that would

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<sup>3</sup> The reticence of scholars to accept religiously inspired revolutions as real revolutions is discussed in Walzer, 1970, and Baskerville, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Cohn, 1970. Philosopher Eric Voegelin (1998) viewed secular political ideologies as throwbacks to early Christian heresies.

qualify them as true modern ideologies, this changed with the better-organized movements surrounding the Protestant Reformation (Walzer, 1965).

The first radical religious movement to become explicitly politicised was in East-Central Europe: the Hussites in Bohemia. The Czech historian František Palacký wrote, 'The Hussite war is the first war in the world's history that was fought, not for material interests but...for ideas.'<sup>5</sup>

A similar logic suggests that ideological religion originated in the Anglophone world: by Puritan radicals who took inspiration from Jan Hus and Hussitism but who were able, for various reasons (like the printing press), to apply such ideas on a much larger scale. There was, after all, at least one major modern revolution before the French, and that occurred in England.<sup>6</sup>

This plausible argument has not been pursued by students of ideology (and it is not explored by the many students of 'religious violence' today, e.g., Juergensmeyer&Kitts, 2011, and Juergensmeyer, Kitts&Jerryson, 2013), but the implications are enormous. For if you identify the English Revolution as the first modern revolution, then you might have to include the American Revolution, which was driven by similar principles. To trace modern ideological politics to the religious conflicts of the seventeenth century and the Puritans is to place them at the inception of two of the most important nation-states of modern history (and ironically, two peoples who have prided themselves on their *un*-ideological politics): modern England and the United States.

## THE RE-EMERGENCE OF RADICAL RELIGION

Those who seek the origins of political radicalism in religious radicalism seem vindicated by the re-emergence of radical religion in our own time. The growth of radical Islam lends plausibility to the argument that ideologies were religious in origin. Islamist radicalism seems to indicate that we have come full circle, returning to the original religious source of radical politics.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Count Lutzow, 1909, p. 335. See also Baskerville, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> One of the most important books of post-war New Left scholarship – ignored by both left and right – is Walzer, 1965. Rachik (2009, pp. 351–353) partially bases his argument on Walzer's. A more substantive attempt to assess it is Baskerville, 2018b.

Some problems arise with this line of argument, problems with how we understand history or perhaps manipulate it.

First, as noted, some want to label all political beliefs as ideologies. Thus, for example, Christianity itself is labelled, with great imprecision, as an 'ideology.' Certainly, particular manifestations of Christianity can be described as ideological: those with political aspirations and methods such as, again, the revolutionary, theocratic wings of Hussitism or Puritanism. The validity of today's similar distinction between Islam (a religion) and Islamism (a political ideology) must be assessed by scholars from those fields.

Some today also want to simply equate all forms of religious radicalism – and even all religion – with Islamist terrorism.<sup>7</sup> A fairly clear ploy is operating here: It is an ahistorical and therefore a false effort to condemn all dissenting religion, if not all religion (Cavanaugh, 2009).

It ignores the fact that the Hussites and Puritans never advocated or engaged in assassination or terror, let alone terrorism; neither did they romanticise martyrdom, as do today's jihadists. Also, while past religious ideologies provoked intense political violence and other atrocities, subsequent secular political ideologies have perpetrated vastly more.

But a deeper, more profound understanding of radical Islam demands our attention – one that indeed tells us something about ourselves.

First, Islamism is not simply a throwback to 'medieval' religion. It is an eclectic hodgepodge of ideas, both religious and secular. Some, of course, are taken from the Quran and other Islamic sources. But many are borrowed directly from modern Western secular ideologies themselves – including socialism, communism, and fascism (Ulph, 2012; Hansen&Kainz, 2007).

This is apparent in the most sophisticated manifestation of Islamist radicalism so far, produced in one of the richest political cultures in the Islamic world: the Iranian Revolution of 1979. This manifestation of Islamist ideology bears a comparison with the 'great' revolutions of the West: England, France, Russia. Whatever one's opinion of the Iranian Revolution, it cannot be characterised as obscurantist 'fundamentalism.' It is a complex mixture of ideas borrowed (as revolutionary ideas always are) from others: nationalism, liberalism, socialism, and – a paradox to which I will return – even feminism (Ziemke, 2000).

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<sup>7</sup> The huge recent literature on 'religious violence' attests to this: *e.g.*, Jeurgensmeyer & Kitts, 2011; Jeurgensmeyer, Kitts&Jerryson, 2013.

To understand Islamist radicalism today, we must understand why it has arisen. (And one might include other manifestations of radical religion, such as Hindutva or radicalized Buddhism). I hope it can tell us something more important about our own ideological past and present – both the religious episodes and the secular ones.

Islamism has arisen in part from the failure of secular ideologies to deliver on their promises, especially in the global South. Radicals turn to religious ideologies because the secular ideologies – modified versions of their predecessors developed here in Europe – have failed, much as Communism failed in Europe. The post-war secular ideologies to which many intellectuals in the global South looked for ‘national liberation’ involved hybrids of nationalism and socialism: pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism, most obviously. As in Europe, they brought neither freedom nor prosperity but mostly economic stagnation, political instability, and repression.

It is hardly surprising that some radical intellectuals turned to seemingly more spiritual ideas for their liberation, even if the beliefs they adopted were sometimes little more than secular ideologies covered over with a veneer of spirituality. Islamism (Hindutva, political Buddhism, etc.) is the logical alternative to the failure of the same twin ideologies that failed in Europe: extreme nationalism and socialism.<sup>8</sup>

Why? I could suggest clichés about the centrality of the spiritual dimension of human life. Man is a religious animal – *animal religiosum*<sup>9</sup> or *homo religiosus* in the phrase of Romanian philosopher Mircea Eliade.

But some argue that the recent alternative movements are really political ideologies with a religious covering. ‘While steeped in Islamic myth and forms, the events of 1979 represented first and foremost a political revolution,’ writes Caroline Ziemke.

Khomeini’s revolutionary role models were secular and, for the most part, Western. During the revolution and since, revolutionary political goals have always taken precedence over religious goals. ... Iranian law contains many non-Islamic concepts: legal (if not yet actual) equality between the sexes concerning property, employment, and family rights.... (Ziemke, 2000, pp. 98-99)

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<sup>8</sup> See Walzer, 2015, though he may not agree with my synopsis.

<sup>9</sup> See also Charnock, 1840, p. 6.

Conversely, again, some argue that even the 'secular' ideologies began as a corruption of religion. And no religious revolt is ever purely religious; social and economic and political grievances are always included in the mix.

So ultimately, there may be no clear distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' extremism. To avoid quibbling about words, we must dig deeper into why these ideologies arise.

One striking feature of Islamism, making it so difficult to analyse and confront, is its promiscuous combination of grievances we in the West often consider inconsistent. As if to vindicate the scholars of totalitarianism who stressed the ironic affinities between Nazism and Communism, today's Islamism combines within itself complaints against the West associated with both the right and left.

This suggests several features of ideologies shared by both religious and secular versions: First, they always express grievances, and they thrive on the most dangerous emotion in politics: resentment (Baskerville 2018b). This helps to distinguish two similar phenomena that are not distinguished often enough: 'the confusion of patriotism (old and traditional) with nationalism (new and democratic)' (Lukacs, 2009). Patriotism is love and loyalty to a country and community. Nationalism always involves some discontent or grievance directed at someone else.

It is also worth noting that the Islamist complaints against both left and right have other features in common: They are both directed at the West, against liberalism, and against middle-class values.

This derives from another critical feature common to all ideologies: Regardless of their professed purposes, they all seek power as their ultimate aim, and they are willing to combine apparently inconsistent and even antithetical ideas and goals – and form improbable alliances with 'strange bedfellows' – in order to acquire power. In other words, they will readily sacrifice their most loudly touted principles. 'Power is the alpha and the omega of contemporary Communism,' observed Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas in the 1950s. 'Ideas, philosophical principles, and moral considerations...all can be changed and sacrificed. But not power' (Djilas, 1958, p. 170).

### **THE NEW PURITANISM**

On the one hand, Islamism continues the complaints of the post-colonial left against Western colonialism-imperialism and capitalism. It also borrows

heavily from the ideological left and often contains elements of *de facto* socialism (clear in the current Iranian regime). This explains the otherwise strange affinity the Western left shows toward Islamism and its reluctance to criticise Islamist atrocities. 'It is striking,' remarked Fred Halliday of the 'politically articulated accommodation... between Islamism as a political force and many groups of the left' (Halliday, 2011, p. 77). Even feminism manages to make its peace with radical Islam, as we will see (Hymowitz, 2003).

I want to concentrate on the complaints Islamism seems to share with the right, which have never been placed in their full historical and political context. It involves several grievances, but the most important involves women, the family, and sexuality.

As many scholars have emphasized, this is not a marginal matter. 'The centrality of gender relations in the political ideology of Islam,' in the words of Parvin Paidar, is now widely acknowledged by scholars (Kazemzadeh, 2002, p. 4). Whatever the various resentment fuelling Islamist activism, the Islamist response largely distils down in sexual regulation. Radical Muslims understand that controlling sex and claiming sexual purity translate into political power. 'The issue of women is not marginal,' write Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit; 'it lies at the heart of Islamic [radicalism]' (Buruma&Margalit, 2004). The relationship between sexual discipline and political power, at one time well understood in the West (as we shall see), is now largely forgotten in Europe. But Islamists understand it keenly. 'The *hejab* has been identified by the [Iranian] regime as the very cornerstone of its revolution,' notes Haideh Moghissi. 'It is described as basic to Islamic ideology and...seen by them as denoting deliverance from the yoke of imperialism 'and as representing' a symbol of liberation and resistance to capitalism and of revolutionary aspirations' (Moghissi, 2004, pp. 77-78).

The suggestion<sup>10</sup> that Western sexual dissipation inflames Muslim hostility and plays into the hands of Islamist radicals cannot be completely dismissed. 'The West is...a society in which the number of illegitimate children approaches and sometimes surpasses the number of children from permitted unions,' declares one radical sheikh, accurately (D'Souza, 2007, p. 153).

At the same time, Islamist militancy is no simple return to traditional family values. It is a fanatical and terrorist ideology that freely borrows from its kindred Western ideologies. The larger point is not the specific demands

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<sup>10</sup> D'Souza, 2007, pp. 150, 152, 153, provides a popular example.

of radical Islamists; it is that they seek to control the terms of sexuality and use it to acquire political power. Again, radical Muslims understand something that we in the West at one time also understood but have forgotten: that controlling sexuality and claiming sexual purity translate into secular political empowerment.

This helps explain the otherwise puzzling paradox that, more than any other, inhibits our understanding of radical Islam: If Islamism oppresses women, why does it attract such large numbers of them? 'Many observers have wondered why women in the hundreds of thousands, including educated women, actively supported a movement which appeared to curtail their rights' (Roded, 1999, p. 255). These are consciously dedicated Islamist women, attired decidedly in veils, and often armed. 'Observers have all noted the presence and activism of women in the Islamist movement,' writes Olivier Roy; 'recall the demonstrations of armed and veiled women in Iran' (Roy, 1998, p. 59).

Contrary to the stifling political correctness that distorts Western understanding of this important phenomenon, these women are not coerced into this involvement. They are enthusiastic operatives in a movement that is consciously determined to acquire political power, and they understand very clearly that controlling the terms of sexuality and claiming sexual purity are the most effective means of acquiring it.

### **THE WEST'S SEXUAL JIHAD**

In this respect, a parallel battle is being fought today in the secular West, and Islamist militants share this preoccupation with elements that now dominate the Western left. For throughout the Western world too, the ideological fault lines have been shifting from economic and social cleavages that drove socialist ideology to grievances that are sexual. *Newsweek* magazine calls this 'the politics of sex.'<sup>11</sup>

This is not new. The Western left has had a long history of ambivalence toward sexual freedom. Though Western radical movements have usually contained fringe elements of bohemianism and libertinism, the most successful secular political ideologies have been sexually puritanical. 'Ironically, those countries which rejected religion in the name of

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<sup>11</sup> Magazine cover: <https://www.thewrap.com/newsweek-avoids-condoms-nudity-politics-sex-cover-35368/>.



Communism tended to adopt their own version of sexual puritanism, which often matched those of the religions they assailed,' Dennis Altman observes. The most effective radical agitators have sought to limit sexual license. A major achievement of Bolshevism, for example, was to discipline the cadres' 'infantile' bohemianism by channelling the libido into party activity. 'Drown your sexual energy in public work,' urged Nicolai Semashko, the first People's Commissar for Health. 'If you want to solve the sexual problem, be a public worker.' Likewise, Lenin himself: 'The revolution...cannot tolerate orgiastic conditions, such as are normal for the decadent,' he insisted.

Dissoluteness in sexual life is bourgeois, is a phenomenon of decay. The proletariat... does not need intoxication as a narcotic or a stimulus. Intoxication as little by sexual exaggeration as by alcohol. ... Self-control, self-discipline is not slavery, not even in love.<sup>12</sup> (Altman, 2002, p. 6; Eley, 2002, p. 188; Zetkin, 1934.)

When liberal bohemianism crept back into early Soviet family policy in the form of easy divorce laws, it caused social havoc and had to be abandoned (The Russian Effort to Abolish Marriage, 1926).

The recent Western left has embraced sexuality with (so to speak) a passion. At first glance, this appears libertarian and libertine, not puritanical. But while its devotion to open-ended sexual freedom stands diametrically opposite and opposed to radical Islamism, what they share is a realization of the political importance of sexuality and aspiration to political power that can be gained by controlling its terms and rules.

What one scholar calls 'sexualityism' has now positioned itself on the vanguard of left-wing politics (Alvare, 2012). Demands for 'power' and 'empowerment' indicate the emergence of more than a desire to be free of state interference and instead a true ideology, including clear aspirations to commandeer the state machinery. One sympathetic scholar terms it 'the ideology of the erotic' (Parker, 2009, p. 111). The older socialistic battle cry of 'social justice' is replaced with demands for 'erotic justice' (Correa, Petchesky&Parker, 2008, pp. 4-5).

Like their predecessors, Western sexual radicals (and their opponents too) present their revolt primarily as the pursuit of sexual liberation. Yet, here too,

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<sup>12</sup> Compare the words of one Puritan minister: 'When thou findest any lust of the flesh arising in thee, turn the strength of it into a spiritual end,' John Cotton urged. 'Art thou troubled with lust after women? ... Turn the strength of thy affection to another [purpose].' (Baskerville, 2018b, pp. 288-289)

a corollary dimension of puritanism and even authoritarianism also appears. 'Having embraced the sexual revolution and encouraged an atmosphere of promiscuity,' Ken Masugi notes, the sexual left 'has now created a legalistic, centralised crackdown on talk about sex' (Masugi, 2013). This paradox has perplexed and fooled both liberal and conservative critics, who often support one side of the dialectic and reject the other. 'The old guard of feminists (rightly) battled against those who sought to constrain women within false and offensive notions of biological destiny,' writes one. 'But the new breed of gender warriors have pulled off the very opposite effect: a puritanical climate in which bodies are angrily policed and furiously weaponised, where an iron will to condemn and stamp out sexual waywardness wherever it is found... reigns supreme' (Strimpel, 2017). Likewise, two liberal former feminists seem sympathetic to freedom but uncomfortable with the authority. 'Feminists used to urge women to explore their own sexuality freely,' write Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge, 'but now there is a figurative policing of the bedroom' (Patai&Koertge, 1994, p. 3).

In some ways, the sexual revolutionaries have not discarded puritanism so much as they have changed its terms by redefining sexual sin. Traditional religious definitions have been replaced by secular definitions formulated in political language. Sexual indulgence is no longer a sin against God but now a crime against the state. Having ridiculed into silence traditional Christian morality, with its vocabulary of 'immorality,' 'licentiousness,' 'fornication,' and 'adultery,' the radicals substituted new crimes and expanded redefinitions of existing crimes, all involving sexuality – 'rape,' 'sexual assault,' 'sexual harassment,' 'sexual abuse,' 'sexual misconduct' (no clear distinctions separate these terms) – plus quasi-crimes of ideological heterodoxy: 'sexism,' 'misogyny,' 'homophobia' (Baskerville, 2017a; Gottschalk, 2006, pp. 115-116).

In effect, a new political theology carries a politicised definition of sin. The shame and stigma of the 'fornicator' and 'adulterer' have been replaced with that of the 'abuser' and 'harasser.' In the process, traditional morality is replaced with ideology and community pressure with criminal prosecution.

These two ideologies – Islamism and feminism-homosexuality – offer today's competing models for ordering the relations between the sexes, marriage, the family, and children. They also offer competing visions for the alignment of global power (Baskerville, 2018a).

## THE ORIGINAL PURITANISM

Yet a third model exists that also bases its legitimacy, in part, on its ability to manage the terms of sexuality and the family. This is the traditionally Christian West and the increasingly Christian global South (Jenkins, 2011). The West has also grappled in its past with not only sexual repression but also its political implications, and it has created its own religious and political radicalism. Indeed, it was the first to do so.

Here we return again to the origin of our own ideologies. For the obvious parallel is with our friends whom we have already introduced: the Cathars and Bogomils incipiently, but especially the Hussites and above all the Puritans, whose name is virtually synonymous with strict morality, including sexual morality. The Puritans were probably the world's most successful practitioners of the principle of repressing sexual freedom and harnessing sexual energy in the service of civic freedom (Baskerville, 2018b).

The popular understanding of 'Puritan' as abstinence from pleasure, including sexual pleasure, may indeed be that movement's most significant legacy (though ironically, now the one least fashionable among scholars). Campaigns against personal vice – not only sexual license, but swearing, drinking, gambling, blood sports, and other popular indulgences – involved more than 'the haunting fear that someone, somewhere may be happy,' in the words of H.L. Mencken. Decided political aims lay behind them: to create virtuous citizens. Puritanism might thus be seen as a massive program to implement what has since become the cliché that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance (Walzer, 1970). Like Lenin, the Puritans saw freedom as beyond the reach of people wallowing in indulgence and licentiousness. Self-government required self-control. 'There is a service which is freedom, the service of Christ; and there is a freedom which is servitude, freedom to sin,' one minister told the House of Commons during the English Revolution of the 1640s. 'There is a liberty which is bondage and...a bondage which is liberty' (Baskerville, 2018b, p. 196).

It is no accident that in their heyday the Puritans were also political revolutionaries – the world's first. They were certainly the Reformation's most sophisticated political activists. Their drive for personal purity was the launching point for larger campaigns demanding ecclesiastical purification, and from there to political reform.

Inseparable from their politics, the Puritans also produced early modern Europe's most voluminous literature on the family. This was hardly the quietest withdrawal from the public square into private life. On the contrary,

the family was the Puritanism's institution for connecting sexuality and civic life, and the Puritans considered the family a 'little commonwealth,' whose members, especially children, were trained in the habits and techniques of citizenship and even political activism (Demos, 1970; Baskerville, 1993). Relevant here is that women were assigned essential responsibilities, and despite their reputation as purveyors of the 'patriarchal' family, the Puritans (paralleling later Islamism) attracted educated women in large numbers.

Puritanism is also renowned for promoting economic prosperity, supplying evidence for the 'Protestant ethic' thesis of sociologist Max Weber. Considering the family as the most basic unit of economic production, one consequence is almost certainly the material prosperity of the West. It was probably the Puritan commitment to family solidarity and integrity – as much or more than the predestinarian soteriology where Weber identified it – that served as the basis of the Protestant ethic of conscientious work leading to material affluence.

### **THE DILEMMA OF EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE**

None of these ideological systems has had a major role in Central and Eastern Europe. As noted, Hussitism originated here, and its predecessors, pre-political forms of religious dissent such as the Bogomils were active in the Balkans. Islam was also a political presence, but imposed from outside in its pre-ideological form and not an indigenous Islamism.

And yet, like the ideologies of the last century, CEE is where they could clash, with global implications. The twentieth-century ideologies that wreaked such havoc here were imposed largely from outside, by major powers. Something similar may happen again, for CEE is again pivotal in global politics.

For one thing, changes in the Islamic world have put pressure on Europe, to which CEE countries have responded with the heightened defence of their national sovereignty. This has created tension between the European Union and Poland, Hungary, and others.

But the fault lines involve more than national sovereignty and nationalism, though that is how the Western media, ever-attentive to the battle lines in the 'previous war,' insists on simplifying it. A larger cultural and moral tension centres on the confrontation between traditional Christian faith and the new ideologies.

Today's push back against western secularism is not primarily coming from Puritan northern Europe, though Puritan Britain and America are both involved.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it is Catholic Central Europe and Orthodox Eastern Europe that are resisting. This is not a new Puritanism, for it is not ideological. The 'revolutions' it has already inspired were not theocratic but 'velvet.' Their aim was not to seize state power but to limit it.

But the push back does carry political implications. One major power is making a claim to leadership of this push back: Russia. This broadens the dynamic from culture to geopolitics, presenting a new East-West polarisation quite different from the old ones (Baskerville, 2017b). Though the old ideologies are effectively gone, we are left with a political polarity with a cultural (if not an 'ideological') subtext: Eastern Christian values versus Western secularism. Geographically and politically, it may be represented – eerily reminiscent of the past – in, respectively, Russia and a German-dominated EU. That Britain is pulling out of continental 'entanglements' and resuming its traditional role in 'splendid isolation' as offshore balancer-of-power is also uncanny.

This new polarity resembles past ones superficially, but now the ideological dimension is not social-economic or even nationalistic but religious-cultural (with sexual issues often accentuated). While CEE risks being (again) caught in the middle, the polarity also provides an opportunity to act as a pivot or broker between East and West. That a similar tension increasingly separates the West from the global South further augments this leverage, giving CEE importance above its size.

So CEE faces a choice: It can allow itself to again be a pawn in great power rivalries, or it can use its leverage to assert its own values against the hegemony, political or cultural, of both East and West. What those values are is not for me to say. But if Western institutions expand eastward and into the Balkans, the cultural gap between Western-sponsored elites and traditional populations could grow. Increased 'populism' will highlight pressures and contradictions within the NATO and EU alliances that may already stand in need of redefinition.

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<sup>13</sup> Christian non-governmental organizations lobbying on family and sexual issues, though themselves usually rooted in Catholic and Orthodox churches, and clearly enjoying support from local populations, often follow the lead and adopt the techniques of (and may be funded by) the large American Evangelical law firm Alliance Defending Freedom, which has recently opened offices throughout Europe.

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## THE PROBLEM OF REGIONAL SEPARATISM AS A FACTOR OF DESTABILISATION IN SPAIN

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*Abstract:* The contribution discusses the separatist tendencies of selected regions in Spain and their impact on the state's stability. The separatist tendencies have been present in Spain for a long time, and they are disrupting its political and economic stability. The main aim of this paper is to determine the causes of the origin and development of Basque and Catalan separatist tendencies and to describe their impact on the political and economic stability of Spain. To accomplish this aim, we used various methods such as description, region analysis and comparison. We also formed a hypothesis that the right of peoples to self-determination is a more legitimate argument in the case of Catalan separatism than in the case of Basque separatism, which can be confirmed. After the analysis, we concluded that the main aim was fulfilled. Moreover, it offers a development prognosis concerning separatist tendencies of the above-mentioned regions.

*Keywords:* separatism, destabilisation, self-determination, the Basque country, Catalonia.

### THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF SEPARATISM RESEARCH

Separatism forms the basis of our work and, therefore, we consider it important to bring several different definitions of this term given by several experts from the Slovak and foreign academic community.

The word separatism comes from the Latin word *separare* – to pull apart, separation, detachment. This phenomenon has accompanied humanity since its inception, and history offers a large number of tendencies of wars and conflicts among separatists. However, separatism is not just a matter of

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the past. It is a phenomenon present in the 21st century throughout the world. Separatism arises when members of linguistic, ethnic, national, or religious groups feel that their degree of representation by political elites is insufficient, as well as the degree of autonomy of their territory created by administrative boundaries (Ištók, 2003).

According to Ištók and the team of authors, separatism, in the sense we know it today, appeared in Europe around the middle of the 19th century. Even then, it was associated with a new social phenomenon - nationalism (Čajka et al., 2010). We will also address this concept in the first chapter of the work. In Political Geography, the above-mentioned team of renowned Slovak academics defines separatism as 'a movement operating to separate a part of the territory and its population from a certain territory, either with the intention of creating a new state or joining a neighbouring state' (Čajka et al., 2010, p. 170). Separation is thus a process that is contrary to the primary goal of each state - to preserve its own territorial integrity. At the same time, it is contrary to the internal sovereignty of the state. This phenomenon cannot be removed from the reality of international relations by any law. At present, according to Barr, separation is the only way to create a new state (Baar, 2002, p. 23). It leads to the separation and independence of a certain territory, which differs in some way from the rest of the state, and the creation of a new independent state. In this context, Ivančík and Nečas argue that state separatism expresses the separation of a smaller part from the whole or the recognition of the autonomous rights of the national minority in the state (2012, p. 328).

The Cambridge Dictionary states that separatism is 'the belief held by people of a particular race, religion, or other group within a country that they should be independent and have their own government or in some way live apart from other people' (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). However, we consider this definition to be unprofessional and not entirely accurate. It does not mention the state's territory, only a group of people. The mere conviction of a group of people does not automatically mean a real separation of the territory in which they live from the rest of the state.

Another definition of separatism is offered by Červenáková (2013) in her rigorous work. It draws on Otto's General Encyclopaedia, which defines separatism as 'an effort to seize part of the state's territory, usually by its population, usually to unite divided populations united by a common ethnic, national and religious identity'. It is often accompanied by an effort to annex a part of the territory of one state to a neighbouring state' (Červenáková, 2013, p. 24).

In his article Ryabinin used the Political Science Encyclopaedic Dictionary, which describes separatism as a movement for the territorial secession of a part of the territory to create a new state or achieve a degree of autonomy in areas such as language, religion or national issues (2017, p. 6). We consider this definition to be sufficiently relevant. It also brings a new perspective on separatism, and this is the aforementioned degree of autonomy. It is important to realize that separatism does not necessarily result in a real separation of a part of the state's territory from the rest. It may also be related to the requirement to achieve a higher degree of autonomy, but this is linked to the right of nations to self-determination. This law is closely linked to international law. The issue of separatism and the right of nations to self-determination from an international legal point of view will be addressed in the next subchapter.

Another slightly different definition comes from the American professor of sociology Schaeffer. He writes that separatism, in general, is a process of dividing an existing state and creating a successor state in the same territory. It is mainly the disintegration of the nation-state. He also states that the term secession may be synonymous with this term. Art Nouveau can be defined as the disintegration of a nation-state and the emergence of successor states on its territory. It is, therefore, the emergence of new subjects of law (Schaeffer, 2008). Gierl (2012) mentions secession in the context of the unilateral separation of a part of the territory of the state and the declaration of independence in that part of the territory. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled on the issue of Art Nouveau that only colonial-dominated states that are in this way oppressed, and where dialogue on the internal realization of the right to self-determination is not possible in the future, have the right to Art Nouveau exploited. Thus, if a minority nation is represented in a state and is not discriminated against, the right to internal self-determination is therefore respected, and the nation has no right to demand the creation of its own state unit and thus violate the principle of territorial integrity (Gierl, 2012, p.17). However, international law does not support Art Nouveau because it is not in line with its basic principles (Rosenberg, 1997).

In the second half of the 19th century, small states separated from the increasingly weakening Ottoman Empire. This separatism was considered legitimate because it was a matter of national liberation struggles against Turkish colonialism ambitions. The period after the First World War was characterized by the fact that in Europe were created several states, whose borders did not correspond to the borders of the nations. This fact is also

confirmed by the emergence of multinational states, such as Czechoslovakia, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was renamed Yugoslavia in 1929 (Hruboň, 2020, pp. 84-86, 100). In the second half of the 20th century, new states emerged mostly in the process of decolonisation and also in situations of dissolution or splitting up. The only real separation from a state that has existed for at least 10 years has been the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan. After the war, the victorious powers signed an agreement in Yalta, which dealt, among other things, with the post-war organization of Europe and the immutability of borders. As the number of states whose colonial borders did not represent national borders grew, so did the number of separatist movements. At present, they manifest themselves mostly in armed conflicts with the state power, but this is not the rule (Mesárová, 2012).

In the 20th century, in the process of decolonisation, new successor nation-states emerged in the world. In some cases, the leaders of these newly created states also wanted to conquer foreign territories that did not belong to them. The means to achieve such a goal were invasions and annexations. Such endeavours were never in line with international law. The pretext for the territorial expansion of these newly formed states was to unite the new nation into one state. Therefore, Israel launched the occupation of Palestine and Indonesia annexed the western part of the island of New Guinea and later East Timor (Schaeffer, 2008).<sup>2</sup>

Most of the examples of separatism mentioned were marked by prolonged armed struggles. The demands of separatist movements are generally similar and generally concern unresolved economic, social or national issues. The declaration of a territory as a new independent state was preceded either by the occupation of the territory by separatist troops or by the long-term control and administration of the territory without the interference of the central power. An example from practice regarding the second of the mentioned methods is the case of the Republic of Somaliland (Čajka et al., 2010).

An interesting view of separatism is provided by Boyle and Englebert, who define separatism as the process of forming a state preceded by tyranny and driven by the shared memories of the past (2006, p. 3). This definition deviates from the more traditional definitions already mentioned. However,

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<sup>2</sup> The establishment of the Israeli state ensued following the UN partitioning plan for Palestine and enjoyed international support. On the other hand, the Indonesian invasion of East Timor represents a different example.

it offers an insight into separatism separate from nationalism, ethnic and religious elements.

The concept of separatism is also related to the concept of irredentism. Irredentism is a national movement whose goal is to connect a territory with a national minority to a state whose nationality is a given minority (Lněnička, 2011). It can also be defined as an attempt to tear off a certain part of the state territory in order to annex it to another state. Irredentism comes from the Latin words *terra irredenta* - unredeemed land.<sup>3</sup> It began to appear in Europe in the second half of the 19th century and is considered a specific form of separatism (Baar, 2002).

Separatism can be based on various integral parts - cultural, religious, economic, ideological, ethnic, or even civilizational. In terms of the degree of activity, separatism can be active or mild. We speak of active separatism when an ethnic group actively supports the idea of Art Nouveau. In turn, we speak of moderation or mild separatism when an ethnic group demands only the status of autonomy, or when an ethnic group expresses dissatisfaction with its position in the state but has no demands to change that status. Other types of separatism result from such a perception, such as open and closed separatism. We speak of open separatism when an ethnic group openly expresses its demands for separation from the state (Baar, 2002, p. 65). Closed separatism, on the other hand, involves strictly prohibiting the government from discussing the possibility of separation (Ryabinin, 2017).

External factors influencing the strengthening of separatist processes in the state include the presence of neighbouring states or powers interested in weakening or even collapsing the state. At the same time, the aim of such action by states is to improve their own position in the region or expand their territory if they share a border with the separatist territory. According to Ryabinin (2017), this kind of separatism is visible and foreseeable in the post-Soviet space (an example is Donbas in Ukraine).

External factors have two different manifestations, two forms – soft and hard support. We consider military invasion as hard support, and it could occur in the following situations:

- If the region is supplied with ammunition;

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<sup>3</sup> Unredeemed Italy, Italian-speaking territory not incorporated in Italy. In 1877 the Italian politician Matteo Renato Imbriani invented the new term 'terre irredente' ('unredeemed lands').

- Intervention by peacekeepers to bring a solution to the conflict, but taking into account the interests of either the rebel region or the state government, and
- Implementation of humanitarian intervention, which presupposes participation in the struggle on the part of the insurgent region (Ryabinin, 2017).

Soft support of external factors can be further divided into subtle active and subtle passive support. Subtle passive support is reflected in the existence of a neighbouring state with an ethnically close population. At the same time, there is an effort by this neighbouring state to unite nations into one state. On the other hand, subtle active support manifests itself as follows (Ryabinin, 2017):

- Cost-effective activities (financing of the fight, financing of non-governmental organizations);
- Technically (arms supply);
- Humanitarian activities (creating links with ethnically close people in the field of culture, education and science, financing educational programs, etc.);
- Support for the rebel region or bodies in international organizations, e.g., in the UN, OSCE;
- Construction of religious buildings, and
- Influencing public opinion (the negative portrayal of the insurgent region or state authorities).

In his article, Ryabinin describes five stages in the development of separatism: the introduction of identity; ban on language, culture and history; criminal prosecution; absorption of an ethnic group by a titular group, and genocide (2017, pp. 6-7).

## **SYSTEM OF AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES**

Spain is characterized by a high degree of decentralisation of power. It is one of the most decentralised states in Europe. The decentralised organization of Spain has contributed to the development of democracy, to the economic growth of the state, and also to the improvement of the social system. The high degree of autonomy of individual territorial-administrative units is logically related to decentralisation. Spain is composed of 17 territorial units, which are called *Comunidades Autónomas* in Spanish, meaning the

Autonomous Communities (Ištók, 2003). At the same time, the terms autonomous region and autonomous regions, which are synonymous, are also used. Besides, two regions located in North Africa – Ceuta and Melilla – are under the Spanish administration. These provinces do not have the status of an autonomous community but an autonomous city (*ciudad autónoma*) (Chalupa, 2009). The individual Spanish autonomous regions are separated by the so-called right boundaries, self-governing bodies. They define territorial-administrative units. Administrative boundaries can separate territories that differ in linguistic, ethnic, nationality, or religious terms (Ištók, 2003, p. 97).

These are national borders that have been set by the state, or by the state in cooperation with a certain degree of autonomy. In the process of creating the right borders in a heterogeneous state, it is important that these borders respect the linguistic, ethnic, national, or religious distribution of the population. If such boundaries were not set correctly and did not respect these factors, they could become a source of national conflict. On the other hand, even the administrative borders that respect the composition and distribution of the population can lead to distortions of national stability. Such a situation can occur if the individual administrations are fully accorded a high degree of autonomy, which can lead to the separatist tendencies of homogeneous territories within one heterogeneous state (Ištók, 2003, p. 98).

The term autonomy comes from the Greek word *autónomos*, which means to follow one's own laws. Political autonomy means that a certain political entity has a high degree of self-government. Most cities or regions have political autonomy. Autonomy does not represent absolute political independence or sovereignty. It represents a certain degree of freedom in the administration of a given territory transferred from the state to the city or region (Žaloudek, 2004, p. 23).

The system of Spanish autonomous communities cannot be identified with the territorial division in Spain or with the system of territorial self-government from other unitary states.<sup>4</sup> Spain offers a completely original way of decentralising state power. López Guerra and the team of authors (2010) used the words of the Spanish Constitutional Tribunal to describe the communities. They described the Autonomous Communities as public corporations that have a territorial basis as well as a political nature (López

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<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it can be compared with Italian regionalism.



Guerra et al., 2010). In addition to the autonomous communities, the territorial division of the state includes the so-called provinces and municipalities (in Spanish *provincias a municipios*).

The process of creating a system of autonomous communities was relatively complex. The space for its rebound in Spain was made after the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975. After the end of Franco's dictatorship, the power was decentralised, and Spain began to transform into a democratic state. The system of autonomous regions was created by the Constitution of Spain in 1978, which is still in force today. Although the establishment of specific autonomous regions is not mentioned in the Constitution, space is provided for their establishment. Article 2 of the Constitution (1978) 'guarantees the right to autonomy of nationalities and regions...'. Articles 143-158 deal with the organization, competences, funding, bodies, and control of their activities (Domin, 2013, p. 42). Under Article 143 of the 1978 Constitution, several areas have been granted the status of a historical community. This was particularly true of the areas in the north of Spain, namely Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia and the southern part of Spain, Andalusia. Due to their position, these four areas had the opportunity to achieve a higher degree of autonomy more quickly, in the so-called first wave of decentralisation. In addition, they enjoyed various privileges. In the referendums on the establishment of the Autonomous Community, the will of only two-thirds of the majority of eligible voters was sufficient in these regions, while in thirteen other regions the will of three-fourths of the majority of eligible voters was required (Rosenberg, 1997, p. 27).

During the 20th century, Galicia, the Basque Country and Catalonia demanded the fulfilment of the right to autonomy and independent domestic political management of their territory. The establishment of the Second Republic in 1931 provided a suitable opportunity for the decentralisation of power. The Spanish Constitution of 1931 introduced a system of autonomous regions in the state. The reasons for the establishment of autonomous communities were stated directly in the Constitution. The common history of individual regions or the common economy is mentioned (Rosenberg, 1997, p. 27).

The basic and founding document of any Autonomous Community is the Statute of Autonomy (hereinafter 'the Statute'), which must be approved by the Spanish Parliament. However, the establishment of such a document also requires the will of the people expressed in a referendum in each autonomous region separately (Rosenberg, 1997). Article 147 (2) of the

Constitution lays down the minimum substantive conditions of the Statute. Each statute must contain the official designation of the Autonomous Community, define its territory, regulate the designation, organization and seat of the Community institutions and present a calculation of the competences that the Community assumes from the central government (the framework is given by the Constitution). Of course, the statutes contain much broader information than just the minimum mentioned (Domin, 2013, p. 43). Such a process created only Catalan autonomy during the Second Republic (1931-1939). Although the Basque Country and Galicia proposed their statutes, domestic politics in the state in the 1930s did not allow the statutes to be implemented in practice (Rosenberg, 1997, p. 28).

Pursuant to Article 147 (2) of the Constitution, the Statute must also establish the institutional framework of the Community, that is to say, its individual bodies. The system of bodies that each region can create according to itself is regulated by Art. 152 para. 1 of the Constitution. However, absolute freedom does not apply here, as the communities must comply with the provisions of the four prescribed bodies. These are the Legislative Assembly (*Asamblea Legislativa*), the Government Council (*Consejo de Gobierno*), the President of the Autonomous Community (*Presidente*) and, finally, the Tribunal Superior de Justicia. The Constitution stipulates the obligation to establish such a body but does not specify its name. Therefore, in some areas, a body with legislative powers is called differently. In the Extremadura region, this body is called the 'Assembly', in the Basque Country or Andalusia it is called the 'Parliament', and in the region of Asturias, it is called the 'Cortes' (Domin, 2013). Here we have communities that have a certain degree of freedom in creating their bodies. But it also applies here that communities must establish a body that conflicts with the Constitution. An example of a Community body that is outside the mandatory framework of the bodies provided for in the Statute is the Economic and Social Council (*Consejo económico y social*) (Domin, 2013, p. 49). For example, it is established in the Valencia and Madrid area.

The relationship between the central government and regional governments has changed throughout history. At present, it is regulated in individual statutes. More specifically, the statutes define the competences of the communities, which are taken over from the central government. These competences are then exercised by the above-mentioned bodies. The Constitution offers a definition of the competences of the communities. It defines several types of competences: exclusive competences of the state, exclusive competences of the communities and shared competences of the

state and the communities. The exclusive competences of the state include the issue of citizenship, migration, as well as state defence, foreign policy, customs duties, criminal and labour legislation, etc. The question of exclusive Community competences and shared competences seems more complex. In principle, however, it can be said that the Constitution regulates these competences only within a framework. It, therefore, only offers a framework of competences from which individual regions can choose. The choice of individual competences is set out in the statutes of each community. The competences that the community does not take over are automatically left to the central government. This is governed by Article 149 (3) of the Constitution. The competences of the communities may include, for example, the administration of rail and road transport, the question of the organization of Community bodies, or tourism in the territory of the Community (López Guerra et al., 2010). At the same time, the exclusive jurisdiction of the Autonomous Communities includes local civil law, agriculture, domestic production, social welfare, housing construction, culture, etc. (Rosenberg, 1997). The calculation of the third category, the shared competences between the state and the community, is slightly problematic. The Constitution does not offer an exact calculation. In order to be able to name the shared competences, we must make a comparison between Article 148 (1), which defines the exclusive competences of the State, and Article 149 (1), which defines the competences of the Communities. The degree of state participation in individual competencies may vary (Domin, 2013, p. 49). In the event of a conflict between Community law and the law of the State, the law of the State shall prevail (Rosenberg, 1997, p. 31).

It is also important to mention Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. This article enshrines the right of the central government to use means which compel the Autonomous Community to comply, respectively, not to violate the obligations arising from the Constitution or any other law. In such a case, the use of force would also be accepted. We can state that the acquisition of statutes after the fall of the Franco dictatorship had three different processes - fast, medium and slow. The fastest statutes were adopted and recognized in the so-called historical regions. Historical regions are granted wide legitimacy of their requirements and powers. Other regions did not see the adoption of autonomous status until later.

Spain has arranged autonomous regions according to different lengths of acquisition of their regional autonomy:

- Historical regions and special conditions – the Basque Country, Galicia, Catalonia, Navarra
- Regions with a rapid pace of autonomy – Andalusia
- Regions with a moderate course of gaining autonomy – Valencia, the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Extremadura, Cantabria, Castile – La Mancha, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia
- Regions with a slow process of gaining autonomy – Aragón, Astúrias.

### **THE BASQUE REGION**

The Basque Autonomous Community (Basque Autonomous Community, Comunidad Autónoma Vasca in Spanish, Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoa) lies in the north of Spain. It connects the country with the Bay of Biscay, respectively the Cantabrian Sea. The Basque province of Gipúzcoa borders France, but their common border is no longer than 20 km. The Basque Country is one of the smallest regions in Spain. Nevertheless, it is very strong economically. It consists of three provinces – Álava, Vizcaya and Gipúzcoa (Arab, Biscay, Gipuzkoa). The capital of the Basque Country is the city of Vitoria (after the Basque Gateiz) and is located in the province of Álava. The population of this province consists mainly of the Basques, who consider their language – Basque (also called Euskara or Eurskera) as part of their unique identity (Cancela-Kieffer, 2018). Basque, together with Castilian, is the official language of the Community. This fact is also confirmed by the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country of 1979. However, the Basques do not live only within the Basque Country. The Basques can be found east of the Basque region, in a neighbouring region called Navarra. The border between Spain and France does not reflect an ethnic, respectively linguistic distribution of the population. A large group of the Basques also lives in the territory of France, specifically in the provinces of Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa.

As we have already said, the political-administrative borders of the Basque Country cannot be equated with imaginary linguistic borders. Basque is considered to be the mother tongue not only of the inhabitants of the Basque Country and the French border provinces, but also of the inhabitants of the northern parts of the neighbouring autonomous region called Navarra. Language is a kind of unifying element and the Basques are very proud of it (Miháliková, 1998).

The Basque Country covers a relatively small area - covering about 7,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is home to more than 2,188,000 inhabitants (in 2019), which makes up 4.7% of the entire population of Spain (European Commission, n.d.).

The status of Basque autonomy came into force in 1979, although attempts to achieve autonomy were known in the Basque Country as early as 1936. Since 1979, the competences of the Basque Country as a historical region have been broader than in other regions of Spain. The Basque Country has gained independence in the management of education, the judiciary, health, industry, tourism and agriculture.

### **THE CATALONIA REGION**

Catalonia (English Catalonia, Spanish Cataluña, Catalan, Catalunya) is one of the 17 autonomous communities that compose the Kingdom of Spain. It is located in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula on the Mediterranean coast and borders France and Andorra. Catalonia is a coastal region with a significant location that has made it a trading hub for centuries. More than 7.5 million people live here (in 2018) and it is an interesting tourist destination for millions of other people. It is the second most populous region of Spain - 16% of the country's population lives in Catalonia. Catalonia covers approximately 32,000 km<sup>2</sup> (Cancela-Kieffer, 2018). The largest city and at the same time the 'heart' of Catalonia is Barcelona. The Autonomous Community of Catalonia consists of four provinces: Girona, Barcelona, Tarragona and Lleida (Baar, 2002, p. 67).

From the beginning of the 21st century, separatist tendencies began to gain momentum in Catalonia. Today, the region is often mentioned in particular connection with political instability, efforts to achieve independence and conflicts with the central government in Madrid. Now, we will focus on Catalan separatism and the cultural, political and economic development of this autonomous region.

### **COMPARISON OF SEPARATIST TENDENCIES OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY AND CATALONIA AND PREDICTIONS OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

The separatist tendencies of both the Basque Country and Catalonia are similar in many respects, but there are some differences. In the following chapter, we will use a comparative method to present the basic differences

between the separatist tendencies of both autonomous communities and make three predictions of the future development of their separatist efforts.

### **A brief comparison of Basque and Catalan separatism**

The difference between Basque and Catalan separatism was captured by Pablo Simon, a professor of political science at the University of Madrid. He argues that the interests of the two regions are very different. One region wants to protect what it has achieved, and the other wants more (Cancela-Kieffer, 2018).

The emergence of both nationalist movements dates back to the end of the 19th century. Their origin was connected to socio-economic changes in the state and Spain's efforts to centralise as much as possible. Both Catalonia and the Basque Country felt damaged by the situation. Movements and political parties representing the demands of dissatisfied social groups began to emerge. However, the programmatic focus of both nationalisms was different (Miháliková, 1998).

A common feature of both separatist movements is that they cite their different language, culture and historical experience from the rest of Spain as one of the main arguments for gaining independence. Another existing different feature is the Catalan separatists' arguments regarding namely the economic issues and taxes. Basque separatism is not based on economic arguments, as the Basque Country is granted broad autonomy in fiscal policy. On the other hand, Catalan separatism is based on economic arguments, i.e., the outflow of Catalan funds through the treasury to less prosperous regions. At the same time, only a small part of the funding is being returned to Catalonia, which supports efforts to gain independence. To sum it up, although the two Autonomous Communities are economically very prosperous and industrially developed, the presence of arguments concerning the economy is different in the two communities. In other words, the Basques do not consider their strong economy to be an important argument for the emergence of an independent state. Catalan separatism, on the other hand, has its roots in economic causes.

A common feature is the existence of political parties representing the efforts to create an independent state. It is a traditional PNV party in the Basque Country, but there are more of these parties in Catalonia. The parties supporting the independence of both Autonomous Communities are part of the Cortes Generales.

However, we see a significant difference in the way in which the regions want to achieve their goal. The terrorist group ETA has been fighting for Basque independence for almost 60 years, killing hundreds of people. No similar organization has been formed in Catalonia. The struggle for independence is represented only by political parties and no armed attacks by Catalonia have yet taken place (De la Calle, 2015).

Interestingly, in 1989, Basque nationalism was visible as more aggressive, more inclined to separatism, and seeking independence from Spain. On the contrary, Catalan nationalism seemed more moderate at the time. Its goal was to gain as much independence as possible, but within Spain (Miháliková, 1998). Today we can see that the situation has changed. Basque separatism seemed to freeze, the Catalan one awoke. The Basque Country made Spain's political life more difficult, especially in the 1970s, when the ETA's attacks were extremely frequent and neither side was open to dialogue. The Catalan separatist tendencies have brought intense tensions and instability to Spain since 2010. Following the independence referendum on 1 October 2017, stability has deteriorated further, and the relationship between Barcelona and Madrid has deteriorated significantly. In order to calm the situation in Spain, world leaders commented on the national situation, who supported the unity of Spain but rejected the harsh intervention of the Spanish Guardia Civil police during the referendum in 2017 (Cancela-Kieffer, 2018).

In the past, while the ETA was fully operational, the withdrawal of the central government in favour of an independent Basque Country was out of the question. It would be a clear signal to other regions in Spain and around the world that violence and terrorism are the best way to achieve their goals. Today, in 2020, after the official and final dissolution of the ETA, however, Basque nationalism has declined. The only reminders of the ETA's activities are the victims of their assassinations, its former members and prisoners, who are gradually being released (Cancela-Kieffer, 2018).

### **Predictions about the development of the Basque and Catalan issues**

The aim of the work is to explain the predictions about the development of the Basque and Catalan issues. In the following part, we will offer an evaluation through three different scenarios of further development in the Basque Country and Catalonia.

To begin reflecting on the future development of the Basque Country and Catalonia, it is important to raise the question of whether an entity

separated from Spain would at all meet the attributes of the State. The attributes of a state are certain criteria that a territorial-political entity must meet in order to be considered a legitimate state. In most of the literature, we can meet with the three main attributes of the state, which were first defined by Jellinek in 1906. They are a permanent population, a defined territory and a sovereign state power, and it is true that these attributes must be met simultaneously. The generally accepted document containing the definition of the state is the Montevideo Convention from 1933. The Montevideo Convention, which defines the fundamental rights and obligations of the state, contains, in addition to the three attributes mentioned, the fourth - the ability to enter into relations with other states (Krejčí, 2014, p. 72). However, some authors do not identify with the fourth attribute and call it controversial. The first three attributes are directly related to the creation of the state or are inevitable for its emergence. However, the ability to enter into relations with other states is not directly related to the establishment of the state. In the following predictions of development, we will try to answer the question of whether an independent Basque Country and Catalonia would meet the criteria of statehood.

The first scenario that could come true is to maintain the status quo. The second scenario would be a deepening of autonomy, and the third scenario is the emergence of an independent Basque Country or Catalonia. The third option raises a number of questions, and we will try to find answers to some of them in the next part of the work.

As we have already said, the first scenario assumed the situation where the Basque Country and Catalonia maintain the status quo. This would mean that both the Basque Country and Catalonia would remain the autonomous communities of the Kingdom of Spain without enforcing any change. In the Basque Country, separatist tendencies would remain relatively subdued, as they are today. In order to maintain the status quo in the Basque Country, no new organization should be mobilized to continue the ETA's activities. The ruling party PNV would not make any radical personnel changes and would continue to refer to dialogue against violence. However, maintaining the status quo would mean another period of instability, demonstrations and tensions between Catalonia and the central government for Catalonia. Reluctance to act can be observed from both sides. Proposals for a new fiscal pact to increase Catalonia's fiscal autonomy would have to be rejected by the central government. At the same time, ties and trials would continue with several Catalan pro-separatism policies, which the public strongly rejects. We think that maintaining the status quo



would benefit the relationship between Spain and the Basque Country. However, in the case of the Spanish-Catalan relationship, maintaining the status quo would have the opposite effect. Their extremely tense relationship needs space for dialogue. At this moment, however, neither side is considering concessions, and political leaders have not negotiated for a long time. We consider this scenario, i.e., maintaining the status quo, to be the most likely for the Basque Country (Krejčí, 2014, p. 62).

The second possible scenario of development is the deepening of the autonomy of the mentioned autonomous communities. This would require a change in the status of autonomy. Although the Basque Country is more fiscally autonomous than Catalonia, there are still areas in the Basque Country that could escape the control of the central government. Catalonia would welcome an increase in fiscal autonomy by adopting a new fiscal pact, which Madrid has rejected in the past. Catalonia would thus be given greater powers to administer the taxes levied on its territory. It would not pay more into the treasury than it gets back, and thus the fiscal deficit would be reduced. This scenario seems to us to be the most likely to resolve the Catalan question (Rosenberg, 1997).

The third assumed development scenario is the fulfilment of independents requirements, the creation of an independent Basque Country and Catalonia. However, it should be recalled that in the event of a declaration of unilateral independence leading to an Art Nouveau, both regions would have to face a number of challenges, which we will try to approach (Giertl, 2012).

From the point of view of the legality of the declaration of independence, there are only two possibilities – independence will be achieved legally or illegally. If the Basque Country or Catalonia were to achieve independence in a legal and legitimate way, they would have to find an appropriate legal framework according to which the creation of their independent states would be feasible. We assume that a necessary step would be to change the Spanish Constitution. However, the two longest-strong Spanish parties, the PP and the PSOE, have strongly rejected any attempt to undermine Spain's territorial integrity. Their common position is that they will not support separatist tendencies. Therefore, we do not expect them to support a change in the Constitution or an independence referendum. Therefore, if the government were to make changes to the Constitution and hold an independence referendum, the regional pro-parliamentary parties would have to succeed in the national parliamentary elections and create a parliamentary majority. Later, the already mentioned amendment of the Constitution would be

necessary. Such an act would require the consent of a majority of the two Chambers of the Cortes Generales (Cancela-Kieffer, 2018).

On the other hand, the declaration of independence could also take place in an illegal and unconstitutional way, as was the case in Catalonia in October 2017. Catalonia was not supported by any state. If the secession did take place, the newly created state would find itself in international isolation. The recognition of the state by other states is important for the existence of the state, especially those at the top of the imaginary pyramid of power (López Guerra et al., 2010, pp. 200-202).

Following the creation of a new Basque or Catalan state through secession from Spain, this new state would necessarily have to resolve a number of key issues important to the very survival of the new state. The first key issue is the relationship between the newly created state and the European Union (EU). As for Catalonia, it expressed its desire to become an EU Member State after independence in 2012 during the independence referendum. The question of the referendum was 'Do you want Catalonia to become a new state within the European Union?'. These desires have not changed to this day and were revived in 2017 during the independence referendum. However, the then President of the European Commission, Jean- Claude Juncker, refuted Catalonia's ideas, arguing that the newly formed state must re-submit to all pre-EU procedures (López Guerra et al., 2010, p. 213). The new Basque or Catalan Republic would therefore not automatically become a member of the EU, as Catalonia in particular had hoped, but would have to re-join it. This would mean that both regions would have to meet all the requirements related to the granting of candidate status. In considering for a given state to become a member of the EU, it would have to undergo new accession negotiations and fulfil the accession, the so-called Copenhagen criteria. At the same time, the admission of a new member to the EU would have to be approved by all EU Member States, as discussed in Article 49 of the EU Treaty (López Guerra et al., 2010, p. 219). We assume that this step could be problematic. Not only Spain but also the other Member States could, by their consent, set a precedent to which many other separatist regions could begin to refer. Such a step could start the so-called snow globe effect.

Another problem for the newly created state would be its membership in NATO. After separation from Spain, the newly formed state would not belong to NATO. Even if it wishes to become a member, the accession of a new member to NATO is subject to the consent of all member states.

Expressing support for the Basque Country or Catalonia could, as in the case of the EU, set a precedent and start the so-called snow globe effect.

As we have already said, the newly created independent Basque Country or Catalonia would not be among the EU Member States once it was created. Declaring their independence would create a complicated situation regarding the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, which is one of the EU's main Four freedoms. The borders of the new state would become highly guarded because the state would not even belong to the Schengen area. All this would also have a huge impact on the movement of labour and the economy itself, resulting in huge economic downturns. Marinzel (2014) predicts that there would be a boycott of Basque and Catalan products on the Spanish market. In addition to the disruption of trade relations with Spain, both regions should also expect a decline in international export markets. Catalonia exports to the many EU Member States and the loss of EU membership would require customs duties. This would make exports more expensive and likely fall (Marinzel, 2014). In addition, as Spain is part of the Economic and Monetary Union, both the Basque Country and Catalonia would no longer be entitled to the euro after the separation. Such difficult obstacles would harm the Basque and Catalan economies. An example is a period at the end of 2017, which was marked by instability and a referendum on Catalonia's independence. As we have mentioned, almost 2,000 companies have relocated their headquarters from Catalonia to other Autonomous Communities, which is only a small percentage of the problems that the newly created state would have to face. Both Autonomous Communities would have to face an economic slowdown, as the Bank of Spain suggests (Benítez-Aurióles, 2019).

Public opinion polls in Catalonia have long shown a strong polarization of society. The society is divided into supporters of independence and supporters of Catalonia staying within Spain. The society is polarized almost exactly in two halves. If Catalonia continued to fight for its independence, one of the tasks would be to increase the percentage of supporters of this idea, both in the society and in the Generalitat.

Another challenge for the newly formed Catalonia or Basque Country would be to gain the recognition of other states. According to Gierl, the act of recognition of the State does not affect the very existence of the State. This means that even an unrecognized state is a legally responsible entity under international law. However, this does not call into question the importance of recognition. A state that has not been recognized by the international community finds itself in isolation and has very limited opportunities for

self-realization (Giertl, 2012, p. 33). Vintó, an expert in constitutional law at the University of Barcelona, argues that before a state can get to the issue of its international recognition, it must ensure that its state power is effective and recognized (Roden, 2017).

So, at the end, we believe that the Spanish Government will prioritize the power of argument and diplomacy over the argument of power.

## CONCLUSION

In the presented text, we have tried to evaluate what Basque and Catalan separatism have in common and how they are different. The most significant difference is their current interests. Basque separatism is subdued, mainly due to the dissolution of the Basque terrorist organization ETA in 2018. It seeks to maintain the status quo. However, during 60 years of efforts to achieve its goal, it has killed hundreds of people in its attacks. On the other hand, Catalan separatism is not primarily violent, but also emotionally embedded across various parts of its society, similarly to the Catalan sovereignist movement. It is represented mostly by legal political parties and no terrorist organizations. In the case of Catalonia, we have witnessed instability on the political scene and tensions between Barcelona and Madrid since 2010, in contrast to Basque separatism, which was most active in the 1970s. Another important difference between the two separatist tendencies is the presence of economic arguments. While the Basque Country is satisfied with the current fiscal policy conditions, Catalonia feels aggravated and its arguments for independence are based on economic considerations. In the third chapter, we also offer predictions of the development of Basque and Catalan separatism. We have outlined three possible scenarios: maintaining the status quo, deepening autonomy, and creating an independent state. Based on previous analyses, we believe that in the case of the Basque Country, the most likely scenario is a status quo. The Catalan question, in turn, could be resolved by deepening its autonomous powers.

To sum up, Basque and Catalan separatism is not based on the same values. Identity plays the most important role in Basque separatism, with the economic causes currently absent. On the other hand, Catalan separatism is built primarily on the political and economic reasons. Cultural differences as a cause of separatism are, of course, present, but in the case of Catalonia, they are less significant.

We conclude that arguing the nation's right to self-determination is more legitimate in the case of Catalonia than in the case of the Basque Country

because Catalonia's internal right to self-determination is not fulfilled to the same extent as in the Basque Country. But we should argue that the legality of the right to self-determination is also an international legal category. In international legal terms, any such notions of self-determination would require approval from the highest national authority. In this comparison, this is due to fiscal policy, which is currently set more in favour of the Basque Country, and a sense of responsibility in Catalonia seems justified.

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## HOAXES AND FAKE NEWS OF THE NEO-FASCISTS IN SLOVAKIA: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES, REFLECTIONS, IMPACT ON INTERNAL AND SECURITY POLITICS

Anton HRUBOŇ<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* This contribution analyses profiling European-wide and local specific features of the neo-fascist propaganda strategies in Slovakia in the last decade, with special attention to the role of hoaxes and fake news, which, at the times of massive internetization and growing impact of the cyberspace, essentially help their producers to spread the ideas of 'alternative world' and 'alternative truths' to their addressees and offer a set of simple solutions for complicated global problems. The article discusses the hypothesis that the neo-fascist parties/movements are currently not a peril for the democratic system as such since they do not possess enough political power to overthrow it. Their real danger, however, lies in the fact that the hoaxes and fake news produced by those organizations, as core elements of their propaganda, are being adopted by many 'traditional' and governmental parties, which may seriously affect the public discourse, the attitude of the state authorities towards non-military security threats (including political extremism) and, eventually, radicalize the political regime's nature itself via 'cultural fascistization' of political language and gradual 'normalization' of conspirative connotations.

*Keywords:* hoaxes, fake news, Neo-fascism, propaganda, Slovakia, Central Europe, security politics, V4 countries.

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## INTRODUCTION

The notable rise of neo-fascist movements throughout Europe in the last decade has raised challenging questions for the academia and governments' security politics: if fascism's comeback in its 1930s–1940s stamina is unlikely, as many experts assert, why should the societies be aware of its temptations? What is the legitimacy of integrating the 'struggle against political extremism', which also includes neo-fascism, in almost every country's security doctrine? Though at the time of writing this article, the neo-fascist parties in all European countries have not been given the opportunity to gain a share of governmental power, their impact on internal politics and the general atmosphere is indisputable and immense.

Drawing on the contemporary paradigm of ongoing extensive international debates in the field of comparative fascist studies, the hypothesis of this case study is to argue that, although at the beginning of the 2020s the neo-fascist movements are, in general, relatively minor political force and, under current circumstances, have only a weak chance to become an acceptable governmental partner, their major current threat lies in a potential to *radicalize the 'traditional' political movements via infiltration of fascist rhetoric into the 'mainstream' discourse*, which may lead to *fascistization of political culture and transformation of the social milieu* in the affected country. This shift can eventually result in making of serious threats to internal security and political regime's status quo, e.g., cultural wars, ethnic, religious, or racial conflicts, exclusion of certain social communities accompanied by massive dehumanization campaigns, strengthening of anti-system forces, or, in the worst-case scenario, to a destruction of the existing order in the broadest sense of the word.

In his famous *The Nature of Fascism*, political theorist Roger Griffin stresses the role of *mythic core* the fascists have expressed in their political communication: a central narrative (or a set of narratives) around which they build up a specific 'world of truths' the fascists and fascists' followers believe in. Since the defeat of 'historical' fascism in 1945, the social-political environment in Europe has essentially changed. As fascism is, still, notwithstanding the country, generally considered a deadly ideology leading to genocides and a dangerous political force responsible for unprecedented terror and damages, the modern fascist (neo-fascist) political parties and organizations had to adapt to a new post-war or post-socialistic reality. They usually keep denying any relation to their older predecessors and nominally renounce the fascist identity. They have revised the style of political practice (dress code, social behaviour, etc.),

stopped emphasising a violent revolution as an inevitable tool for 'spiritual regeneration' of a nation, creation of a palingenetic 'new society' and a 'new man'. Following the suggestions by Alain De Benoist, a prominent theorist of the *Nouvelle Droite* ('New Right'), whose conception has significantly influenced current neo-fascist movements' ideologies, many neo-fascists gave up trying to reach an impact comparable to that from the 'fascist era' by combining legal and illegal methods attempting for power takeover. Instead, they have started concentrating on conquering the political milieus via *metapolitics* (De Benoist and Champetier, 2012, p. 9)<sup>2</sup> which, in other words, means nothing but a gradual step-by-step *cultural fascistization* of public discourse (see: Copsey, 2020).

One of the neo-fascists' key tools in meeting this goal is digital technologies. Nowadays, characterised by a high degree of societal internetization, the neo-fascists have discovered cyberspace as an ideal platform for a mass-scale distribution of *hoaxes* and *fake news*.<sup>3</sup> Hoaxes and fake news have always been inherent features of fascism's nature, fascist movements' persuasive strategies and methods they profited on, seeking the aim to *spread fear* as a salient component of fascists' mobilization strategy and raising the political capital within society. Even though their expressions and communication contexts have mutated in the stream of time, the core of ideology remains principally intact.

Based on these groundings and the methodological framework, the article will try to provide an overview of the most frequent topics of neo-fascist hoaxes and fake news and analyse their political utilization on a

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<sup>2</sup> The New Right's *Manifesto* states that '*metapolitics is not politics by other means... It rests solely on the premise that ideas play a fundamental role in collective consciousness... There is the growing impotence of political parties, unions, governments, classical forms of conquest and the exercise of political power... Metapolitical action attempts, beyond political divisions and through a new synthesis, to renew a transversal mode of thought and, ultimately, to study all areas of knowledge in order to propose a coherent worldview*'. For a critical analysis of the New Right's intentions see: Griffin, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> The article perceives *hoaxes* as '*an act intended to trick or dupe; something accepted or established by fraud or fabrication*' (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). *Fake news* may be defined as a *type of hoax, misleading or false information presented as news*. Fake news is usually spread by 'non-traditional' media (social media, conspiracy websites, etc.) with the intention to confuse the readers for the purpose of political and economic profit.

model of the Slovak political milieu, laying an accent on their historical background, transformation, current semantics, and possible security threat they pose as factors of potential societal radicalization. For heuristic and analytic purposes of this article, the case study includes solely parties and movements reflected as openly neo-fascist according to Roger Griffin's and Cas Mudde's definitions distinguishing between fascist (neofascist) subjects on one hand, and far-right (radical/extreme right) on the other (Griffin, 1991, pp. 161-179; Griffin, 2018, pp. 91-125; Mudde, 2000, pp. 1-24).<sup>4</sup>

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Neo-fascism in Slovakia has undergone a dynamic transformation after the 1989 fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The pioneer Slovak neo-fascist organizations might be divided into two groups.

The first emerged from admirers of the wartime Nazi-allied Slovak State (1939–1945) and its President, Catholic priest Jozef Tiso. These Lilliputian parties of almost zero relevance, like the National Council for Liberation of Slovakia (*Národná rada za oslobodenie Slovenska*), Movement for Liberation of Slovakia (*Hnutie za oslobodenie Slovenska*), Slovak National Unity (*Slovenská národná jednota*), or Slovak People's Party (*Slovenská ľudová strana*), which proclaimed itself a successor of the Slovak State's only allowed ruling party, were active during the period of Czecho-Slovak federation (1990-1992) and legitimized themselves by a 'struggle for Slovak independence'. In political practice, their activities and political language were framed by intolerant nationalism with strong anti-Czech and, partly, anti-Semitic sentiments, nostalgia for the wartime 'golden era', as they claimed, as well as by conspiracy theories spreading the fear of forces which, according to their rhetoric, wanted to 'rig Slovakia and the Slovak nation' (Rychlík, 2012, pp. 151-152). These minor parties, overshadowed in terms of widely supported

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<sup>4</sup> A comprehensive overview of how to distinguish between the movements within the 'far-right family' is explained in detail by Nociar (2016) as well. It should be noticed that up to this day, the history and present of the post-1989 Slovak far right-right, neofascism and neo-Nazism have not been synthesized in a comprehensive monograph. Therefore, the researchers dispose only research papers cited in the following sections of this article and several analytical materials, e.g., Milo, 2004; Biháiová, 2012; analytical bulletins published by the Institute for Public Affairs (*Inštitút pre verejné otázky* – IVO; see: Mesežnikov and Gyarfášová, 2016; Bútorová et al., 2017), etc.

nationalistic populism by the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana*), balanced on the edge between far-right and intellectual neo-fascism and, sooner or later, fell into utter insignificance.

The second line of Slovak post-1989 neo-fascism has been represented by various 'groupuscules' neo-Nazi organizations not involved in politics, which openly declared the racist worldview and were inspired by the global neo-Nazi subculture promoting Hitler's 'Third Reich', anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, anti-Blacks and anti-Roma hate speech, and the Holocaust denial.

In 1995, the Slovak Ministry of Interior registered Slovak Togetherness (*Slovenská pospolitost*), originally a nationalistic civic association which came into public's consciousness a decade later as the most notable and visible neo-fascist organization with a neo-Nazi background, transformed in 2005 into a political party (dissolved by the Supreme Court a year later). As proved by many authors (e.g., Budajová, 2018; Drábik, 2019; Vasiľková and Androvičová, 2019), this 'founding mother' of Slovak political neo-fascists is ideologically and personally linked to as of 2020 active parliamentary movement People's Party Our Slovakia (*Ludová strana Naše Slovensko*),<sup>5</sup> considered neo-fascist by academic and security experts. Prominent representatives (e.g., Marian Kotleba, Rastislav Schlosár) have been the leading figures of Slovak Togetherness during its most radical era; the others, including MPs, candidates and local party authorities (Milan Mazurek, Stanislav Mizík, Andrej Medvecký, Michal Buchta, Rastislav Rogel, Marián Mišún, Rastislav Jakubík, etc.), were accused of, and some of them also sentenced for extremist crimes (Benčík, 2019).

### **FROM 'JUDEO-BOLSHEVISM' TO 'Z.O.G.' AND THE SOROS-RELATED OBSESSIONS**

One of the most used hoaxes of the modern age in public discourse has been a 'Jewish plan for global domination'. This myth, rooting in the new wave of rising anti-Semitism at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries has been reflected in almost all European political cultures. Publication of the

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<sup>5</sup> Official names of the party have changed during its existence as follows: February 2010 – November 2015 *Ludová strana Naše Slovensko*, November 2015 – November 2019 *Kotleba – Ludová strana Naše Slovensko*, since November 2019 – *Kotlebovci – Ludová strana Naše Slovensko*. To simplify and not confuse the reader, the article operates solely with the name *Ludová strana Naše Slovensko*.

notoriously known *Protocols of the Elders of the Zion* (1903), fabricated by the Russian emperor police, strengthened the conspiracy perception of Jews as an 'alien' community, caused rising hostility and radicalization of the majority resulting in anti-Jewish pogroms and the 'expulsion' of them from nations across the continent. Later the hoax was instrumentalized by the fascists after 1919. Struggle against 'Judeo-Bolshevism', a construct referring to the paranoid merge of Jews with Bolshevism, became a 'security doctrine' of various far-right, fascist and Nazi-allied government, including the wartime Slovak State's (1939–1945) Miklós Horthy's regime in Hungary (1920–1944) or interwar Poland: anti-Jewish spirit and subsequent anti-Jewish measures were justified by the inevitable elimination of both Jews and Bolshevism from public life as noted 'eternal foes' and a 'threat' to European civilization and Christian culture. Not even the memento of the Holocaust, which the neo-fascists deny or flout, has silenced the voices suspecting the Jews of world domination intentions (Hanebrink, 2018).

In Slovakia, apart from marginal far-right movements founded after 1989 and the neo-Nazi subcultures, anti-Semitic hoaxes and fake news containing the 'Jewish aspect' were represented to the greatest extent by Marian Kotleba's Slovak Togetherness mentioned above. Slovak Togetherness, expressing its deepest sympathies to the wartime Hlinka's Slovak People's Party's regime with fascist tendencies, had frequently been thematizing the historically rooted archetype of a Jew controlling the world economy and national governments attempting to create and retain the 'New World Order' (NWO). All the cabinets after Slovakia's accession to the EU were marked as 'Zionist Occupation Government' (ZOG) in Kotleba's speeches and the organization's periodical called *Prúty* ('Rods'). The anti-Semitic spirit of Kotleba's propaganda did not vanish from his newspapers even after he was elected the Governor of Banská Bystrica Region in 2013. Bimonthly magazine *Náš kraj* ('Our Region') published in one of its 2015 issues a cartoon of a crossed giggling Jew with a bundle of banknotes in his hand, stating that the region's administration under Kotleba's leadership was '*liberating the region of debt slavery*' (Poláš, 2015).

After Kotleba's People's Party Our Slovakia (*Ľudová strana naše Slovensko* – ĽSNS) entered the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2016, its MPs, including Kotleba, have started to hide or deny their anti-Semitism in contrast to the era of Kotleba's involvement in the Slovak Togetherness (Cirner and Dudinská, 2020, p. 185) and to proclaim it in various metaphorical cultural codes instead, which on one hand do not conflict with the law but, on the other hand, lucidly express a clear message to the party's

supporters as well as the broader public. Kotleba and his PR managers figured out that an open fierce anti-Semitism is, in general, not popular among the Slovak society. However, in its masked forms, especially in combination with the modernist expressions and associations criticizing the world geopolitics and Western civilization supposedly controlled by the 'Zionist lobby', economically motivated frauds historically linked in conspiracy discourse with the Jews, and with the role of 'foreign factors', 'corrupted' and 'anti-national' NGOs on domestic politics, the potential of society's radicalization by this conspiratorial image of world's functioning is not negligible. All the more, when it is being adopted by traditional and democratic parties that declare their principled anti-fascist stance.

Adoption and usage of originally neo-fascist anti-Semitic hoaxes have intensified in Slovak political culture following the murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée in February 2018. The ruling social-democratic party SMER-SD headed by Robert Fico had already been associated with corruption scandals, interconnections between the government, police, jurisdiction and ill-reputed business circles close to the mafia to which the traces of suspicion of a murder order led for a while at that time. The accumulated atmosphere within the society eventually erupted into the most extensive anti-governmental protests since 1989 supported by a critique of President Andrej Kiska.

As the crisis between President and the government had been escalating, in March 2018, Fico, whose cabinet faced a threat of collapse and – in case of new general elections – criminal prosecution of its members as well, reached out for irrational counterattack and instead of an acceptable response, accused Kiska of maintaining private contacts with George Soros. During his press conference, Fico asked: *'Today, at this press conference, I want to ask Mr President a simple question: 20 September 2017, New York, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I am asking, why the head of the Slovak Republic visited a private soil of a man whose name has a dubious reputation. And this man's name is Mr Soros'* (Kern, 2018).

Sheltered by an argument of suspected 'foreign intervention' into internal Slovak affairs, Fico claimed that recent domestic events (president's, NGOs' and media's critique, upcoming planned anti-governmental protest) pursued a single intention – to totally destabilize the situation and prepare a fertile ground for overthrowing the government. After the media had informed that several tens of thousands of people were planning to attend the protests, Fico supported his previous reaction by alleged police findings, warning that the attacks on public buildings which were supposed to be

executed by stone cubes found near the Governmental Office hidden in the bushes were highly probable.

Even though these rumours turned out fake (Ako Fico vydal, 2018), Fico's newspeak meant a crucial turnover in his profiling. By adopting a conspiracy, lucidly anti-Semiticly motivated construct – regardless of him really believing it or not – Fico's and his party's reputation significantly changed in the eyes of the conspiracy scene and neo-fascists. A politician who was, together with his minister of interior Robert Kaliňák, years ago labelled by Kotleba as a 'representative of a police state' due to 'brutality against the nationalists', received shortly after his summer 2020 political comeback a proposal from the neo-fascist leader to '*unite the forces*' in joint actions against the new government of Igor Matovič, blamed for 'killing the economy' and 'anti-democratic measures' introduced during the second Covid wave in November 2020 (Priaznivci kotlebovcov, 2020).

Except galvanizing the 'Soros-myth' in 2018, the anti-Semitic framework as a mobilizing stimulus resonated again during a campaign before the presidential election held in March 2019. Presidential candidate Zuzana Čaputová had not been accused by her opponents only of being a 'pawn of neoliberalism' and her campaign being co-financed directly by George Soros, but also of *Jewish descent*. To highlight this fake news, the magazine *Zem a Vek* ('Earth and Age'), very popular among the conspirators and neo-fascists, photoshopped Čaputová's picture in an unprecedented way: a modified image published online, accessible to anyone just several days prior to the second decisive round, portrayed Čaputová with a crooked nose and fleshier lips, intending to underline her 'Jewishness' (Šnidl, 2019). The photomontage's aim was not only to revive subconscious anti-Semitic sentiment of part of the voters (which might have influenced a group of the undecided) and to fuse the conspirators' as well as neo-fascists' negative associations of liberalism, 'Jewish world domination', 'éminence grise' standing behind the electoral curtain and 'threat of a woman rule' into a unifying '*mosaic of evil*', but also, taking the broader sociopolitical context into consideration, to indirectly help Maroš Šefčovič, Čaputová's counter-candidate supported by Fico's SMER-SD.

Despite efforts to discredit both Andrej Kiska and Zuzana Čaputová through anti-Semiticly motivated connotations previously used in post-socialist Slovakia's relevant political discourse almost solely by the neo-fascists, the strategy did not prevail. According to opinion polls on politicians' credibility from April 2018, even after the crisis between the President and Prime Minister, Andrej Kiska held his position of the most

trusted politician (46.2%) while Fico dropped to seventh place (23.1%) (Dôveryhodnosť politikov, 2018). Even the attempts to stigmatize Čaputová as a 'Soros-deployed agent' of 'Jewish origin' proved counterproductive: Čaputová defeated Šefčovič in 58.40% to 41.59% ratio and won in many municipalities where Šefčovič or Kotleba celebrated a first-round victory (Voľby prezidenta Slovenskej republiky, n.d.).<sup>6</sup>

In general, anti-Semitic framed hoaxes and fake news have shown their minimal potential to become a functional tool in political campaigns in contemporary Slovakia. Though anti-Semitism had been one of the core elements of the wartime Third Reich's collaborating Slovak State's regime, it has not disappeared completely from the Slovak political culture and, from time to time, has still been used by political subjects/politicians (including some of the 'mainstream' parties) as the 'last lever', it significantly lacks broader legitimacy: according to the 2011 census, the number of Jews in Slovakia has decreased below 2.000 (Obyvateľstvo SR podľa náboženského vyznania, n.d.), none of the foremost Slovak politicians admits his/her Jewish origin or identity, and the public discourse misses a self-proclaimed Jewish-associated 'éminence grise' with a noticeable impact on internal Slovak politics. Even the leader of governmental 'We are family' (*Sme rodina*) movement Boris Kollár, a successful businessman who openly admitted several of his racially persecuted family members had died in concentration camps, has not been confronted with his Jewish roots by the opposition so far. In this context it should be noted that in May 2019 Kollár hosted an *Identity and Democracy Party's* session in Bratislava, attended by Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini, and held an energetic speech in Italian at Salvini's *Lega Nord* Milanese gathering shortly after (Boris Kollár, 2019).

### **'THE GYPSY PROBLEM'**

The question of 'socialization' of the Roma population has been resonating in Central Europe for more than a century. Even after the transformation of the Roma's way of life from nomadic to settled, completed by the communist regimes, the 'Roma question' in the broadest sense remains a big challenge for governments. The Roma's 'otherness' and negative connotations (cultural, social, racial) historically attributed to them by the majority have provided the neo-fascist movements a 'punching bag'

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<sup>6</sup> Marian Kotleba ended up in fourth place in the first round with 10.39% and did not advance to the second round.



usable in venting their radicalism. Unlike the abstract 'Jewish threat', the propaganda image of a 'dirty Gypsy' who 'parasites on the social system', 'refuses to work' and to 'socially adapt', has achieved notable response within the relatively broader audience of neo-fascist as well as right-wing nationalist and populist parties.

This generalized image became one of the core topics in Slovak 'Togetherness' discourse immediately after its establishment. 'Togetherness' had been promoting the idea of '*some form of isolation of Gypsies*'; however, despite the hoaxes expressing the 'threat' that the Roma people '*will roll over the Slovak nation*' (Vražda, 2020, pp. 21, 27) were present in organization's rhetoric, they did not dominate at 'Togetherness' beginnings and only co-shaped the conspiratorial puzzle made of anti-American (anti-NATO), anti-EU and, most of all, anti-Hungarian segments.

However, in November 2008, the members of 'Togetherness' visited a rally of their partner Czech organization called the Workers' Party (*Dělnická strana* – DS), after its 2010 ban transformed into the Workers' Party of Social Justice (*Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti* – DSSS; see: Dlouhý et al., 2020).<sup>7</sup> Slovak journalist Daniel Vražda considers Kotleba's presence at the Litvínov protests, during which the neo-fascist radicals accompanied by local citizens tried to get into the police-protected Roma ghetto of Janov, a turning point in his strategy. The slogan 'to protect the whites from the Gypsies' and 'the polite people from the anti-socials' (Vražda, 2020, p. 51) soon turned into the most powerful weapon of the neo-fascist propaganda on which this spectrum has been capitalizing until nowadays.

Putting the emphasis on 'solving the Roma question' earned Kotleba popularity incomparable with that before, when his and 'Togetherness' communication was characteristic of spreading hoaxes and fake news on very 'distant' issues for Slovak voters (e.g., American geopolitics, Zionism, etc.) or issues which they did not perceive as an immediate threat (e.g., Hungarian revisionism). By a constant accentuation of the 'Gypsy problem', Kotleba acquired a coveted fulcrum of his targeted propaganda. From 2009, a year before the general election, he started a state wide 'mobilization', travelling region to region where the interethnic problems between the majority and the Roma population had occurred in the past, supported by a clearly DS-inspired poster campaign portraying a laughing tattooed Roma

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<sup>7</sup> For the historical background of Czech neofascism see: Mareš, 2003.

encircled by children with a text saying 'Look how they are laughing! Thanks to our taxes! Do you want to change it? Come, vote Kotleba!' (Vražda, 2020, p. 52).

As Kotleba's electoral support had been slightly growing (despite still being on the margin of the political scene with less than 2%), the traditional Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana* – SNS) borrowed his anti-Roma rhetoric in the 2010 election campaign and misused an image of a corpulent Roma with the following slogan '... So that we will not feed those who do not want to work' on the party's billboards all over Slovakia (Kováčová, 2010). Although the SNS's chair Ján Slota had previously caused many controversies with his sharp anti-Hungarian and partly anti-Roma discourse, it was the first time when a Slovak pro-European party, stressing its democratic character and values, adopted open racism representing the political subject as such, not only the leader's private opinion. The 2010 general elections showed how the populist party facing the failure of non-meeting the quorum (SNS eventually gained only 0.07% more than the necessary 5%) was capable of taking unexpected steps beyond its official ideological framework just to get into the parliament (Počet a podiel, 2010).

Although the Slovak National Party's temporal tactics to use the racist propaganda was not expected, in the context of its leaders' previous hate speech, it did not surprise anyone. What the public shocked much more was Robert Fico's and Robert Kaliňák's shift to 'politics of order' during SMER-SD's last rule (2016–2020), clearly motivated by the success of Kotleba's strategy of anti-Romani framed PR. Despite Fico had already addressed voters with an anti-Roma agenda wrapped in a package of social populism years ago (Bariak, 2020), after SMER-SD came to power as the winner of the 2006 general elections, Fico's criticism on the Romani had muted and many Roma voters were considered his followers. Right after a series of setbacks, including Vladimír Maňka's (a SMER-SD nominee's) loss in the 2013 county election to Marian Kotleba and following Kotleba's People's Party Our Slovakia's premiere election to parliament in 2016, Fico started promising he, along with his Minister of Interior Kaliňák, would 'restore an order', support the police in its crackdowns in the Romani settlements and stop the Roma 'misusing the social system in Slovakia' (Tódová, 2016).

SMER-SD's anti-Romani discourse strengthened after the party failed in the 2020 general elections and became an opposition alongside Kotleba's ĽSNS. Following Robert Fico's vlog defence of Kotleba's MP Milan Mazurek sentenced in September 2019 to a €10.000 fine for racial hatred in a radio broadcast ('*Milan Mazurek just said what almost the whole nation thinks*') (Fico,

2019), he stated that the new Prime Minister Igor Matovič is '*a Prime Minister of the Roma, of the Gypsies; he does not care for anyone else*' (Mikušovič, 2020). Reaction on Matovič's aid provided to the Romani in eastern Slovakia, whose settlement had to be quarantined under the military and police supervision due to a massive incidence of coronavirus in the first Covid wave, suggests not only the validity of premise raised above, that in times of movement's existential crisis even the democratic and anti-fascist profiled political parties are not immune to taking on the (neo)fascist conspiracies and hoaxes, as well as that Kotleba's repeated success and his 'from zero to hero' rise radicalized the political discourse in Slovakia and 'mainstreamized' a political communication previously typical for non-democratic regimes or, as Viktor Orbán said, for 'illiberal democracies'.

### **'MUSLIM AND AFRICAN AVALANCHE THREATENING CHRISTIAN AND EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION'**

Since the end of World War II, the ethnic structure of Europe has fundamentally changed (see Bade, 2005; Hruboň et al., 2017; Ther, 2014). Various motivated massive migration flows and the state administration's 'incapability' of ceasing them have always been a matter of neo-fascists' ruthless criticism. A declared will to 'protect Europe', to 'defend Christian values', and to 'save cultural Western civilization' from being 'exploited' and 'raped' by the 'hordes from the East' has persisted in the fascist political language for decades: using the same expressions, Adolf Hitler and his Axis allies warned against the Soviet invasion of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s; now, the neo-fascists are using the same vocabulary for commenting the latest European migrant crisis.

Hoaxes and fake news distributed in this regard have comprised of two key dimensions:

The first might be understood as a modernist reincarnation of the conflict between the 'Christian' and 'Muslim' world, however, in its secularized cultural meaning cleaned of religious aspects. In Central European radicals' discourse (mainly in Slovakia and Hungary), the 'Muslim comeback' is frequently compared to the Ottoman occupation of the historical Hungarian Kingdom from the 1526 Battle of Mohács to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The neo-fascists struggling against – as their discourse emphasises – the 'new occupation' often portray themselves as 'new-age knights' of noble intentions aiming to secure an 'eternal triumph' in the 'modern Reconquista' and to 'bring Europe back to its

roots'. Refugees from the East (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq) pouring into Europe are collectively being labelled potential 'terrorists', 'Islamic fundamentalists', 'jihadists' and 'severe threat to national security'; the migrants from Africa as 'unwelcome persons', 'burden to the social system', 'unable and unwilling to work'. The neo-fascists thus perceive combatting the migration flow as a self-preservation campaign and, in a biological sense of the word, as the white supremacy theorist Ben Klaasen prophesied RAHOWA ('Racial Holy War'). In this context, the neo-fascists' reactions to the migrant crisis and their reflection in the disseminated hoaxes and fake news cannot be seen just as religious conflict, *'some kind of war of identities'* which are always irreconcilable, radical, and fundamentalist (Kazanský, 2013, p. 68), but also as a war between 'cultural West' and 'decadent East' with the hidden racial and eugenic core.

The second dimension of the neo-fascist hoaxes and fake news related to the migrant crisis lies in their anti-system framework allegorically opposing liberal democracy. In this case, the neo-fascists have been blaming not just the migrants but also Western politicians, intellectuals, media, NGOs, and other specific social groups for the intentional undermining of Western culture by promoting the idea of multicultural humanistic Europe and open society. In a conspiratorial discourse, the European migrant crisis, during which millions of refugees fled to Europe, was artificially provoked as a part of a plan developed by the 'cultural Marxists' to put Western culture to its knees and raise a new mixed shapeless and nameless society. Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory has gained many supporters, including Nazi-inspired terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who perceived his 2011 Utøya attacks as an assault on cultural-Marxist values represented by the leftist governments in Norway and Europe enabling the destruction of 'true European values and identity' (Jarmin, 2014, p. 85).

It should be noted that despite the neo-fascists in Central Europe shared the same anti-migrant stance as their comrades in other countries, commenting on the migrant crisis did not markedly differ from the governmental rhetoric as well as political and security measures taken in its spirit. Fico's government – contrary to President Andrej Kiska's emphatic words (Kiska, 2015) – categorically rejected the principle of 'joint responsibility' of all EU member states promoted by German or French authorities to adopt a common security politics in terms of immigration management. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán took a protectionist

attitude too: he ordered to build a 175 km long barbed-wire fence on the border with Serbia and a 40 km long one on the border with Croatia.<sup>8</sup>

In the summer of 2015, three of four V4 countries – Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic supported by Romania – announced that none of them would ever accept any long-term EU-issued quota of accommodating the migrants as requested by German Chancellor Angela Merkel (V4 sa dohodla, 2015). This uncompromising attitude, the legitimacy of which in the eyes of the public was confirmed by the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shootings and subsequent November attacks at multiple places in Paris, silenced the neo-fascists' criticism of governments in Central Europe, and forced them to redirect the fury of foreign officials who had been emphasising the need for solidarity with the refugees.

#### **GENERIC HOAXES AND FAKE NEWS AS ANTI-SYSTEM LANDMINES OR WHAT IS THE NEO-FASCISTS' PURPOSE OF BEING PERSISTENTLY RESISTANT (CONCLUDING REMARKS)**

Conspiracy thinking (see: Panczová, 2017) has been a core feature of fascist ideology ever since its inception. Fascist deep persuasion that complicated the modern world around us is influenced and controlled by the 'dark forces' who use corrupted puppet governments to reach their global domination and destruct the 'genuine European values' was principally the same both in 1933 and 2020. However, what has essentially changed, is the *methods* the fascists (neo-fascists) use to decompose the detested democratic system. The romantic era of coups d'état and demonstrative 'marches on Romes' seems to be long gone. The neo-fascists know very well what their historical predecessors committed – and, therefore, are ashamed to openly subscribe to fascist ideology. The neo-fascists have not transformed only the external visible elements of political culture and behaviour ('from uniforms into suits strategy') but also the strategies of 'conquering the system' (see: Drábik, 2019, pp. 468-561).

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<sup>8</sup> Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared, regarding the reception given to migrants, that: *'It must not be forgotten that those who are arriving... are the representatives of a profoundly different culture. For the most part, they are not Christians but Muslims. That is an important question because Europe and European identity have Christian roots'*. (Camus and Lebourg, 2017, p. 287).

In the last decades characterised by a mass dispersion of new communication technologies, the neo-fascists took their chance to rise again, this time differently and much more sophisticated than after 1945. The climax we are witnessing now in Slovakia, as well as in Central Europe, is a hybrid cultural war between liberal democracy as a system (not ideology) that became mainstream following the downfall of the communist regimes and (neo) fascism with its alternative anti-utopian vision of the world. The neo-fascist movements' potential cannot be underestimated: even as of 2020, the neo-fascists have not embodied a security threat in terms of possible violent power takeover or parliamentary election victory, their *diversionary ideological war* has significantly impacted the political milieu, as this article has proved on several examples. Systematic and long-lasting communication with their followers via the internet (in Central Europe mainly on conspiratorial websites, various internet forums, Facebook, and Russian 'VKontakte' platform) has not been mirrored only in a relatively stable electoral support to People's Party Our Slovakia or Hungarian Jobbik and a consolidation of their position in the structure of well-established parties, but also in making of a new, still dynamically forming social group of *anti-system radical nihilists*.

Hoaxes and fake news spread individually in reaction to current events, sometimes also by the mainstream media, are not more dangerous from the perspective of society's radicalization than ordinary rumours or whispering campaign: they appear and then fade over time, replaced by fresher ones. However, in recent years we may observe that thanks to social networks – in Central Europe Facebook in particular – the rooted hoaxes and fake news promoted and/or produced by the neo-fascist movements have in their interconnectedness mutated into a comprehensive ideology within which all partial units of discourse (9/11, chemtrails, medical misinformation including the anti-vaxxer movement as well as the hoaxes and fake news based on conspiracy theories above) merged into a *compact worldview* which identifies itself as *anti-system, anti-establishment* and *exclusively true*.

Metaphorically speaking, accumulated hoaxes and fake news, spreading uncontrollably and super fast, have turned into a chain of *landmines* and seriously threaten the democratic system. The neo-fascists have successfully penetrated the public discourse masking their palingenetic radicalism by 'freedom of speech' and hiding behind the right to let anyone 'express an opinion'. The chameleon-like transformation has made the neo-fascists more refined. Their fascist identity (which the neo-fascists question) remains cocooned for a lay audience because of 'mainstreamization of fascism'

(Kallis, 2013), difficult to distinguish from radical (extreme) non-fascist right and, as neo-fascists' influence on traditional parties point out, also from 'standard' parties. In doing so, the difference between far-right and neo-fascist organizations from the point of view of democratic system's stability is crucial: whilst the 'standard' parties including far-right want only to take control over institutions, the neo-fascists seek to knock the existing order down and to build up a new dystopian society ('new nation', 'new man', etc.), even though, in the modern times, they resigned to impatience in creating the desired revolutionary 'new order' and, instead, bet on the strategy of gradual metapolitical fascistization.

In this regard, both Slovakia and Central Europe provide unique examples of how modern fascism has lost nothing of its strength, despite its limited manoeuvring possibilities. Without any doubts, People's Party Our Slovakia and Jobbik belong to the most successful *metapolitical projects* in Europe and, at least, Kotleba's movement's share of governmental power cannot be ruled out in a medium-term future: moving away from an openly neo-Nazi subculture (accompanied at that time by marching through streets in dark uniforms with burning torches and praising Jozef Tiso's wartime Hitler's allied Slovak State), its continuous tactical shift to far-right acceptable for a broader audience, and electoral support climbing up to double-digit numbers, make Kotleba's party an attractive partner for a hypothetically strong 'illiberal coalition'. Evolution of hoaxes and fake news in the Slovak milieu, which make up a core of the People's Party Our Slovakia's political agenda and PR, as well as their perception in politics and by the broader public, thus remains barely predictable.

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IV  
NEW TRENDS  
ON THE ECONOMIC HORIZON  
IN EUROPE

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## THE RISE OF EUROPEAN PROTECTIONISM

Nataša STANOJEVIĆ<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* This article analyses the rise of the European Union protectionism in the field of international trade, foreign investment, and global production chains. The scope, forms and dynamics of restrictive measures in each of these three segments of modern global economic connectivity are investigated. Although far from the concept of the free market, some protective measures have an explanation in emergency situations such as the World Financial Crisis and the disturbances due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast, protectionism in the field of foreign direct investment, shaped by the newly introduced screening mechanism in the European Union, has a clear discriminatory character. It is similar to several packages of politically motivated restrictive trade measures. The documents of the European Commission, which prescribe the stated protectionist measures, lead to the conclusion that the EU is implementing a bloc division, that is, to protect its economies from the global environment, rather than to integrate into it.

*Keywords:* protectionism, European Union, trade, FDI, screening, value chains.

### INTRODUCTION

After decades of intensive efforts to dissolve barriers and borders, both in their own and foreign markets, there was a sudden rise in protectionism in Europe, particularly in the European Union (EU). This implies restrictive

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measures with harmful effects on international trade and foreign direct investments (FDIs), both inward and outward. Besides direct protectionism, withdrawing trends in European production (or value) chains also indicate a significant degree of protectionism. Despite its importance for ensuring Europe's strategic autonomy and the EU's industrial future, value chains in the European Union are beginning to lose their importance. The weakening of international economic connectivity and the rise of protectionism require unexpected phenomena after the strong, decades-long momentum of economic globalization. In all these cases, major changes have taken place since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC).

The general hypothesis of this research is that after the Global Financial Crisis, the European Union adopted a block approach to the economy in terms of rebuilding the barrier to the external environment. Indicators used for formulating this hypothesis are a) the growing number of EU trade restrictions, b) the lengthy public debate on the introduction of screening for FDI and c) numerous examples of withdrawal of European companies from non-EU countries.

The aim of this research is to determine the intensity of growing European protectionism, by analysing the restrictive trends in key segments of international economic connectivity: trade, global value chains, and FDI.

The first chapter is a review of recent literature related to current changes in all three analysed areas of international economics, especially the literature that includes these changes in Europe or the European Union.

In the second chapter, the degree and directions of European trade protectionism will be analysed, using data on the number of newly introduced restrictive measures in European countries. Protective trade measures include contingent trade-protective measures, export-related measures, tariff measures, trade-related investment measures, but also subsidies, according to the set of measures used by the Global Trade Alert (GTA).

The third chapter examines whether and to what extent there has been a shortening of European GVCs. Global production chains (GVCs) are groups of interconnected but geographically dispersed production units, which are measured by the share of foreign value added (FVA) in exports. This trend will be analysed at the level of the whole of Europe, but also of individual larger economies.

The fourth chapter examines the EU's restrictive measures in the field of FDI, with special reference to the new screening instrument, which

includes special procedures for FDI originating from Asian countries in sectors that have been declared protected.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The current trend of mass trade protectionism is a relatively new phenomenon which developed during and after the GFC from 2008. Having in mind the previous decades-long trend of trade liberalization, the return of protectionism is strongly seen as a negative phenomenon and even a step backward in economic globalization (Erixon and Sally, 2010; Steinbock, 2018). Jacoby (2018) and Evenett (2019) consider this phenomenon a symptom of serious disturbances in the international economic system and the beginning of deglobalization. Evenett's contribution to the study of this phenomenon is much more significant than his articles published on the subject. This refers to its launch of the online database Global Trade Alert (GTA, <https://www.globaltradealert.org>) established in June 2009 with a purpose to record any restrictive measure of each country, which positively or negatively affects international trade. The GTA initiative was established due to previous sharp global economic downturns that have brought "extensive discrimination against foreign commercial interests" (Evenett, 2019). This database also includes all subsidies, FDI restrictions, and migration. The GTA database is useful both for international business, as a source of information about the policy environment they face, as well as for scientific research of the world economy. Some of the most recent researches explore the effects of the US-China trade war. Fajgelbaum et al. (2020) have made a significant contribution by statistical analysis of the negative effects of protectionism on the American economy, as well as Huang et al. (2018) and Crowley et al. (2018) investigated the negative effects on China's economy.

The important theoretical framework and advantages of GVCs were given by Gereffi (2018). The authors Cattaneo, O., Gereffi, G. and Staritz, C. (eds.) (2010) analysed the state of GVCs after the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) but generally did not recognize its fragility and future inability to recover. UNIDO reports (2016; 2018) stressed the usefulness of the value chain approach for understanding development and especially industrial development, its sustainability and inclusiveness. Kummritz et al. (2016) have found that strengthening a country's GVC participation may lead not just to higher value added, but also in output, productivity and jobs. The research of Kordalska and Olczyk (2019) is significant for the second part of

this study, dedicated to international production. Their research analysed the role of the hub of Germany in the trade of the selected CEE countries and showed the deep integration of CEE into German production chains. For this subject are also important Baldwin and Lopez-Gonzalez (2015) and Meng (2019), which also found that GVCs do not occur in a linear form by production stages, but that there is always one dominant economy at the centre of the chain.

Declining in FVA in Europe is a slow process so that there is very little literature on that. The newest is the research of Solleder and Velasquez (2020) which suggests that the EU imports of manufacturing inputs will drop more significantly after 2020. It is similar to scientific articles on the negative trends of FDI in Europe. Two papers on this topic stand out. Those are: Reins (2019) and Zwartkruis and de Jong (2020). Both papers refer to a new restrictive measure in the European Union - FDI screening. Reins (2019) views this measure from the angle necessary for the EU to establish energy stability and control of energy resources. Zwartkruis and de Jong (2020) analyse legal and practical challenges of screening of FDI. They see it as a legally controversial and practically not very useful instrument of restriction of free capital movement.

Another, newer form of European Union protectionism is keeping a distance from European non-EU countries. In terms of content, this belongs to the field of high politics and therefore is not the subject of this research, but it is important for insight into the whole and dimensions of EU protectionism. This topic was very thoroughly addressed by Petrović (2019) through the analysis of procedures and problems faced by Serbia and other countries of the Western Balkans in the process of endless accession to the European Union.

One of the main goals of this study is to fill the existing gap in the literature by analysing the reducing the degree of economic openness of Europe in all three aspects: international trade, production and investment.

### **THE RISE OF TRADE PROTECTIONISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has left more lasting effects on world trade than on individual economies. The volume of trade is declining in some regions, stagnant in others, but what is particularly important is that this process continues even after more than a decade since the end of the Crisis. In February 2017, Germany, Italy and France addressed the European

Commission with a proposal to improve the level of trade and investment in strategically important areas that have been the focus of foreign investors in state ownership or under state control. Given that many countries continue to establish inappropriate barriers and do not provide a level playing field for EU FDI, it was concluded that the EU must adopt appropriate measures to remain open to other countries while ensuring more effective protection of key economic areas from foreign investment, which could harm its security and public order (Dimitrijević, 2018, p. 161). In the European Union, international trade was still growing at a moderate pace until 2018. In 2019, the value of trade was almost the same as in 2018, and in 2020, it was reduced due to the general economic stagnation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. By 2019, in Europe, unlike global parameters, the parameters of foreign trade have not changed significantly. What is a new and unexpected phenomenon in Europe is the rapid growth of trade protectionism generally atypical for this region, especially for the European Union.

The weakening of economic activity during the GFC initiated a number of restrictive trade measures of both developed and developing economies. The degree and directions of European trade protectionism is a subject of special interest. Protectionist measures, which negatively affect international trade, include: subsidies (excluding export subsidies), contingent trade-protective measures, export-related measures (including export subsidies), tariff measures, trade-related investment measures. This set of measures is used by the Global Trade Alert (GTA), which includes more forms of restrictions than the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Several key trade routes have been suspended by a series of restrictive measures as early as 2012-2014. These are Russia's trade restrictions on the EU, North America and Latin America, then the sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea. All of these restrictions are still in place. The culmination of this trend was a trade war between the US and China, which marked the international trade in 2018 and 2019. The Trump administration tried to influence the economic and geopolitical growth of China, using the "tactics of great pressure" (Jović-Lazić, 2019, p. 156). In addition to introducing the various tariff measures, the United States also called on the allies not to buy Chinese technological products and sell advanced technology to China (Jović-Lazić, 2019, p. 156). This attracted a lot of public attention so that European protectionism remained in the background.

What also goes unnoticed is that American protectionism is limited to Donald Trump's policy toward China, which is exposed to over 1,200 US

trade-restrictive measures (GTA, 2020). These measures are not protectionism that affects a large number of countries. When Trump leaves the power at the end of 2020, this approach will almost certainly soften. In contrast, the protectionism of the European Union is a more permanent commitment, i.e., the EU's trade and investment protectionism have become a strategy towards the rest of the world. These measures have been considered and adopted by most EU countries and recorded as strategies in the documents of the European competent institutions.

Thus, the protectionism of the European Union began much earlier than the US-China trade war. EU trade-restrictive measures escalated in the trade conflict with Russia in 2014, but a number of measures were adopted during the 2009 GFC.

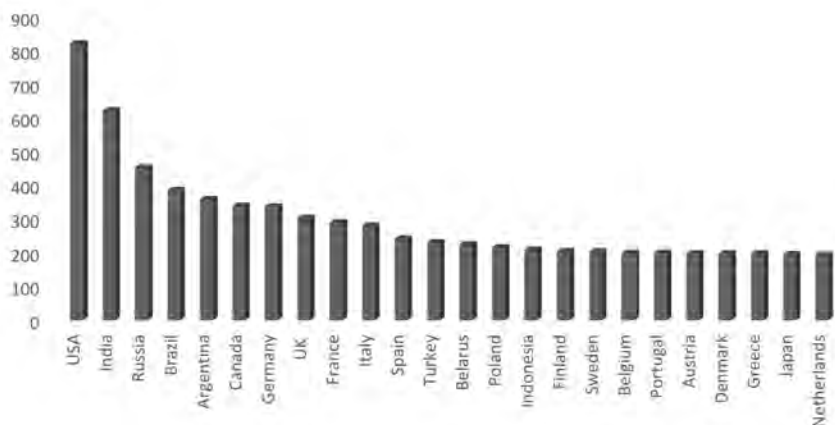
The European Union is working intensively and relatively successfully on removing trade barriers of its partners, in order to support the exports of its companies. On the other hand, the number of restrictive measures against partners is continuously increasing. "All of these trade initiatives are part of a wider effort by the European Union to ensure we build the foundations for resilience, competitiveness and growth; developing mutually beneficial bilateral relations, while taking the internal measures needed to strengthen our economy, and defend it from unfair and abusive practices" (European Commission, 2019, p. 2).

The growth of trade protectionism was further contributed by the Covid-19 pandemic when trade protectionism escalated. All countries, despite a number of formal restrictions provided by the WTO and especially the European Union, during 2020, have also provided massive subsidies to large companies, airlines, banks, etc., to save them from bankruptcy. In addition, basic food products in the EU are additionally protected. For example, import duty on maize, sorghum and rye was subject to restriction twice in one month. The European Commission issued a Regulation on 27 April 2020 imposing the duty rate of EUR 5.27 per ton. On 5 May 2020, the same Commission issued regulation, increased an import duty to EUR 10.40 per ton.

The EU does not have many restrictions in the area of trade in services, but in terms of trade in goods, the EU countries occupy 13 of the top 25 positions on the list of countries by the number of restrictive measures. In the period from 2009 to December 2020 (GTA, 2020), the individual leaders are the USA, India, Russia, Brazil, and Canada. Only then do the EU members follow. However, the EU trade-restrictive measures are mostly part of the EU-wide restrictive packages, and rarely the regulations of individual

countries. Viewed in this way, these 13 countries have collectively imposed around 3,000 protective measures on non-EU countries (GTA, 2020).

FIGURE 1. COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF RESTRICTIVE MEASURES IN TRADE IN GOODS



Source: Author according to GTA, 2020.

The largest EU countries are in the lead: Germany with 337 protective measures, Italy with 405, France and Spain with more than 300 (figure 1).

## SHORTENING OF EUROPEAN VALUE CHAINS

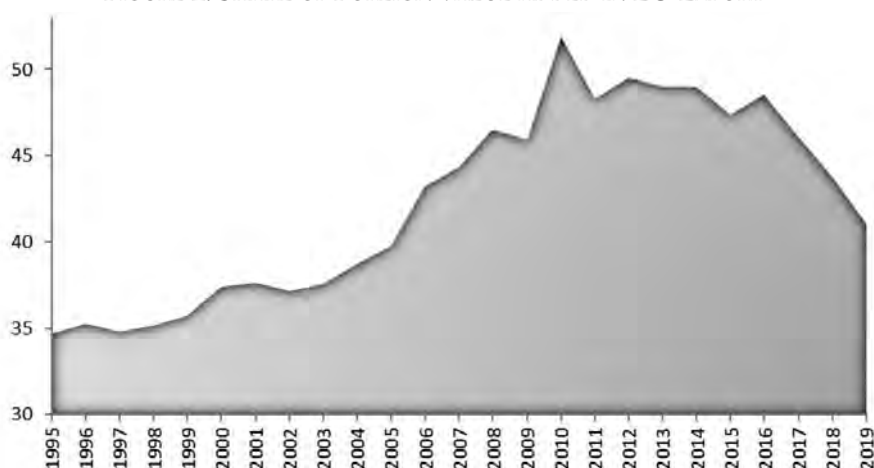
International segmentation of production processes is the most specific and the newest form of modern globalization. “The driver of international production segmentation was to achieve the most cost-effective structure for each stage of the production process” (Gereffi, 2018). Almost all exporting companies, with or without the participation of foreign capital, are part of global value chains (GVC). They are international (rather regional than global) production networks of geographically dispersed production units in different countries. GVCs are a specific mark of the modern world economy. One-third of the total international trade takes place within GVCs.

The main indicator of economic integration in international production is the foreign value added (FVA). This is the value of an imported semi-finished product that is ready for further processing and export. So, it is a

part of the trade, but a part that implies much wider change in the European economy than the decline of the trade. In only one decade, the share of value chains in European exports has fallen from 52% to 41% (figure 2).

As figure 2 shows, FVA within European supply chains had a sharp rise until 2010. Then, as a result of the uncertainty and instability of the market caused by the GFC, European multi-national companies begin to withdraw production segments to their home countries or enter into mutual mergers, losing the need for a large number of suppliers. GVCs is getting shorter that way.

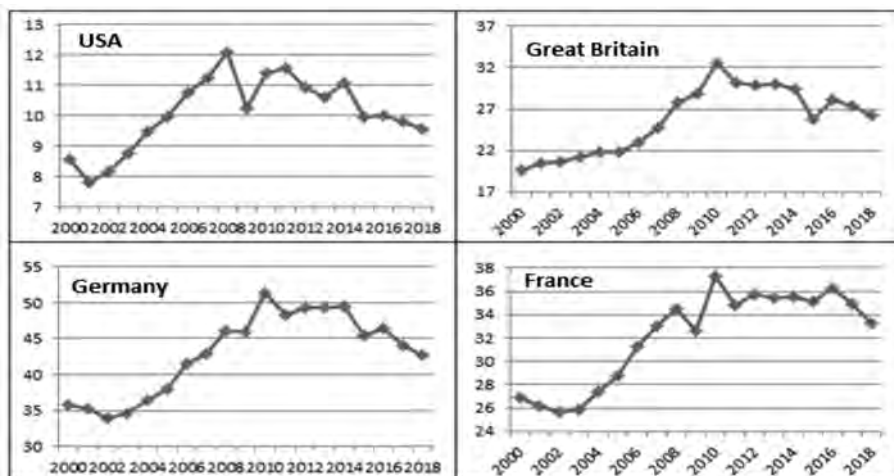
FIGURE 2. SHARE OF FOREIGN VALUE ADDED IN EU EXPORT



Source: Author according UNCTAD (2020) Eora Database

The host countries of the largest multinational companies, the US and the UK, are also facing a steady decline in FVA, as does Germany, whose international production mainly takes place in the European Union's neighbourhood. In the years after the GFC, FVA share in US exports decreased from 12 to 9.5%, in the UK from 33% to 26%, in Germany from 52% to 43%, in France from 38% to 33% (author's calculation based on UNCTAD, 2020, Eora database) (figure 3).

FIGURE 3. INTEGRATION OF MAJOR INVESTOR COUNTRIES IN GLOBAL PRODUCT CHAINS, REFLECTED BY THE FVA SHARE IN EXPORTS, (%)



Source: Author according to UNCTAD-stat, [unctadstat.unctad.org](http://unctadstat.unctad.org), and the World Bank, [data.worldbank.org/indicator](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator).

The direction of change in the EU refers not only to the disruption of existing GVCs but also to the announced direction of future ones. The future focus of European supply chains was defined by the European Commission in 2019. The Commission has identified only six strategic value chains into which the EU will direct resources. They all rely on the concept of sustainable development. These are: Clean and autonomous vehicles, Hydrogen technologies and systems, Smart health, the Industrial Internet of Things, the Low-CO<sub>2</sub> emission industry and Cybersecurity (Strategic Forum, 2019). The very choice of sectors for key EU supply chains indicates the intention to intensify exchanges between the leading EU countries and reduce the connection with less developed countries and those outside the EU. Such a strategy obviously imposes a further shortening of European supply chains.

Lockdowns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic further contributed to the disruption of value chains and accelerated the process of their shortening. GVCs are impacted directly through supply chain linkages when companies in any country stop producing. In addition, the Covid-19 also affected value chains by causing disruption in international transport. Even when the production itself was not compromised, the inability to supply export



partners in many cases led to production interruptions. The pandemic had the strongest and most lasting effect on GVCs by reducing demand.

Through value chains, the epidemic has even affected countries where production has not been interrupted, and whose production is not directly dependent on vulnerable economies. Producers at the beginning of the production chain (raw materials and services) are prevented from exporting goods due to demand disruptions in the next downstream market. Manufacturers of parts, components and semifinished goods reduce their output due to the suspension or reduction of imports of the downstream market of finished goods. Therefore, they also reduce inputs from abroad. Breaking up value chains in some sectors resulted in pressure to *re-nationalize* production in the belief that this would provide greater security of supply.

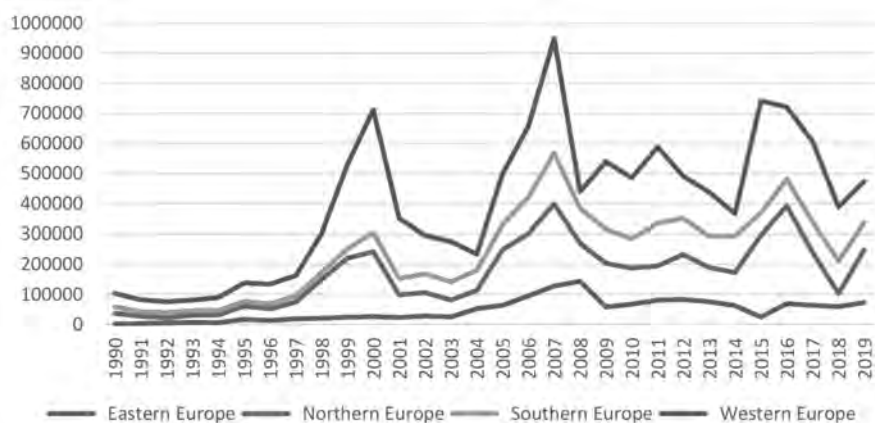
## FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS TREND IN EUROPE

The traditional EU approach to FDI is based on a positive view of the free movement of capital. The EU was one of the world's most open destination for foreign direct investment in the world. But things are also changing in this segment of the international economy. As executive Vice-President Dombrovskis said: "The EU is and will remain open to foreign investment. But this openness is not unconditional" (European Commission, 2020a).

Particularly frequent is the introduction of *screening*, mandatory assessment of the inflow of foreign investment by an authorized agency. In March 2019, the EU has adopted a Regulation on the screening of foreign direct investment (FDI). "Member States are allowed to use a national screening mechanism for FDI from outside the EU on the grounds of widely defined public order or security, including the protection of key technologies" (Zwartkruis, de Jong, 2020). This mechanism started to apply on 11 October 2020. It was introduced by 24 countries, which together account for more than half of the world's cumulative FDI (Stanojević, 2020, 350). Also, more than 40 amendments to the list of sectors or economic activities, subject to screening, were adopted in 2018 and 2019.

However, European FDIs, inward and outward, collapsed in 2008, long before the introduction of screening, and have never reached pre-GFC values since then (figure 4 and figure 5). The inflow of FDI into Europe is halved, in the period 2016-2018 (figure 4), and some countries registering a negative inflow as a result of the withdrawal of investment funds by US multinational companies (MNC).

FIGURE 4. FDI INWARD IN EUROPE 1990-2019 (1000 USD)



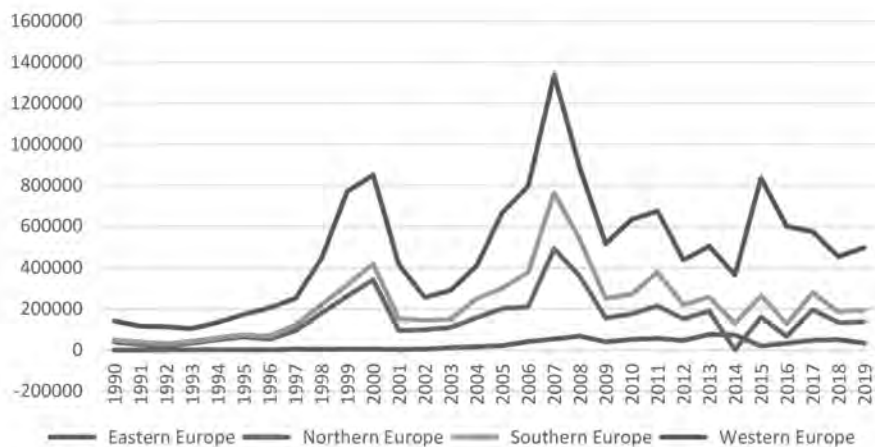
Source: UNCTAD stat (2020)

Due to screening, the FDI inward will certainly be further reduced in the coming period, but the reduction should not be so significant. Namely, the mechanism of screening is the result of EU concern about the loss of strategic technological knowledge and technological advantage over emerging economies. There is also a concern in the EU that China is competing in an unequal way, that is, Chinese and EU companies do not compete directly, but Chinese companies have a great advantage due to the support and protection provided by the Chinese state. More precisely, the initial problem was China's policy instruments for the implementation program *Made in China 2025*, which have included *technology seeking investments abroad*. Many of the FDI from China into the EU are "aimed at EU companies that have technological knowledge that China can use to upgrade its industry" (Zwartkruis, de Jong, 2020, p. 6). Accordingly, areas subject to screening have been identified as: defence and security, energy, businesses supplying critical technologies, infrastructure, inputs or access sensitive information (European Commission, 2020b). "The EU wants to maintain an open investment environment", but, "the reflection paper on *Harnessing Globalization* recognized increasing concerns about strategic acquisitions of European companies with key technologies by foreign investors, especially state-owned enterprises" (European Commission, 2017). The last term - "state-owned enterprises" clearly indicates that the entire screening instrument was launched as prevention of Chinese leadership in the field of high technologies.

After several years of negotiations about Chinese investments in the EU, in the last days of 2020, two sides reach an agreement in principle, called the *Comprehensive Agreement on Investment* (CAI). A key point of the agreement is the rules against forced technology transfer. The CAI includes obligations for the conduct of state-owned enterprises, comprehensive transparency rules for subsidies, and obligations related to sustainable development. Even if all the provisions of this agreement are successfully implemented in practice, that does not diminish the fact that the EU is “defending” itself from the inflow of foreign capital.

Inward and outward European investments have been dramatically reduced since the Crisis. Several early abrupt reductions in FDI were the result of the recession of the European Union and US economies in 2001 and 2007-2009. The current decline in foreign investment is not the result of the Crisis. Economic growth has slowed globally, but it still represents growth, and no major economy is in recession. Trust in investment security, as an important condition for FDI, is severely disrupted by restrictive policies of large economies. The number and scope of restrictive measures in the area of foreign investment have had a pronounced upward trend since the GFC. Restrictive measures include a number of instruments, which have negative effects on FDI in different ways. The most direct measures concern the restriction or prohibition of the inflow of foreign investment in certain economic sectors, but there are also restrictions on outward investment in certain foreign countries or sectors. The states that are home to the largest MNCs, intensifying their efforts to reduce and discourage capital outflows from the country. Such measures were adopted by the Committee on Foreign Investment of the USA, the European Commission, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, as well as China. These are, to a large extent, the causes of the decline of outward FDI from Europe (figure 5).

FIGURE 5. FDI OUTWARD FROM EUROPE 1990-2019 (1000 USD)



Source: UNCTAD stat (2020)

The general instability of market conditions and reduced demand play an important role in the sharp decline in European FDI inflow and outflow. So, screening and other forms of protectionism were not the only cause of this trend, but “more important is the contribution of protectionism to the creation of negative investment environment” (Stanojević, 2020, p.350).

## CONCLUSIONS

Multiplication of barriers to foreign trade and foreign direct investment, as well as reshoring of supply chains, have led to the world economy becoming less and less integrated. The European Union, although based on the concept of economic freedoms, generally does not lag behind the newly formed American protectionism, and in some segments, such as FDIs, the EU is even in the lead.

In terms of trade restrictions, individual EU countries have fewer newly introduced protective measures than the USA. On the other hand, if we look at the EU as a single market, trade protectionism far exceeds that of the United States. A large number of protective trade measures have strained political relations with Russia in the background. Restrictive measures against other countries have no political background but are motivated by the need of the EU to protect their economies from the dramatically changed

state of the world economy. This primarily refers to the reduction of demand and economic activities due to the Global Financial Crisis. Many tariffs have been increased and exports limited during the state of emergency in the global economy due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The GFC has also changed market conditions and caused general uncertainty about the profitability of investments abroad. EU companies reacted by withdrawing key production processes from the global market. European MNCs are retreating into national contexts partly because of the volatility of the global market, caused by the GFC, and partly due to the changed conditions, which no longer provide extreme profits. With international input prices converging, too long GVC no longer justifies the high transportation costs.

Protectionism in the field of FDI, although not large in a number of measures, is huge in the scope of measures that prescribe screening. Secondly, in the legal sense, the screening has caused numerous controversies and disagreements, because it is a matter of direct discrimination of investments from China and India. The measures were adopted based on the assessment of the European Chamber of Commerce that China has a strategic interest in investing in European companies in the field of high technologies in the future. These protectionist measures undoubtedly have a discriminatory character.

Some trade protection measures during the Crisis or Pandemic, which restrict the export or import of strategic products, although very far from the free-market concept advocated by the EU, are the natural responses of responsible governments. The withdrawal of GVC, although it excludes non-EU countries, is not disputable because its subjects are companies that behave in accordance with market conditions. On the other hand, trade restrictions introduced on a political basis, as well as the described discriminatory FDI restrictions, clearly indicate the EU's block division approach, that is, the protection of EU economies from the environment rather than integrating into it.

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## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION?

Sanja JELISAVAC TROŠIĆ<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* The crisis of the regulatory framework of international trade has become more pronounced. Trade policy tensions between the US, the EU and China have evolved and could continue for long unless there is a reform of the international trade framework. The future of the WTO as an intergovernmental institution that regulates international trade practices is uncertain due to this unprecedented economic turmoil and political tensions. The EU is a key supporter of the multilateral trading system and seeks to address the challenges that the WTO faces by proposing a set of concrete reform proposals. The European Commission announced its intention to lead reforms of the WTO. In this paper, we will explore the EU's position on WTO reform and compare the EU's position with the position of other powerful countries with influence in the WTO. According to the findings, the EU is seeking to take the lead in redefining the WTO. Compared to other WTO members, the EU is particularly active and comprehensive in proposing modernization and reform of the WTO.

*Keywords:* EU, WTO reform, crisis, trade, US, China.

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## INTRODUCTION

The World Trade Organization (WTO) provides a framework for negotiating trade agreements and facilitates the process of resolving trade disputes. The system is set up so that trade disputes are resolved by independent judges through the WTO dispute settlement mechanism. The WTO membership has expanded to 164 members, representing over 98% of international trade. Since the crisis of neoliberalism started, the WTO, as a key international trade organization, has been put into a vulnerable position (Chorev, Babb, 2009, p. 460). The trade war between the United States of America (US) and China, which escalated in 2018 and 2019, should have been addressed and possibly solved through the WTO's multilateral trade system (Ciuriak, 2019, p. 132). In Trump's US presidency, protectionism and nationalism played a central role, and appointments to the WTO Appellate Body have been blocked and complaints have been filed about the use of lawsuits and litigation instead of negotiations. The US was the leading country to contribute to the stalemate in the 2017 WTO negotiations in Buenos Aires by blocking a draft ministerial text, which includes a reference to the central role of the global trading system and trade as a flywheel of the world's development. In 2015, the WTO reached a significant milestone with the receipt of its 500th trade dispute for settlement. Trade disputes are becoming more complex, and the Appellate Body must make a decision in a short time frame, taking into account the growing law. In dispute settlement, the WTO suffered a setback at the end of 2019 when the members could not agree on reforms for the Appellate Body. Currently, the Appellate Body cannot review appeals since the term of the last sitting Appellate Body member expired on 30 November 2020 (WTO, 2021). It is now clear that dispute settlement reform will have to be a result of the agreement between the high political levels of the most influential countries, primarily the European Union (EU) and the US.

The Doha Round of multilateral negotiations has been troubled almost from the beginning. Longstanding differences over agriculture policies, disagreement between the most influential WTO members, a large number of issues and topics for negotiations raised but not finished, along with the principle of the "single undertaking", as well as other factors, such as serious problems in the functioning of the dispute settlement system and the increase in unilateral protectionists trade measures introduced by the most powerful economies of the world, led to the fact that countries individually began to seek changes in the system of functioning of the WTO. The crisis has even penetrated to the highest ranks of this organization. Roberto

Azevêdo stepped down as the WTO Director-General on 31 August 2020, a year before the expiry of his mandate. Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was slated to be the new Director-General since she had won support from the vast majority of the member states, including the EU, Japan and China, but not the US. The General Council meeting scheduled for 9 November 2020 to consider the appointment of the next WTO Director-General has been postponed until further notice.

We are now witnessing the reshaping of the global economic and political order. In order to overcome trade tensions, it is imperative to reform the multilateral trade framework. It is important to understand that the issues are larger than the conflict between the US and China and that a modern multilateral framework must be created in which all countries have a mutual stake in ensuring its integrity.

The aim of this research is to improve knowledge on this important topic and determine in which direction the EU proposal to modernize the WTO is going. The aim, as well, is to compare the proposals and positions of the EU with other countries that are the important WTO members. In the research, we will try to determine the EU's position on WTO reform, compare it with other major players and forecast the possible outcomes how and in what fields the reform will be carried out.

The research question of this study is: How is the EU taking the leading role in reshaping the future of the WTO? This research question can be widened: How is the EU taking the leading role in efforts to give concrete proposals, solutions and measures for overcoming the WTO crisis and modernizing the work of the WTO? A qualitative analysis, along with the comparative method, will be used in this paper. We will also have a scientific explanation of the motives and intentions of the countries that have a strong voice in the WTO.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The WTO-based system of regulating international trade is fraught with many problems. The problems that burden the work of the WTO are very well addressed in Bohl (2009) and McDougall (2018) regarding the problems in the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, Martin and Mercurio (2017) tackling the problems in the Doha Round of negotiations, Zagashvili (2019) about crises in the WTO as a manifestation of globalisation crises, and others.

At the beginning of the new century, scientific and professional circles have already expressed their views on the need for WTO reform. In Labonté

(2002), the findings suggest that assistance and resources must be made available to poorer nations and jurisdictions of the WTO Agreements need to be restrained in order to be subordinated to human development and environmental sustainability goals. Gathii (2004) argued the importance of removing obstacles for developing countries' involvement in the governance of the WTO. Hauser and Zimmerman (2003) have suggestions on how to reform the WTO dispute settlement understanding. Hoekman (2011) summarizes the arguments and proposals to reform the *modus operandi* of the WTO, including decision-making procedures, negotiating modalities, and dispute settlement. The paper of Birkbeck (2009) explores options for improving the negotiation process, institutional reform of the WTO, and calls for the WTO to take greater leadership on the issues of trade, finance, aid for trade, and surveillance of protectionist measures. In his work, Crombrugghe (2009) states that a reform of the WTO is severely needed, and positive reform can be achieved. In Caporal and Gerstel (2018), we can find answers to questions like why are countries calling for WTO reform and what reform proposals are being suggested. Wilkinson (2019) is giving arguments on why the change in the WTO has to occur.

About the EU role in the WTO, we can find in Steinberger's (2006) conclusion that both the EU and the EU Member States are fully bound by all Treaty provisions, and are both, at the same time, fully responsible for each breach of the contract, no matter whether it was committed by an organ of the EU or an EU Member. De Búrca and Scott's (2000) research gives points of comparison and contrast between the EU and the WTO and how procedural norms at the WTO level are relevant for the EU decision-making bodies. Krämer-Hoppe's (2020) book provides a reconsideration of the positive and negative integration paradigm in the EU and the WTO.

Also, it would be useful to read about the role of new rising powers in global economic governance and about building their influence in the WTO. We can find out about the rise of the BRICs in relation to the Washington Consensus in Ban and Blyth (2013), and about different paths of Brazil, India and China at the WTO in Hopewell (2015). Narlikar's (2003) book analyses the coalition strategies of developing countries in the context of international trade, while Gaskarth (2016) focuses on China's and India's rise and offers answers on whether their growth is signalling a shift in power from the West to the East.

This paper will focus on the views and position of the EU in order to show the steps the EU is taking to reach a leadership position in the WTO. The scientific contribution of this paper will be a comparison of EU

proposals for WTO reform with the proposals of four countries – China, the US, Canada and Japan. In this paper, we will explain, summarize and shine the light on the extensive and often inconspicuous documentation of the EU. This paper further analyses and compares the requirements for WTO reforms set by its most influential members, explaining their differences and motives, thus very clearly pointing out the causes of the blockade and the uncertain future of this organization.

### THE EU-WTO RELATIONSHIP

Both the EU and the individual 27 EU countries are members of the WTO. The Ministerial Conference is the WTO's highest decision-making body, and the EU Trade Commissioner represents the EU in the WTO's Ministerial Conference. Thus, the European Commission alone speaks for the EU at almost all WTO meetings. Besides the US, the EU has always been the main protagonist and a crucial player in multilateral trade negotiations, starting with the GATT through the WTO (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: THE EU ROLE IN GATT AND WTO

1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)	1995 World Trade Organization (WTO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EU single market was partly inspired by GATT principles and practices (many of the EC Treaty provisions reflect this)</li><li>• The EU reduced its common external tariff during rounds of negotiations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The EU promotes a multilateral framework for trade negotiations, intended to complement bilateral negotiations</li><li>• The EU has been one of the biggest users of the WTO dispute settlement system</li><li>• Because of the stalemate in the Doha Round, the EU reconsidered its long-standing strategy and returned to regional and bilateral negotiations.</li><li>• The EU is exploring the possibility of modernizing the WTO</li></ul>

Source: Author according to the EU and the WTO, 2020.

Among the countries that ratified the WTO Agreement as early as 1995 were the EU, the US, Japan, and Canada. At that time, they had a 90% share in world trade (Jelisavac Trošić, 2015, p. 44). In the WTO practice, all significant proposals are submitted by developed countries, most often by the four powerful member states: the EU, the US, Japan, and Canada (which are known as the 'Quadrilaterals' or the 'Quad'). Over time, other countries appeared with a stronger voice: India, Australia and Brazil (they were called 'the new Quad', the 'Four/Five Interested Parties' (FIPS), the 'Quint' and the 'G-6'). They tried to break the Doha Round deadlocks, but the Round was suspended in July 2006 because the six could not agree.

According to formal views, 'the EU is a strong supporter of the multilateral trading system. Having exclusive competence in trade policy, the EU plays a key role in the WTO and actively promotes a multilateral trading system that is fair, predictable and based on common rules' (Permanent Mission of the EU to the WTO, 2016). The EU has always promoted international trade based on the rule of law. The EU advocates for the multilateral introduction of rules in trade, but on the other hand, it has given insufficient concessions for its highly protected trade in agricultural products.

A new strategic agenda for the EU 2019-2024 sets out the priority areas to provide guidance for the work of the European Council and other EU institutions. The strategic agenda focuses on four main priorities:

1. Protecting citizens and freedoms;
2. Developing a strong and vibrant economic base;
3. Building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe;
4. Promoting European interests and values on the global stage (European Council, 2019a).

Under the fourth priority, we can find guidance and recommendations for pursuing robust trade in line with multilateralism and the global rules-based international order. Under this priority, the Council has agreed, for the key actions on 'ensuring ambitious and robust trade policy, within the reformed WTO and at the bilateral level between the EU and its partners cooperating closely with NATO' (European Council, 2019b).

The EU set six priorities for 2019-2024, which will serve to address the political, economic, or social challenges faced by the EU and its citizens:

1. A European Green Deal;
2. A Europe fit for the digital age;

3. An economy that works for people;
4. A stronger Europe in the world;
5. Promoting our European way of life;
6. A new push for European democracy (European Commission, 2019a).

In the fourth priority – A stronger Europe in the world – the European Commission has compiled a first set of ideas to modernize the WTO. These ideas relate to three key areas:

1. Updating the rule book on international trade to capture today's global economy;
2. Strengthening the monitoring role of the WTO;
3. Overcoming deadlock on the WTO dispute settlement system (European Commission, 2019b).

It is clear that during all the years after the Second World War, the EU actively participated in building multilateral rules for regulating international trade. So far, the EU has played a central role in developing the international trading system. It can also be concluded that the EU will not easily give in to the dissolution or disappearance of the WTO, but will make an effort to reform and modernize the WTO in the coming years.

### **THE EU'S POSITION ON WTO REFORM**

The European Commission has proposed improving the functioning of the WTO in areas that it recognizes and considers crucial. The EU is an advocate of multilateral trade regulation and advocates that the WTO has to ensure free and fair trade. The EU proposes three areas for modernization: area 1 – rulemaking and development; area 2 – regular work and transparency; area 3 – dispute settlement. For each area, the EU has whole sets of measures and concrete modernization proposals (see Table 2).



TABLE 2: EU PROPOSALS ON WTO MODERNIZATION

<b>Rulemaking and development</b>	<b>Regular work and transparency</b>	<b>Dispute settlement</b>
<b>Proposals for future rulemaking activities in the WTO</b> A. Creating rules that rebalance the system and level the playing field B. Establishing new rules to address barriers to services and investment, including in the field of forced technology transfer C. Addressing the sustainability objectives of the global community	<b>Transparency and notifications</b> A. More effective committee-level monitoring B. Incentives for improving notification compliance C. Sanctions for willful and repeated non-compliance D. Counter-notifications E. Strengthening the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM)	<b>First stage: comprehensive amendment of the provisions of the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) relating to the functioning of the Appellate Body addressing all points of concern with the "approach" of the Appellate Body</b> A. Article 17.5 of the DSU and the issue of 90 days B. Transitional rules for the outgoing Appellate Body members C. Findings unnecessary for the resolution of the dispute D. The meaning of municipal law as the issue of fact E. The issue of precedent F. Independence of the Appellate Body members
<b>Proposals for a new approach to flexibilities in the context of development objectives</b> A. Graduation B. Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) in a future agreement C. Additional SDT in existing agreements	<b>Solving market access problems</b> A. Developing rules that oblige Members to give substantive replies B. Strengthening cross-committee coordination on market access issues	<b>Second stage: addressing substantive issues</b> A. The substantive rules as such can be modified or interpreted by the WTO Membership in accordance with the relevant procedures B. Discussions on possible changes or authoritative interpretations

<b>Rulemaking and development</b>	<b>Regular work and transparency</b>	<b>Dispute settlement</b>
<b>Proposals to strengthen the procedural aspects of the WTO's rulemaking activities</b> A. Multilateral negotiations B. Plurilateral negotiations C. Role of the secretariat D. Building political support	<b>Adjusting the WTO rulebook incrementally</b>	
	<b>Downsizing ineffective committees</b>	

Source: Author according to European Commission Concept paper, 2018.

The EU is taking a leading role in working towards the WTO modernization with the goal to establish a system that can solve the challenges of today's global economy and work again for all members. The EU has already begun cooperation with other countries, with the US and Japan in trilateral discussions, with China in a special working group, and with other G20 partners.

A WTO structural reform and levelling the playing field in global trade is a proclaimed key priority for the EU. It encourages China to opt-out of the special and differential treatment, and to accept strengthening the rules on government subsidies. The EU calls for flexibility in terms of negotiation modalities in the Doha Round. When there is no interest of all countries in certain issues, it should be allowed to move forward in the negotiations in order to achieve plurilateral agreements within the WTO, for instance, on digital trade, or services and investment. The EU wants a gradual reform of the entire system, the continuation of the multilateral settlement of trade disputes, as well as multilateral negotiations with the introduction of certain changes that would lead to new modern WTO agreements. The EU has presented the comprehensive reform proposals involving substantial changes in the WTO.

In order to hold a leadership position, reforming the WTO must remain a top priority for the EU. Predictable and transparent rules and their

enforcement are indispensable for the EU, so it tries to uphold the rules-based trading system. 'The EU will always believe in the strength and value of multilateralism and cooperating in global institutions. We will propose a Joint Communication on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism. We need to lead reforms of the World Health Organization and World Trade Organization to make them fit for new realities' (European Commission, 2020a, p. 6).

### **Comparison with the US's position**

The US agrees with most of the EU and Canada proposals, except for the proposals on resolving the stalemate in the Appellate Body (EU) and seeking a conciliatory solution between all WTO member countries (Canada). 'The US is working through various WTO standing committees to advance reform ideas. To remain a viable institution that can fulfil all facets of its work, the WTO must focus its work on structural reform, find a means of achieving trade liberalization between Ministerial Conferences and adapt to address the challenges faced by traders today' (USTR, 2020, p. 152). In reform proposals, the US relies on continuing and expanding an America-First trade agenda. The US is in favour of establishing new rules in the WTO, directly criticizing China and claiming that China, as a non-market economy, is no longer compatible with the WTO system.

The US seeks the Appellate Body reform and reform of special and differential treatment for developing countries, a new fishery and a digital commerce agreement, enforcing notifications obligations, etc. The US's plan to reduce the number of countries eligible for special and differential treatment directly and, primarily, affects China and India. Current and future negotiations should deny this treatment to countries classified by the World Bank as high-income countries, the OECD countries, G20, as well as any country with 0.5 or more percentages of participation in world trade (Blenkinsop 2019). The US argues that far strict global rules on state-owned enterprises are needed, supported by a binding dispute resolution that allows for retaliation when rules are violated (*Ibidem*). The US is planning to explore a broader WTO reset since outdated tariff determinations no longer reflect economic realities. It is pushing for a close review of the WTO's budget, especially Appellate Body member salaries. 'The US will advocate for changes that allow for additional and more effective plurilateral agreements since there is an urgent need for a new political and legal understanding at the WTO that enables the pursuit of less-than-fully

multilateral outcomes while preserving the characteristics of the WTO' (USTR, 2020, p. 19).

### Comparison with China's position

China supports efforts to implement the necessary WTO reform and actively works with all parties to help cope with the current crisis and respond to the needs of the modern world, protect the multilateral trading system and promote the building of an open world economy. The necessary reform should cover the following four areas:

1. Resolving the crucial and urgent issues threatening the existence of the WTO;
2. Increasing the WTO's relevance in global economic governance;
3. Improving the operational efficiency of the WTO;
4. Enhancing the inclusiveness of the multilateral trading system (Delegation of China, 2019).

The Chinese proposal for each area contains specific steps that should be taken (see Table 3). We can assess that the Chinese proposal is designed to address the WTO survival crisis, increase its authority and efficiency and relevance in global economic governance.

TABLE 3: CHINA'S PROPOSAL ON WTO REFORM

<b>Resolving the crucial and urgent issues threatening the existence of the WTO</b>	<b>Increasing WTO's relevance in global economic governance</b>	<b>Improving the operational efficiency of the WTO</b>	<b>Strengthening the inclusiveness of the multilateral trading system</b>
Breaking the Impasse of the Appointment Process of Appellate Body members	Rectifying the Inequity in Rules on Agriculture	Improving the Compliance of Notification Obligation	Respecting the Right of Special and Differential Treatment of Developing Members
Tightening Disciplines to Curb the Abuse of National Security Exception	Improving Trade Remedies Rules	Improving the Efficiency of WTO Subsidiary Bodies	Adhering to the Principle of Fair Competition in Trade and Investment

<b>Resolving the crucial and urgent issues threatening the existence of the WTO</b>	<b>Increasing WTO's relevance in global economic governance</b>	<b>Improving the operational efficiency of the WTO</b>	<b>Strengthening the inclusiveness of the multilateral trading system</b>
Tightening Disciplines to Curb Unilateral Measures Inconsistent with WTO Rules	Accelerating Negotiations on Fisheries Subsidies		
	Advancing Joint Initiative on Trade-related Aspects of E-commerce in an Open and Inclusive Manner		
	Promoting Discussions on New Issues		

Source: Author according to China's proposal on WTO reform, 2019.

The Chinese proposal largely coincides with the EU's proposal, as both recommend strengthening the implementation of the WTO member countries' commitments on trade policy information in order to improve the organization's efficiency. On the other hand, opposing the EU proposal, China seeks to retain the right to special and differential treatment for developing countries, arguing that without it, liberalization would not benefit those countries. The Chinese position regarding state-owned enterprises is that they should not be suppressed and limited, but it is necessary to provide equal conditions for enterprises of different ownership for market competition (Jelisavac Trošić, 2020, p. 162). The proposal sends a clear message of China's opposition to the US agenda that individually targets China.

### **Comparison with Japan's position**

Japan has many close ties and is one of America's most important allies. Japan also shares one of the world's largest bilateral economic relationships

with China. That puts Japan in a unique position to navigate between the two. In its efforts to contribute to the WTO modernization, Japan does not work or act much independently but cooperates on issues of their interest with other member countries. Considering that Japan is a developed economy, in their interest is to cooperate with the EU and the US, especially on the regulation of technologically advanced forms of trade.

The EU, the US and Japan announced their agreement to strengthen existing rules on industrial subsidies, condemned forced technology transfer practices, and confirmed continued cooperation on a number of key items such as:

- The importance of market-oriented conditions;
- Reform of the WTO, to include increasing compliance with the existing WTO notification obligations;
- Pressing the advanced WTO members claiming a developing country status to undertake a full commitment in the ongoing and future WTO negotiations;
- International rulemaking and trade-related aspects of electronic commerce at the WTO; and
- International forums such as the Global Forum of Steel Excess Capacity and the Governments/Authorities' Meeting on Semiconductors (European Commission, 2020b, p. 1).

Japan will not directly confront China and will follow the EU leadership since it suits their interests.

### **Comparison with Canada's position**

Canada proposes a range of instruments that could be used to gradually modernize and strengthen the WTO. In most cases, these are solutions that do not involve changes to the existing WTO agreements. These include actions and measures to:

1. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring function;
2. Safeguard and strengthen the dispute settlement system; and,
3. Lay the foundation for modernizing the substantive trade rules when the time is right (WTO, 2018, p. 1).

Canada insists on pragmatic and realistic actions and confidence-building measures. Canada argues that it is unrealistic to expect a new multilateral agreement or significant institutional changes in the near future.

Most of the proposed Canada's solutions require changes to the existing agreements or formal institutional reform. In fact, most of Canada's proposals can be achieved with alternative instruments that will act gradually and flexibly. The most necessary and urgent action would be aimed at restoring the function of dispute settlements, and after the function of monitoring. In this way, trust in trade according to the adopted rules would be restored, and the success of these actions would bring a positive momentum for the continuation of negotiations and the adoption of new rules (Jelisavac Trošić, Todić, Stamenović, 2018, p. 247).

Both the EU and Canada argue that consensus decision-making is outdated, advocate changing the system of special and differential treatment, and specifically target China for introducing new disciplines in subsidies and state-owned enterprises, while at the same time largely keeping silent about violations committed by the US.

### **EU, US, China, Japan, Canada – What the future holds for the WTO?**

The multilateral negotiation system embodied in the WTO has its limits. One of them is that any member can block progress because of the need for consensus. The WTO is in existential crisis as a result of the Doha Round's failure to end in success (Jelisavac Trošić, 2017, p. 244). There is a wide spectrum of issues and topics under the WTO negotiations, and the members should negotiate in good faith. But, for instance, protectionism in agriculture, despite its steadily declining percentage of world trade, is still a stumbling block for negotiations.

Most reform proposals have been made in the areas of trade negotiations, trade policy monitoring, and dispute resolution. It seems now that there is a consensus on the need for reform, but there are a lot of disagreements on how and what to reform, where to start, what are priorities, etc. Initial concrete proposals for WTO reform were given by developed countries and it is noticeable that developing countries are not so actively engaged in the process of reforming. The most comprehensive of the proposals is the EU proposal. From the developing countries, only China is currently included in the WTO reform talks. However, it is questionable to what extent China, with high rates of economic and trade growth, can be called a developing country and really protect the interests of that group.

At the moment, it is very difficult to predict how the reform will unroll. For now, the distance between the policy positions of the three biggest

players in international trade – the EU, the US and China – remains significant, in particular on rules for subsidies and state aid. The solutions that will be adopted after the negotiations between the major players will have a decisive and long-term impact on the individual trade development policies of countries, and indirectly, on the overall economic development, regardless of whether they directly participated in negotiations and formulations. Today, there is the new trade environment, and there are some that question the WTO's continuing ability to help shape the future of the international trade landscape and consider the idea that the organization might essentially act merely as an umbrella for trade negotiations in the future (Martin, Mercurio, 2017, p. 56).

Over the past decades, the EU and the US acted as a world regulator. They were defining the rules of multilateral trade, and developing countries implemented those rules. Rising powers, China, India and Brazil, took a more proactive position and challenged the old global trade order. Now, the EU and the US, each in their own way, want to take the lead in the WTO again. The EU peculiarly displayed a preference for regulatory agreements, such as investment, competition, environment, and labour, to be an integral part of international agreements (De Bièvre, 2006, p. 853). The EU proposal is the most comprehensive of all proposals, with numerous concrete proposals on specific problems in the work of the WTO and shows the intention of the EU to become an old-new world trade regulator.

## CONCLUSION

The WTO member countries have started working individually to make proposals for solving many problems of this organization, and discussions are underway. Some initiatives have been launched, and proposals have been made to overcome the crisis, so it remains to find a compromise in the coming years, with the agreement of the most influential members, including the EU, which would lead to the reform and modernization of the WTO.

How is the EU taking the leading role in reshaping the future of the WTO? The EU has taken an active role in what it calls modernization and reform of the WTO. Indicators that the EU is taking the leading role are:

- The European Commission issued on 18 September 2018 the Concept paper on WTO modernization;
- In the Work Programme 2021, the Commission announced its intention to lead reforms of the WTO;



- The EU is taking the key actions on ensuring ambitious and robust trade policy, within the reformed WTO;
- The EU actively cooperates with other key players, primarily with the US and Japan, but also with China on issues where they can find a common solution;
- From all the WTO reform proposals made so far, the EU proposal was the most elaborated and served as a basis for proposals from other countries.

Consultations among influential players are on the way. In addition to the US, China and other WTO members have been strengthened, so the EU is facing a difficult path to achieve its plans and reshape the WTO according to its intentions. The EU is trying to lead and play a diplomatic role in order to identify potential solutions, which will be very hard given the opposing views of the main actors. Also, the list of necessary changes in the system of this international organization is long. The best chance of success has a clear strategic direction for change and a deep EU engagement with China and the US. There are a lot of uncertainties in trade today, and unless the WTO reforms, it loses its significance and integrity. Through actions, the EU seeks to strengthen the capacities of this organization and regain a leading position within its framework. Also, judging by all the stating positions and EU plans, it is clear that reforming the WTO will take time.

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## THE RESULTS OF ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND CHINA AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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*Abstract:* The global Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly altered the course of economic history and development, and it is significant to observe and analyse the various facets of those changes. The main aim of this paper is to analyse the results of economic co-operation between the European Union (EU) and China amid the coronavirus outbreak. To that end, the paper examines trade and investments patterns before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data from Eurostat, Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) and Rhodium Group, from 2010 to 2020, are used for descriptive statistical analysis. After suffering many setbacks in Q1 and Q2, the volume of trade between the EU and China increased in Q3 2020, but its structure changed, with medical supplies becoming its primary component. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows are low relative to the sizes of both markets. On the other hand, the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, expected to be signed in 2021, will in all likelihood increase FDIs.

*Keywords:* European Union, China, economic co-operation, results, Covid-19 pandemic.

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## THE PANDEMIC AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Many events have over the past century affected global economic development: two world wars, the Great Depression, numerous regional conflicts, and epidemics, as well as the 2009 global financial downturn. These disasters have had a profound effect on economic history and development. Yet, the current Covid-19 pandemic is unprecedented in its impact. The unknown virus has taken more than two million lives and changed the world beyond recognition.

The many macroeconomic and microeconomic setbacks and issues made an economic recession unavoidable. It was and remains difficult for governments to address the complicated situations that transcend current knowledge of how economies function in crises. The only thing now known for certain is that resolving the problems with the world's economy will take time, and that the pace of recovery will depend on how quickly the pandemic is stopped.

The health and economic situation has changed frequently and dramatically, prompting governments to implement a variety of measures. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have repeatedly adjusted their estimates of the pandemic's impact on the global economy. The economic forecasts were grim in April and September 2020, at the time of spikes in coronavirus cases. The final global economic results for 2020 were not available at the time of writing,<sup>3</sup> but preliminary figures exist that highlight the impact of the crisis. According to Jackson *et al.* (2020) for the US Congress, the IMF estimated global growth would stand at -4.4% in 2020, with the OECD predicting -4.5%, and the World Bank -5.2% (Jackson, 2020, p. 23). 'The World Trade Organization (WTO) estimated that global trade volumes could fall by 9.2% in 2020' (*ibid.*, p. 27). Analysis by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) revealed foreign direct investments (FDIs) fell by 49% in the first six months of 2020 relative to 2019 (*ibid.*, p. 31). Moreover, the IMF has stated that, between 2020 and 2025, the loss of global economic output will amount to \$28 trillion, and that 120 million jobs will be lost permanently in the tourism sector (*ibid.*, p. 3). The same study warns that between 100 and 110 million people globally could enter extreme poverty (*ibid.*, p. 1). Whilst noting all countries face

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<sup>3</sup> January 2021.

difficulties, the IMF paper emphasises that developing countries and regions will be hit the hardest.

The relationship between the EU and China emerged as a key global bilateral economic relationship during the 2020 pandemic. The EU and China are among the top three economies globally, and the impact of their relations extends to other economies as well.<sup>4</sup> In an economic sense, the trade and investments dealings between these two entities after the 2020 coronavirus outbreak merit closer attention, because these point to not just bilateral trends but global economic movements as well.

### **ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND CHINA: FROM 'HONEYMOON' TO 'STRATEGIC COMPETITOR'**

For reasons of space, this study will review only a limited sample of the extensive literature on the pre-pandemic co-operation between the EU and China. The review will look at the work of both Eastern and Western researchers.

The importance accorded by the EU to China is revealed in a study done for the European Parliament, which presents a detailed analysis of bilateral trade and investment (European Union Policy Department, Directorate-General for External Policies, 2020, p. 1-76). Trade relations are analysed from various angles, such as trade imbalances, changes in global supply chains, competition in third markets, and trade in services. In addition, the study discusses anti-dumping issues, trade disputes between China and the US, as well as the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on China's trade with the EU. Investments are examined from two perspectives, where a general overview is followed by a discussion of the EU-China bilateral investment treaty. The study is comprehensive, and each chapter includes a set of conclusions.

Xin Chen has published extensive work on China-EU economic relations, both on trade and investments (2009, 2013, 2017). His work looks at the historical development of trade and investments, as well as analysing current and future relations. Chen (2009) distinguishes between several

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<sup>4</sup> Such as members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Western Balkan countries. Trade and global supply chains are evolving, with countries making new trade and manufacturing partners, and such trends seem set to follow trends in EU-China co-operation.



historical phases in the trade and economic relations between the EU and China: 1) 'waking up and warming up' in the 1970s and 1980s; 2. 'downs and ups' in the 1990s; 3) the 'honeymoon', from 2000 to 2005; and 4) the 'post-honeymoon' phase of 'certainty and uncertainty'. His later analysis (2017) presents figures clearly showing the interdependence of the Chinese and EU economy, and, whilst the two have their fair share of disputes and problems, according to Chen the only solution is to communicate better and understand each other's point of view. His proposition for both sides is to be more pragmatic and concentrate efforts not only on political dialogue but on macroeconomic and enterprise-level dialogue as well (2017, p. 90).

Eckhardt (2019) presents a historical timeline of trade disputes from a legal perspective. He emphasizes the importance of China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the subsequent changes in the country's trading relations. According to Eckhardt, these relationships have gone through three phases: 1) 1978 to 1989, dominated by European protectionist measures against a China unable to prevent them; 2) 1990 to 2002, in which China greatly improved trade relations, but EU protectionist measures remained in place; and 3) the current phase, after China's accession to the WTO, 'characterized by increased politicization between the EU and China but also among EU member states' (2020, p. 1).

Chinese investments in the EU have been equally interesting for researchers. Knoerich and Miedtank, who investigated the patterns of Chinese investment in Europe, observe that those differ from traditional investment models that usually come from the West and Japan. These authors identify a number of idiosyncrasies of Chinese investments in Europe, including such important factors as their late entry, speed, policy of seeking strategic assets, and primary involvement of state-owned companies (2018, pp. 7-8).

Dreger and Schüler also examine investment patterns of China in Europe, concluding that Chinese outward FDI (OFDI) in Europe were connected with market size and extent of bilateral trade between China and each European country. Greenfield investments were usually the preferred 'method of investment in regions with less sound institutions and markets with less competitive pressure' (Dreger & Schüler, 2017, p. 160).

Discussing the influence of BRI on economic co-operation between China and the EU, Wang (2015) writes that this initiative was the second opportunity for the two entities to improve their strategic partnership and engage in mutually beneficial collaboration. An assessment of BRI investments in Europe by Zakić and Radišić showed that BRI has had a

positive impact on Chinese investments in Europe, highlighting that EU countries have benefited the most (2017, pp. 32, 34).

Even though economic relations were improving, in March 2019 President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen reiterated the narrative adopted by her predecessor Jean-Claude Juncker by formally declaring China ‘a *strategic competitor* for the EU whilst failing to reciprocate market access and maintain a level playing field; an *economic competitor* in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a *systemic rival* promoting alternative models of governance’ (European Commission, 2019c, p.1; Barkin, 2020). This constituted official confirmation of the EU’s view of China as both an important partner and a rival. It took only 20 years to digress from the ‘honeymoon’ to the stage of ‘strategic competitors’ and ‘systemic rivals’.

### **THE EU AND CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC: NARRATIVE AND ANALYSIS**

After the coronavirus pandemic was declared in March 2020, the economic and in particular the political relationship between the EU and China became unsteady and characterized by difficult challenges for both sides. On a positive note, both parties sent medical help to each other when it was needed the most. By contrast, economic relations suffered, especially in the first two quarters of 2020, whilst political tensions grew. In Q2, global trade fell to its lowest level in modern economic history (Brodzicki, 2020), and this was reflected in EU-China trade relations as well. The first three months of 2020 were especially difficult for China, whilst Europe faced its worst crisis in Q2. As expected, the many uncertainties faced by businesses led to a decline in investment. In June 2020, UNCTAD forecast that FDI would fall in 2020 by 40% relative to 2019 (UNCTAD, 2020, p. 2). The total value of EU-China investments has also fallen, but the final figure still remains unknown.

Henry Tillman, CEO of consulting company Grisons Peak, was among the first to provide economic data and analysis about EU-China co-operation during the first month of the pandemic. In May 2020, Tillman noted positive trends for European investments in China had been in evidence before the pandemic started. These investments started to increase in 2018, with the largest investors coming from France, the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, and Switzerland (Global Times). In the first month of the pandemic, EU investments in China’s health sector increased, and other signs were in evidence indicating that the upward trend in EU investments in China was set

to continue in the second part of 2020. By contrast, the volume of China's trade with the EU declined in the first four month of 2020, whilst that with ASEAN countries increased, in a trend that continued in the latter part of the year.

In May 2020, Nicholas Chapuis, the EU Ambassador to China, wrote in *Asia Europe Journal* that in the first month of the pandemic the 'pre-existing plans for deepening EU-China co-operation' had been 'temporarily side-tracked as both the EU and China are fully mobilized to tackle what has now become a truly global problem' (p. 201). 'We count on China to work with us in framing a globally coordinated economic recovery strategy', added Chapuis (p. 202). He also noted that, once the pandemic is over, the main task for the EU and China will be to help the global economy recover, especially in the fields of trade, investments and green recovery.

During the 22nd bilateral EU-China, held remotely on 22 June 2020, Ms von der Leyen emphasized that market access barriers and investment regulations must be jointly worked upon and negotiated with China (Whalen Benson, 2020). At the same summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping stated that China and the EU were the 'two major forces for world peace and stability' and "two major markets for world development and prosperity' (ibid).

Le Corre and Brattberg (July 2020) noted that, before the pandemic, China and the EU had hoped to 'put their differences aside. But now the relationship is in free fall, with deep uncertainty about what comes next.'

In a recent report by the European Think-Tank Network on China (ETCN), Seaman referred to the Covid-19 pandemic as both bringing China and the EU closer together and taking them further apart, whilst also revealing the existing fractures between EU members in their approaches to China (2020, p. 7).

In summary, although China has declared its commitment to continued strengthening and improvement of bilateral relations, the same cannot be said of the EU (Stanojević, 2020). Political speeches made by EU officials and researchers reveal divided opinions about co-operation during the pandemic and different conclusions about what should be done in the future.

## METHODOLOGY

A descriptive statistical analysis is used for analysis of trade and investment from 2010 to 2019, as well as during the pandemic in 2020. It should be emphasized that the paper was written in late 2020 and early 2021, so only data for the first three quarters of 2020 will be presented, as most

institutions that collect and issue statistics will not have released figures for Q4 2020 by the time this paper has been published.

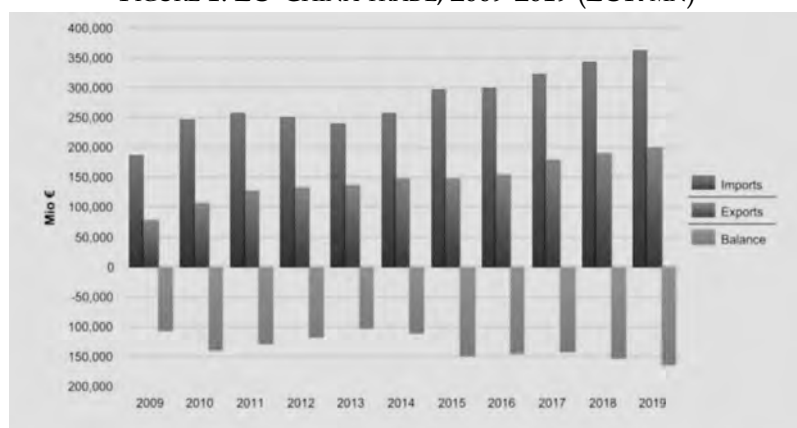
Economic results reported by international institutions vary depending on the methodology used to calculate final data, and those differences can significantly distort analysis (Hanemann & Huotari, 2017), which is why it is important to carefully choose data sets. The time span is ten years, and the focus is on trade and investment. Eurostat trade and FDI data are used for the EU, and figures from MOFCOM are utilized for China. Because both Eurostat and MOFCOM publish data with a delay of 6 to 12 months, the paper uses 2019 and 2020 investment figures produced by Rhodium Group and published by Eurostat.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A) Trade

As noted above, EU-China trade had been growing constantly, and until the pandemic the two had seen decades of successful co-operation. China is the EU's second-largest partner, whilst the EU is China's number one trading partner. China ran a significant trade surplus over the EU in the previous decade, as shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. EU-CHINA TRADE, 2009-2019 (EUR MN)



Source: Eurostat, (2020a, September 05). European Union, Trade with China, p. 2, available online at [webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb\\_results/factsheets/country/details\\_china\\_en.pdf](http://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_china_en.pdf).

According to a Eurostat study (2020e, March) on EU-China trade statistics in 2019, “In 2019, EU exports of manufactured goods (87%) had a higher share than primary goods (12%). The most exported manufactured goods were machinery & vehicles (55%), followed by other manufactured products (18%) and chemicals (14%). In 2019, EU imports of manufactured goods (97%) also had a higher share than primary goods (2%). The most imported manufactured goods were machinery & vehicles (54%), followed by other manufactured products (37%) and chemicals (5%).’ The same study lists the following countries as the biggest importers from China in 2019: the Netherlands (with imports valued at EUR 88 billion), Germany (EUR 76 billion), and Italy (EUR 31 billion). The biggest exporters to China were Germany (with exports worth EUR 96 billion), France (EUR 20 billion), and the Netherlands (EUR 13 billion).

Due to the pandemic, trade between China and the EU fell in the first two quarters of 2020 only to recover subsequently. In the first ten months of 2020, *China was the EU’s main trade partner*, given that the volume of EU-China trade increased in the first three quarters by 3.4% year-on-year, whereas trade between the EU and the US fell 13% year-on-year in the same period (Eurostat, 2020b, p. 2). Chinese trade with ASEAN countries also showed a huge increase (Global Times, 2020), as expected due to lockdowns in most European countries and the resulting disruption of value chains. That did not mean, however, that intra-EU trade increased: on the contrary, it fell by 10.8% year-on-year (Eurostat, 2020b, p. 1).

According to Eurostat (2020c, June): ‘The EU’s seasonally adjusted trade (imports + exports) with China fell from €46.5 billion in January 2020 to €43.1 billion in February 2020. In March 2020, EU’s trade with China fell further to €41.9 billion, while in April 2020 it bounced back above its January 2020 level to €49.0 billion. This increase was mainly led by a sharp increase in imports from China (+€3.5 billion and +€6.8 billion compared with January and March 2020 respectively), and was largely due to an increase in imports of specific made-up textile articles such as textile face masks, surgical masks, disposable face masks, and single use drapes.’ On the exports side, the greatest change was the significant drop in exports of cars and motor vehicles (-71%) and aircraft and aircraft equipment (-89%) from the EU’ (ibid). Whilst data are not available for the whole of 2020, trade is obviously recovering, but the structure of traded goods has changed. It will be interesting to see whether the changes will persist in 2021 and 2022 or whether trade will revert to former patterns.

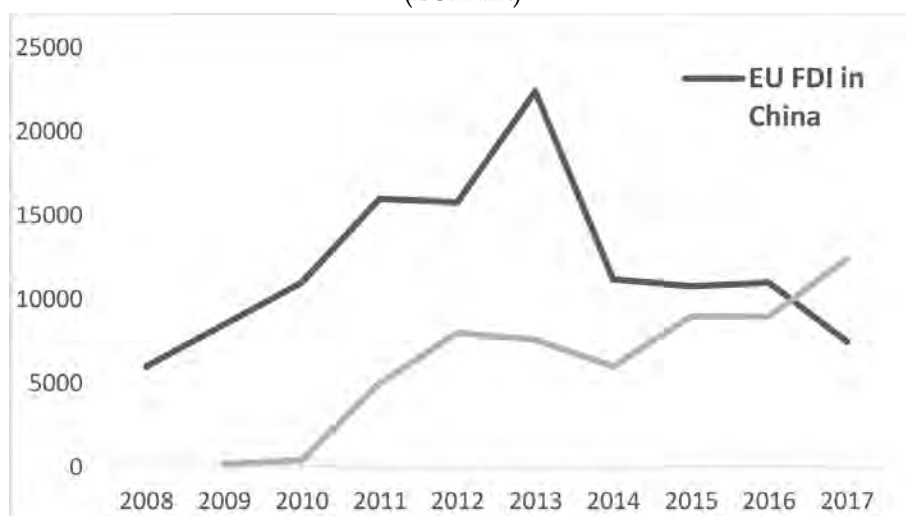
## **B) Investment**

Foreign direct investment flows between China and the EU are substantial, but not as large as may be expected given some of the world's largest investors are EU member states, and that China has for decades been a top destination for foreign investment.

Investments were a source of major disputes between the EU and China even before the pandemic. Eight rounds of negotiations took place in the run-up to 2020 between the two on the Comprehensive Agreement on Investments (CAI). News that emerged in late 2020 suggest the two parties are very close to reaching a final agreement. In the long run, the CAI will provide a platform for closer co-operation.

Figure 2 and Table 1 show Eurostat data about the EU's outward FDI in China. A new report commissioned by the European Parliament (2020), 'EU-China trade and investment relations in challenging times', presents China-EU FDI flows between 2008 and 2017, calculated according to a newly adopted methodology that presents FDI statistics on an asset/liability basis instead of using the directional principle.

FIGURE 2. ANNUAL CHINA-EU DIRECT INVESTMENT FLOWS, 2008-2017  
(EUR MN)



Source: Authors, based on European Parliament (2020), available at [ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf).

After seeing a general decline during the 2008 global economic downturn, EU FDIs in China doubled after the crisis ended, from EUR 5 bn in 2008 to EUR 17 bn in 2011, reaching a high of EUR 22 bn in 2013 (Figure 2). As early as 2014, inflows of FDIs from the EU returned to 2010 levels of some EUR 11 bn, where they remained until 2016. There was another sharp decline to EUR 7.5 bn in 2017, according to the latest available data presented in Figure 2.

Chinese investment in the EU also began to rise sharply after the global downturn. As early as 2012, FDIs exceeded EUR 7.5 bn. No sudden fluctuations were registered thereafter, with the figures trend following a moderate and stable upward trend. In 2015, inflows of Chinese FDIs into the EU amounted to around EUR 9 bn, the same as in 2016, when they reached and then exceeded the EU's FDIs to China. Chinese investments in the EU, however, continued to grow until 2017, when they amounted to a maximum of EUR 12 bn (Figure 2).

The stock of EU-China FDIs is unexpectedly low given to the sizes of the two economies. Nevertheless, from 2008 to 2017, 'the stock of EU FDI in China grew from EUR 54 billion to EUR 178 billion – an increase of 225%' (Garcia-Herrero *et al.*, 2020, p. 8). Table 1 presents data on the outward stock of the EU's FDIs in China from 2013 to 2018. Here, too, there are significant differences relative to the 2020 report due to methodological changes. Data for 2017 according to the new methodology reveal a value of EUR 178 bn, whilst the figure under the directional presentation is EUR 171.6 bn (Table 1).

TABLE 1. STOCK OF EU OUTWARD FDIs IN CHINA, 2013-2018, EUR MN

Year	FDIs (EUR mn)
2013	120,189
2014	136,227
2015	161,991
2016	170,335
2017	171,654
2018	175,326

Source: Eurostat database, Balance of payments – international transactions (bop\_6), BOP\_FDI6\_GEO, available online at [ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/balance-of-payments/data/database](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/balance-of-payments/data/database).

Data on Chinese outward FDI in the EU as published by MOFCOM are presented in Table 2. As noted above, due to differences in methodology, Eurostat and MOFCOM data are not comparable, but both datasets are taken into account in the interests of transparency and to present both points of view.

TABLE 2. STOCK OF CHINESE OUTWARD FDI IN THE EU, 2010-2019, USD BN

Year	FDIs (USD bn)
2010	124.97
2011	202.91
2012	315.38
2013	401.00
2014	542.10
2015	644.00
2016	698.37
2017	860.15
2018	907.39
2019	939.12

Source: MOFCOM, , Statistical Bulletins of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment 2010-2019

After the introduction of the 'Going Global' strategy in China's 10th Five Year Plan, and after the country allowed private companies to invest abroad in 2003, the level of Chinese investment worldwide rose significantly year after year to reach a record high in 2016 (Zakić & Radišić, 2017, pp. 37-38). The 'Going Global' approach allowed China to engage in major mergers and acquisitions (M&A) in the EU, which raised concern amongst European countries about China's strategic interests in the European economy, especially in the IT sector. However, Chinese investments in the EU have been declining constantly due to the European bloc's adoption in 2019 of the Foreign Direct Investment Screening Regulation and greater Chinese orientation towards opportunities in BRI countries.

According to Kratz *et al.* (2020), Chinese M&A in Europe were worth EUR 11.7 billion in 2019, as opposed to 17.4 bn in 2018 and EUR 29.2 bn in 2017.



These authors also noticed several emerging trends regarding Chinese investments in Europe in 2019: China was investing more in Northern EU Member State; Chinese state investment declined by 11%; and the main sectors for investments were consumer products and services, as well as ICT (*ibid*).

On the other hand, EU investors had been investing in China for years, but to a lesser extent than Chinese ones did in the EU. Even though European investors were interested in Chinese business opportunities, legal, tax and know-how restrictions hindered them from investing more. That being said, it also ought to be noted that, in 2017, EU's investments in China (USD 7.17 bn) were worth three times as much as those from the US (Garcia-Herrero *et al.*, 2020, p. 27), and were mainly directed into the manufacturing sector. Moreover, much EU investment came to the mainland via Hong Kong due to security and tax reasons (*ibid*, pp. 27-28).

Global investments declined in 2020 due to pandemic, with many companies seeking greater liquidity by laying off workers and forgoing expansion. Similar effects can be seen in both the EU and China.

Eurostat has published quarterly reports produced by Rhodium Group about EU-China investments. Data are available for the first three quarters of 2020 and are presented in Tables 3 and 4. The figures reveal that the EU has invested more in China than the opposite, with these investments valued at some USD 2.7 bn. Germany, the Netherlands, and France remained the largest sources of EU investment over all three quarters, and the automotive industry was the principal sector for the investments.

TABLE 3. EU FDIs IN CHINA, JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 2020

EU FDIs in China	Q1	Q2	Q3
Value of completed acquisitions and greenfield investments	USD 1.6 bn	USD 2.3 bn	USD 1.6 bn
Industries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Automotive</li> <li>2. Consumer products and services</li> <li>3. Agriculture and food</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Automotive</li> <li>2. Basic materials</li> <li>3. Agriculture and food</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Automotive</li> <li>2. Consumer products and services</li> <li>3. Health and biotech</li> </ol>

EU FDI in China	Q1	Q2	Q3
Main sources of EU investment	1. Germany 2. The Netherlands 3. France	1. Germany 2. The Netherlands 3. France	1. Germany 2. The Netherlands 3. France

Source: Rhodium Group, Cross Border Monitor (CBM) Q1 to Q3 2020, available online at [https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/cfm/doclib\\_section.cfm?sec=120](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/cfm/doclib_section.cfm?sec=120)

The value of Chinese FDI in the EU from January to September 2020 was USD 2.8 bn. There were no obvious patterns regarding industries that China invested in, but real estate and hospitality do stand out. Most Chinese outwards investments were directed into Germany, France, and Romania.

TABLE 4. CHINESE FDI IN THE EU, JANUARY- SEPTEMBER 2020

Chinese FDI in the EU	Q1	Q2	Q3
Value of completed acquisitions and greenfield investments	USD 1.3 bn	USD 502 mn	USD 1 bn
Industries	1. Real estate and hospitality 2. Consumer products and services 3. Basic materials	1. Transport, utilities and infrastructure 2. Entertainment 3. Automotive	1. Energy 2. Real estate and hospitality 3. Electronics
Main targets of EU investment	1. Germany 2. Romania 3. France	1. Spain 2. Germany 3. The Czech Republic	1. France 2. Portugal 3. Romania

Source: Rhodium Group, Cross Border Monitor (CBM) Q1 to Q3 2020, available online at [https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/cfm/doclib\\_section.cfm?sec=120](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/cfm/doclib_section.cfm?sec=120)

It is also worth noting a new trend regarding global inward FDIs in China. Hanemann and Rosen stated that flows into China have been increasing since January. 'In the first five months of 2020, foreign M&A into China totalled \$9 billion, surpassing Chinese outbound M&A activity in both volume and value terms for the first time in a decade' (Hanemann & Rosen, 2020). Judging by Rhodium Group's reports, 2020 and 2021 will be successful for FDIs into China.

Factors that go beyond the scope of in this paper but that will impact economic relations between the EU and China include the US President-Elect Joseph J. Biden Jr.'s policy towards China; the speed with which a Covid-19 vaccine will become universally available; and the impact of 'Dual Circulation', China's new development policy, on the EU-China relationship, and at the end, the future development of the BRI.

## CONCLUSION

Nearly one year on from the start of the pandemic, it is obvious that everything has changed, from people's daily lives and social interactions, to travelling, politics, and economics. The pandemic is not over and the full impact effects of the changes that will occur remains unknown.

Economic measures taken by governments to prevent the devastating effects of Covid-19 on their economies will provide some relief and help companies and the general public survive these challenging times. Although those actions will mitigate some of the impacts, the pandemic has revealed all structural issues in national economies that had previously remained hidden, either intentionally or unintentionally. The economic motto in this pandemic can be said to be 'adapt or disappear' and the fight against Covid-19 is a challenging one for economies.

The pandemic has affected the volume of trade and supply chains between the EU and China. Trade volume decreased in the first two quarters in 2020 but recovered after that. Due to pandemic times and needs, type of the products that were traded changed. Co-operation in the investment field, on the contrary, was less successful and was fraught with many problems. According to available data until January 2021, Europe outward FDI to China were higher than China's outward FDI to Europe. Late in the year, both parties issued statements claiming they had in principle reached an agreement about the EU-China CAI after nine rounds of negotiations (European Commission, 2020b).

It is worth mentioning that changes in trade and investments between these partners affect many other countries they co-operate with. For some, changes to economic links between the EU and China will be a great opportunity, whilst for others they will pose a threat. This was a key reason for producing this paper, which will hopefully give some insights into data for 2020.

However, the authors believe that EU-China economic relations are so deeply intertwined that any dramatic changes would not be in the best interest of either party. In times of the pandemic, when economies are faring worse than previously, radical changes cannot benefit anyone.

Nevertheless, some changes will occur, and these will probably affect investments the most. Even though China wants to have a greater investment presence in the EU, obstacles introduced even before the pandemic (e.g. the EU's investment screening mechanism) will reduce Chinese investments in the EU. On the other hand, investors from the EU began to increase their investments before the pandemic started, and that trend continued even in 2020.

China's 2020 economic results indicate it is one of the world's few nations where the outcomes are positive and better than expected. In these circumstances, when everything is uncertain, the investors are attempting to downsize risk by investing in countries achieving good results and where they expect good returns on their investment. This is currently the case with China, and this is the reason why European investments are increasing, sometimes entering the mainland directly, and sometimes via Hong Kong.

To conclude, the EU and China are partners whose co-operation had already been close before the coronavirus outbreak, whilst the 2020 pandemic has affected the extent of trade and type of traded goods, as well as causing significant changes in investments as well.

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## THE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

Ivan DUJIĆ<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* The main aim of this paper is to present the historical development of economic and political relations between the European Union (EU) and Latin American countries. The emphasis is put on the following research question: To what degree has the economic and political co-operation between the EU and Latin American countries been developed? The author points to the key facts and events that gradually influenced the co-operation to their full extent, despite some inequalities between these regions. In addition, the author highlights the Fourth Industrial Revolution that underpins contemporary relations and its impact on the development of both EU and Latin American countries, as well as its effects on mutual relations. The paper concludes that thanks to bi-regional cooperation, the countries of these parts of the world are capable to define a common language in the field of economic and political relations in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

*Keywords:* EU, Latin America, bi-regional cooperation, contemporary relations, the Fourth Industrial Revolution

### INTRODUCTION

Latin American countries have been trying for decades to improve their global political and economic situation in the global arena. From time to time, they were quite successful in that, but there were also times when those

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countries were not satisfied with economic and political reforms. Political turmoil, several economic crises, poor relations between neighbouring countries, corruption and the production of illicit drugs are some of the main problems in Latin America. However, Latin American countries tend to shape a different future, trying to change the economic and political landscape. Among many things that they want to alter is their relations with the EU. To this end, several things need to change.

It is the reason why this paper is dealing with two topics in that regard. The first topic is dedicated to the historical development of political and economic relations between Latin American countries and the EU. The second part of the paper will compare the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on both entities, as well as on their bilateral relations.

For the first part of the paper historical method along with descriptive statistical analysis is used and for the second part, comparative and case study analysis. This kind of methodology will help to explain major analytical points and the conclusion of this paper.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND LATIN AMERICA**

Complex economic and political relations between the EU and Latin American countries began developing during the Cold War when the European Communities existed as the sole actors in international relations, tasked with representing an integrated sub-region comprising European countries among other actors of international relations. Portugal and Spain acceding to the European Communities was a significant incentive for the future EU to establish bi-regional relations with Latin American countries (Gardini&Ayuso, 2015, p. 10). These relations have not always been deepened, nor have Latin American countries been a standing priority for EU foreign policy.

As Freres noted at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the EU treated Latin American countries differently during the Cold War and immediately after it, which can be seen in the changes in the sphere of foreign trade of the EU and Latin American countries. In the post-Cold War period, the EU had a positive attitude towards Latin American countries: foreign trade between these parts of the world increased by 50% between 1991 and 1997 (Freres, 2000, p. 70).

The beginning and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were marked by notable steps taken towards increased economic and political co-operation

between the EU and Latin American countries. The continued integration processes between the countries of Central and South America, including the Caribbean countries, have encouraged the EU to improve economic and political co-operation with these countries. Đujić points to the importance of the co-operation between the EU and Central American countries during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century favouring greater EU influence on this part of Latin America, as well as on the integration processes (Đujić, 2007, p. 89).

The argument in favour of the EU's efforts to keep economic and political influence not only in Central American but also in other Latin American countries rests on its continued support for the difficult and often slow integration processes between Latin America and the Caribbean that have been taking place since 2015 (European Parliament, 2020, p. 15). From a (geo)political point of view, using its economic and political influence, the EU tacitly seeks to gradually suppress the United States (US) by occasional efforts to influence Latin American countries. This tendency is perceived by numerous scholars, including Đujić, who indicates the EU had economic and political goals related to the integration processes between the Central American countries, set forth in the Regional Strategy Paper (Đujić, 2007, p. 89).

Apart from supporting the integration processes between the countries of Central and, more broadly, Latin America, the EU establishes political co-operation with these countries through, for example, holding bi-regional summits. During the second decade of this century, the EU held two such summits with Latin American countries – in Santiago de Chile and Brussels in 2013 and 2015, respectively (European Sources Online – ESO, 2016, pp. 13-14). Although no summits have been held between the EU and Latin American countries since 2015, the goal of bringing together heads of states or their governments, as well as foreign ministers, is to discuss current issues concerning EU-Latin America relations, including issues of continued integration processes between these countries, with the aim of affirming the significant political influence of the EU in Latin America (European Parliament, 2020, p. 20).

Can the EU's political influence on Latin American countries be exerted independently of economic influence to encourage long-term political co-operation? Political co-operation cannot take place separately from the economic influence and established economic co-operation. Thus, international trade was established between the EU and Latin American countries to include all goods in international trade in goods (Schejtman, 2004, pp. 66-67).

According to the latest data, the percentage of trade between the EU and Latin American countries was uneven relative to US's and China's foreign trade with these countries: the EU reached the highest percentage of foreign trade with members of the Southern Common Market (Mercado Común del Sur – MERCOSUR) – 20.1%, trading in machinery and transport equipment, food and live animals, chemicals, crude materials, manufactured goods and other products (European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), 2019, p. 20). In addition to these items, mutual trade includes trade in computers, supported by the 1996 Information Technology Agreement (World Trade Organization – WTO, 2020, p. 134), the use of which, as seen in the United States and Western Europe, enables further development of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Haskel & Westlake, 2018, pp. 81-82).

The question of whether Latin American countries can be the equal of the EU in leading the Fourth Industrial Revolution is answered by data indicating significant progress of some Latin American countries in this regard. The potential of Latin American countries to overcome their lagging behind the EU is evidenced by the cases of Brazil, Chile and Mexico, where there is a notable increase in the percentage of the use of the Internet in digital connectivity, which is the key to the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the business world. The examples of these countries show that the Internet is 100% used by large companies, mostly for receiving and sending e-mails, then for searching data related to goods and services, while e-banking ranks third (The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – ECLAC, 2018, p. 69).

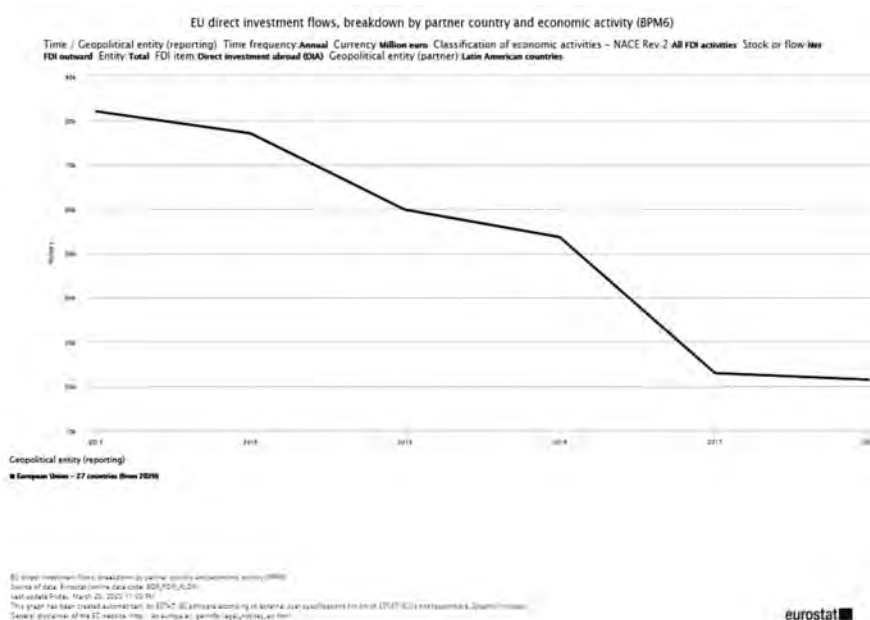
While one would expect to discuss how many companies, including multinational companies, originating from the EU operate in Latin American countries, the focus is on Latin American-based companies operating in the EU. Before the 2008 global financial crisis erupted, some companies from Brazil and Mexico had noticeably developed their business not only in the New World, comprising Latin American countries but also in the EU. For example, one Mexican company, the Alfa conglomerate, had developed partnerships and strategic alliances both in the US and Europe (OECD, 2007, p. 17).

Since in the post-global financial crisis period Latin American companies encountered administrative and other obstacles to do business in the EU, statistics indicate that only a fifth of SME exports from Latin American countries goes to the EU market, of which a fifth to Spain (EU-LAC Foundation, CERALE & Institut des Amériques, 2017, p. 45). This means that the Latin American companies' trade with the EU puts the EU in a

weaker position compared to the US and that its better positioning in the global market requires strong and frequent bi-regional co-operation between the EU and Latin American countries.

The Graph shows that the 2013-2016 period saw a gradual decline in EU FDI flows in Latin American countries. During that period, despite the migrant crisis that hit the whole of Europe in 2015, the EU did not significantly reduce investments in Latin America. This period was followed by a period of accelerated decline in FDI in Latin American countries during 2016. The sharp decline of FDI in Latin American countries was the result of a gradual deepening of the crisis of the integration processes in Latin America. Finally, the last period given in this graph – covering 2017 and 2018 – shows a very low level of EU investment in Latin American countries. Despite the EU's commitment to continuous co-operation with Latin American countries, in this period, there was a change in the EU's foreign policy towards these countries as the EU primarily attended to their own business.

CHART 1. THE EU FDI (FLOWS) IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES  
IN THOUSANDS OF EUROS, FROM 2013-2018



Source: Eurostat database

### **CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES SPURRED BY THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION**

In the digital age, communication technologies are leading to a state in which the material world has become completely overcome. This is one of the essential features of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Throughout the period preceding a sizeable decline of EU FDI inflows to Latin American countries until 2019, a fully-fledged co-operation was developed between these regions in the field of economic and political relations. Nowadays, in the digital age, co-operation stems from the fact that it is spurred by communication technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Communication technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution are based on digitisation. This is indicated by Wajcman, cited by Flecker in his research, who perceives digitisation as '[...] the acceleration of production and communication [...]' (Flecker, 2018, p. 365). The environment of instant communication further encourages 'the process of disintegration of national production and integration of international trade' (Feenstra, 1998), which has a positive effect on connecting physically remote capital and remote locations, as is the case with the EU and Latin American countries.

The EU and Latin American countries nurture multiple forms of co-operation that reflect not only the effort to preserve established ties and global discourse on the most vital issues in the field of the global economy and politics but also certain steps towards defining capitalism. Immediately after the Cold War and at the height of the Third Industrial Revolution, when capitalism seemed to have a tendency to remain as an exclusive global phenomenon, the major capitalist states of Europe exerted their effort to advance information technologies (Wilkinson, 1993, p. 33) that can be upgraded with digital technologies. Moreover, since the end of the Cold War, the aforementioned countries and the US have worked rapidly to develop the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It was a great challenge for Latin American countries to adapt the complex reality of technological changes as a consequence of introducing digital technologies.

After the Cold War era, it seemed that accelerated progress of digital technologies would not be achieved in Latin American countries, nor that evaluation of companies' and corporations' intangible assets (intangible economy) would prevail. On the contrary, instead of an economy becoming highly dependent on companies' and corporations' tangible assets, the modern economy in Latin America implies 'knowledge-based assets'

(O'Reilly, Ranft & Neufeind, 2018, p. 3). Unlike the previous three industrial revolutions which were characterised by economy depending on the revenue from selling finished goods, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is featured by a new economy in which the emphasis has not been put on finished goods, but on the evaluation of projects, as well as the means of communication between people by using national statistics (Haskel & Westlake, 2018, pp. 55).

The fundamental difference between the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the previous revolutions can be observed by the need to connect knowledge – which is an intangible thing – with forms of communication between people, for the sake of its evaluation not only in favour of finished goods but also a wider networking of individuals and companies. In this sense, Haskel and Westlake note that the Fourth Industrial Revolution has been unfolding towards a phase that inevitably leads to increased '[...] importance of communications and connections between people and between businesses, and (...) infrastructure [...]' (Haskel & Westlake, 2018, p. 152). Until the eruption of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the outbreak of the coronavirus in 2020, the EU and Latin American countries sought to continuously improve communication and connections between people and companies through mutual co-operation, with the aim of connecting local spaces not only within countries but also among them.

The assumption that an intangible economy represents an integral part of the commitment and persistent effort to connect local spaces in favour of achieving territorial unity of a state, as well as connecting spaces within several states, raises the question of whether this is feasible in the absence of capital. It can be said that it is feasible, considering that capital – which has been tied to tangible assets for centuries – has been denied and transformed into intangible capital. Recent research indicates that intangible capital is

'[...] coherent with national accounting practices (that) is essential for a deeper understanding of the sources of growth and for the design of macroeconomic policies aimed at stimulating sustained growth, competitiveness and sustainable development' (Corrado, Haskel, Jona-Lasinio & Iommi, 2016, p. 2).

Intangible capital provides an incentive for macroeconomic policies that, in the case of Latin American countries, strive to stimulate economic growth and aim to reduce economic and political backwardness *vis-à-vis* the EU. A deeper analysis of the causes that have led to backwardness in the development of Latin American countries shows that this part of the world



has failed to create tangible capital. According to De Soto, backwardness does not refer to the level of education and culture evident in Latin American countries, but to their inability to create 'much live capital' (De Soto, 2000, p. 170).

One of the possible reasons living capital was not created or globally expanded throughout Latin American countries might be the suspension of loans, for example, by Germany (Kindleberger, 1996, p. 158). As regards the global capital of Latin American countries, it is noticed that it is frequently 'more dependent on the territorial state than any imperial power has ever been before' (Wood, 2005, p. 15). Therefore, we can say that Latin American countries faced difficulties in developing both living and global capital that would confirm educational and cultural values of the economically active population – in favour of both a better status of Latin American countries in the global expansion of capital and greater equality with respect to the EU in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Another possible reason why there was no creation and expansion of living capital in Latin American countries refers to the constitution of Spain, which, as a colonial power, was once depended on Latin American countries. While Portugal and other colonial powers created capital, both in their colonies and own territories, Spain existed as a regressive absolute monarchy. Due to this status, Spain lost most of its colonies in Latin America as early as the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so it is not surprising that '[...] Spain was never able to assert genuine supremacy, either in Western Europe itself or across the oceans' (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 19).

An additional argument that Spain was a regressive monarchy refers to the slow accumulation of physical capital which was provided by former colonies. In their findings, Molinas and Escosura note that '[...] Spanish accumulation (of physical capital) did not converge to the European norm. Physical capital formation started (...) at a very low level [...]' (Molinas & Escosura, 1989, pp. 393-394). Material capital, manifested in the form of physical capital, developed slowly in Spain due to the lack of a developed liberal democracy and the possible risk of falling into a dictatorship. This is also highlighted by Drake when he indicates that in Spain and some Latin American countries 'before the dawn of the dictatorships, working-class militancy had fled to frighten property owners, who therefore abandoned liberal democracy' (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006, p. 72).

The reality has shown that inequality between the EU and Latin American countries is a serious obstacle in the Fourth Industrial Revolution to work on providing a general, common definition of capitalism, as Latin

American countries have given a different response to its development. Some Latin American countries, such as Bolivia, Cuba, and Venezuela, have had a strong vision to abandon capitalism as an economic system but they exactly save it in the existing form. For the time being, only Cuba, with its one-party political system, has managed to completely replace capitalism with another economic system – socialism ‘[...] as (the) state-centric (system) [...]’ (Hernández, 2015, p. 167).

Unlike Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela did not introduce socialism as a one-party state-centric system after the failure of right-wing politics. The case of Venezuela shows that proclaimed ‘socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ was an attempt to overcome political instability as ‘[...] political institutions have remained weak and unstable [...]’ (Panizza, 2009, p. 185). Factors that, in addition to inequality, make it impossible to define capitalism more broadly, are weak and unstable political institutions responsible for creating a discourse in favour of understanding capitalism as a non-economic, social concept.

Since its independence and until the end of the Second World War, Venezuela has suffered severely from a lack of stable political institutions. Rómulo Betancourt was responsible for the success in maintaining stable institutions in this country over the long run, and with his great influence in the realm of public policy, he significantly reduced the threat of dictatorships. According to Magstadt, unlike his predecessors, Betancourt fought hard against dictatorship until he was elected as President of Venezuela, and he continued doing that during his presidency. His successful reign may be explained by the fact that he ruled much longer than his predecessors. Namely, ‘[...] no democratic ruler had survived in office for even 2 years’ (Magstadt, 2013, p. 311). The suppression of dictatorship provided a genuine opportunity for a broader understanding of capitalism, since no ideas had been developed, no initiatives launched, nor programmes designed during the periods of dictatorships in favour of providing goods in the realm of public policy.

The extent to which Betancourt has succeeded in advancing Venezuelan political culture, insofar as to oppose dictatorship – a relapse from the past – is supported by Mainwaring’s findings which point to the erosion of democracy after Betancourt’s resignation from the office. In fact, Mainwaring points to the deep crisis of representation in Venezuela during the 1990s, which was often the result of a deeper and ‘[...] growing disenchantment with the existing political system’ (Mainwaring, 2006, p. 14). The period of unexpected erosion of democracy in Venezuela and other

Latin American countries with a weak political culture, was accompanied by the upsurge of moderate and radical left-wing political streams and even marginal political parties. The military had a mediating role in the aforementioned, i.e., it lost its significance. Namely, within the periods characterised by dictatorships, the military played a dominant role in making economic and political decisions and, according to Kruijt, it was crucial in a new definition of capitalism (Kruijt, 2001, p. 411).

Whilst there are more possibilities for Cuba and Venezuela to continue to be part of global information infrastructure, despite their weak political culture, Bolivia has been for decades seriously faced with the perennial problem – how to overcome its backwardness and reduce the poverty rate (Dujic, 2016, p. 52). The close correlation between global information infrastructure and digital technologies is evidenced by the fact that, for instance, South American countries as part of Latin America committed themselves under the leftist government to co-operate in further technological development with the aim of carrying out the sub-regional integration process (Union of South American Nations – UNASUR, Article 3, n).

On the other hand, the Left in the EU, particularly in the United Kingdom during the second half of the last decade of the twentieth century, did not deal with the issue of defining capitalism. Instead of it, at the time of the moderate left-wing's rise in Latin America and the empowerment of the EU, there was a greater demand to assume '[...] the normative ideal of liberal democratic political discourse' (McNair, 1999, p. 115). The need to establish and sustain a discourse on strong and stable political institutions, thanks to the normative ideal of liberal democratic political discourse, was founded on the EU's and politically stable Latin American countries' preparations for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the provision of opportunities for a broader non-economic definition of capitalism.

Does the Fourth Industrial Revolution encourage the development of a new form of capitalism, which, in addition to the EU, is also taking place in Latin American countries? Frank, quoted by Smith, notes that maintaining multiple ties in the form of Latin American dependence on Spain and Portugal, as mother countries and former metropolises, has contributed over the long run to the gradual involvement of Latin American countries into the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as they

'[...] become integrated into hierarchies of core-periphery relations (that) are not backward in the sense of having pre-capitalist relations of production. Rather, they become part of the capitalist system and in the case of Latin America had been since the sixteenth century when the

mercantilist economies of Spain and Portugal had implanted the seeds of capitalism' (Smith, 2003, p. 90).

In order to become part of the capitalist system, Latin American countries endeavoured to re-formulate capitalism by pursuing their social policies. Since gaining independence, Latin American countries have committed themselves to work on the further development of social policies. This is one of the goals of the document known as 'Millennium Development Goals', which states that by 2020 the living conditions of at least 100 million slum dwellers should be improved. The success of Latin American countries in gradually improving the living conditions of the population in slums was recorded when the percentage of such residents was reduced from 29 to 20 percent (United Nations, 2015, p. 60). Such success is also vital for defining capitalism in the EU and Latin American countries.

The achieved objectives set forth in the Millennium Development Goals resulted in the adoption of a new document: 'Sustainable Development Goals'. Based on this document, the EU and Latin American countries have achieved the key objectives of development, such as a significant increase in the percentage of children with completed primary education (the World Bank Group and the United Nations Development Programme, 2016, p. 69).

Have the Millennium Development Goals promoted political, economic, and social progress in Latin American countries *vis-à-vis* the EU? Drawing on the great significance of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it is possible to achieve progress in the economy and politics, as well as in the sphere of social policy, and comply these policies with the millennium and sustainable development goals. If the appropriate level of human development is achieved, there will be enough room for a broader definition of capitalism as a non-economic system. However, statistics according to the Human Development Report show that among Latin American countries, only Chile and Argentina have achieved a very high level of human development, being ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> respectively (UNDP, 2020, p. 347).

Even though, according to many benchmarks, a balanced level of human development has not been achieved in Latin American countries, the EU has developed close co-operation with these countries until 2019 and the outbreak of the coronavirus. Numerous issues, including technological development, are the subject of long-term cooperation between the EU and Latin American countries. The scope of the EU's activity to co-operate with Latin American countries at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the field of technological development is reflected in the fact that its foreign policy was,

among other things, directed towards the support of small and medium enterprises (the European Parliament, 2012, pp. 34-35).

## CONCLUSION

In the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as well as general interdependence, the EU and Latin American countries are facing the challenge of how to nurture and strengthen mutual co-operation. Although the past economic and political co-operation seems to have weakened under the influence of the pandemic, the European Union and Latin American countries have paved the way for developing and advancing a new form of interdependence – digital interdependence based on information technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Co-operation between the EU and Latin American countries has reached a stage when its results should be maintained thanks to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Given the inequality between the EU and Latin American countries in terms of the level of human development and democracy development, the EU's bi-regional economic and political relations with Latin American countries are likely to continue. Under the influence of information technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, both regions are determined to address issues such as combating corruption, solving migration crisis and mitigating the negative effects of climate change (European Parliament, 2020, p. 28). Continued and deepened co-operation between the EU and Latin American countries during the Fourth Industrial Revolution may lead to an increase in the level of human development in Latin American countries, provided that efforts are made to improve the level of democracy development.

According to Freres and other scholars, the importance of the EU in advancing the development of democracy in Latin American countries is seen in the fact that it offers itself as a role model for other blocs (Malamud, 2010, p. 647). For Latin American countries, this means that they will be able to rely on political co-operation with the EU to defend fragile democracy in their overall development. Instead of continuing to suffer from weak democracy, Latin American countries have a great chance to strengthen it so that they can truly take advantage of the many benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution are evidenced, for example, by the positive attitude of the United Nations, stating that

‘All citizens can play a role in building societal resilience against the misuse of digital technology. We all need to deepen our understanding of the political, social, cultural and economic impacts of digital technologies and what it means to use them responsibly. We encourage nations to consider how educational systems can train students to thoughtfully consider the sources and credibility of information.’ (United Nations, 2019, p. 26).

Co-operation between the EU and Latin American countries is in line with digital and, more broadly, information technologies. In this regard, both parts of the world are striving to take new steps towards nurturing and further advancing bi-regional cooperation in order to enable digital technology-borne innovations to be an additional driving force in the context of continuous shifting of the limits to human development. Finally, the Fourth Industrial Revolution innovations pave the way for improving educational systems for future generations.

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