

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES IN TURBULENT TIMES: COMMUNICATION, LEGITIMACY, AND GLOBAL STAKES

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PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

**Strategic Narratives
in Turbulent Times:
Communication, Legitimacy,
and Global Stakes**

Laura-Maria Herța and Delia Pop-Flanja
(editors)

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INTRODUCTION. STRATEGIC NARRATIVES IN TURBULENT TIMES: COMMUNICATION, LEGITIMACY, AND GLOBAL STAKES

Laura M. Herța and Delia Pop-Flanja

This volume is designed to compile a selection of articles that present, explore, and offer various interpretations for significant events from the international stage. The focus is on those global phenomena and occurrences that have a far-reaching impact, affecting not only entire communities but also individuals, as well as domestic and sub-state groups. By delving into these events, the purpose envisaged in this volume is to provide a comprehensive understanding of their broader implications on a global scale, while examining how they resonate on more localized levels and across different fields of research.

In these introductory remarks to the contributions brought to our volume on strategic narratives in turbulent times, our aim is to bring arguments in favour of the relevance of making the public at large, and not only academia, aware of several stringent problems our “fractured”¹ societies (as described by Jon Yates) are facing nowadays. The rise of populism, the growing threats to global security, the current geopolitical conflicts and the lack of trust in institutions or expert opinion, can all lead to a perception and rhetoric of powerlessness, which can be addressed through inclusive and effective strategic narratives. To counter this divisive discourse, it is essential to empower citizens and communities as, when people feel empowered, knowledgeable and capable, they are more inclined to adopt proactive behaviours that strengthen societal resilience and become less prone to disinformation.

The inoculation theory, which we propose as starting point for the analyses presented herein, was introduced by the psychologist and communication researcher William J. McGuire and can be used to understand the communication strategies employed in the media, in political discourse and in advertising. Drawing on the analogy of medical inoculation, McGuire proposed exposing people preventively to a weakened dose of a specific manipulative persuasive argument, to confer psychological resistance against future exposure to informational attacks, in the same way that a vaccine confers resistance against future infection.²

A study conducted by the Cambridge Social Decision-Making Lab (which explores the social and cognitive psychological processes underlying human social judgment, communication, and decision-making) published by NATO's Centre of Excellence for Strategic Communications, indicates that debunking false information, while effective in some circumstances, is not sufficient, and that more attention should be paid to developing psychological resistance to attempts at manipulation as a preventive measure, in order to

¹ Jon Yates, *Fractured: Why Our Societies Are Coming Apart and How We Put Them Back Together Again*, HarperNorth. 2021.

² William J. McGuire, “Vaccine for brainwash”, *Psychology Today*, 3(9), 1970, pp. 36–64.

make them less powerful³. Nevertheless, misinformation needs to be tackled in a more strategic, targeted and even institutionalised manner. Lee McIntyre, a scholar known for his work on misinformation and post-truth, also calls for politicians and journalists to be held more accountable and for the integrity of public discourse to be maintained. He examined how “post-truth” has led to the erosion of trust in experts and institutions, including scientific ones, and explains how the rejection of scientific consensus and the spread of misinformation on issues such as climate change or evolution have profound implications on society, democracy and public policies⁴. Hence, a prevailing theme throughout the chapters below is the dual nature of communication, serving both as a tool for transparency or engagement and as one for manipulation and control.

Since proactive behaviour was brought into discussion, our next step is to highlight another relevant strategic communication and conflict management model, tackled by researchers Yan Jin, Timothy Coombs, Yijing Wang et alii, namely “READINESS”⁵. Understanding why people do not take required measures and or why they are not willing to act is crucial for developing effective crisis management strategies. Hence, READINESS, which is set apart from preparedness and resilience, is considered as emphasizing proactive crisis management. The authors propose a new READINESS model, rooted in multilevel efficacy, mindset and dynamic process, and assert that: “strengthening the READINESS mindset also requires organizations to assess risks, the likelihood of crisis and crisis spillover on one hand, and develop emotional leadership and mental adaptability on the other hand. The former is built on organizational preparedness, and the latter on organizational resilience.”⁶

Putting this model in the context of the highly debated notion of societal resilience, we can conclude that, by crafting transparent and legitimate crisis narratives, public trust can be enhanced, and the legitimacy of organizations and institutions can be reinforced. In doing so, strategic communication becomes a vital tool not only for mitigating crises but also for fostering a culture/state of readiness, ensuring that communities remain responsive in the face of emerging challenges.

The chapters included in this volume are revised and extended versions of papers presented during the fourth edition of the international conference *Crisis Communication and Conflict Resolution*, as well as other contributions focusing on issues which highlight the interaction between crisis communication, conflict resolution and security studies.

The first chapter, titled *Media-Military Relations: (Social) Media as a Strategic Weapon for Successful Coup Execution in Africa*, focuses on media, tackled as crucial tool for communication and the spread of information. The author argues that, even though it has made the world more connected, media also has a darker side, often used to incite violence, as seen in 1994

³ Jon Roozenbeek and Sander van der Linden, *Inoculation Theory and Misinformation*, Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2021, <https://stratcomcoe.org/pdfs/?file=/publications/download/Inoculation-theory-and-Misinformation-FINAL-digital-ISBN-ebbe8.pdf?zoom=page-fit>. Last accessed on 25 December 2024.

⁴ Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018.

⁵ Yan Jin, W. Timothy Coombs, Yijing Wang, Toni G. L. A. van der Meer, Brittany N. Shivers, “‘READINESS’: A keystone concept beyond organizational crisis preparedness and resilience”, *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*. No. 32, 2024, pp. 1-14. DOI: 10.1111/1468-5973.12546

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

Rwanda, as well as during coups in Africa. It is the author's contention that most literature on African coups often overlooks the role of media. However, this study argues that media, especially social media, is a vital resource for coup leaders, hence fostering mobilizing support and spreading cyber-propaganda, and ultimately playing a significant role in the success of coups as well as their sustainability.

In her paper, *Tackling the Crisis of Substance Use among South African Adolescents: An Inclusive Communication Approach*, Seriane Morapeli looks at alcohol consumption among early adolescents in marginalised communities in South Africa. Starting from the premise that underage drinking has far-reaching detrimental consequences on adolescents, their families and society overall, the author investigates how the crisis of underage drinking in South Africa can be tackled using stakeholder-inclusive school-based alcohol prevention interventions. Methodologically, the chapter is built on self-administered surveys with 215 early adolescents from three primary schools in Johannesburg, South Africa. The results of this study show that early adolescents are receptive to inclusive interventions that acknowledge their experiences and cooperate with relevant stakeholders.

The chapter entitled *The Influence and Involvement of State, Non-State Actors, and Audiences in Crisis Communication and Mitigation* deals with digital media and the influence it has on a number of elements in the global arena including the means of communication. The author is preoccupied with the fact that such influence is no longer used for simple communication, but for humanitarian efforts such as for crisis mitigation and communication strategies by non-state, state and audience actors. The main research question which structures this chapter is: *what are the implications of non-state actors, state actors and audiences on crisis mitigation and communication in the digital era?*

The chapter called *Communication Crisis: Trouble in Paradise. Lady R vs. South Africa and the Biden Administration* tackles crisis communication, which is here understood as essential measure that governments are expected to have knowledge of and to be able to implement in times when a crisis arises as it acts as a guideline for institutions to follow during crises. The study aims to answer the following research question: did crisis communication mitigate the implications of the Lady R incident on South Africa and South Africa-US relations? To this end the study makes use of the US Census Bureau to analyse South Africa-US trade during the course of the crisis, and the exchange rate, and the Financial Times Stock Exchange index to analyse the effects of the crisis on South. Additionally, it makes use of the Image Repair Theory to explain the crisis mitigation undertaken to mitigate the crisis.

The study written by Călina Părău is intended to outline some theoretical perspectives on the generalized crisis of media communication that gravitates around the notion of "truth". The author argues that, against a backdrop of distrust in the media, the postulation of an 'immutable' "truth" is still central to many contemporary discourses across the global media. Catchcries, buzzwords (such as "fake-news"), conceptual metaphors, and 'lightning bulb' terms are being employed across various media, prescribing attitudes towards the 'quest' for the real. The author outlines some theoretical perspectives on how this 'quest' gets to be culturally articulated in an atomised social and political environment. The main goal of the study is to prove that a reaffirmation of the function of imagination can lead towards an ethical re-negotiation of the passion for the real.

The chapter written by Dorin Dobra shows how the EU is going through a period where crisis management has taken the place of simple leadership of the union. Compared to the first 50 years of European construction, the current period (starting with 2008) is characterized by administration or crisis management measures. The term "resilience" has

become the main concern of the leadership of the European Union, the author shows. It is the author's contention that resilience becomes a "good gain" precisely because of the difficult period the EU is going through. Over the past 15 years, crises have affected all dimensions of socio-economic life, so it remains to be assessed whether the Union meets the resilience objectives or will see decreases in the dimensions of its competences and functionalities.

Cathrine Kudzai Bingisai focuses on the importance of multilateralism in the contemporary system, on the growing interdependence, and bilateral strategic cooperation to address common issues of concern to restore global order. Using liberal intergovernmentalism, this study specifically analyses the bilateral relations of the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) in the changing international system and their role in promoting sustainable development. The study made use of interviews to collect data. The empirical research presents that economics and trade continue to drive the AU and the EU relations. The findings also present that the two Unions are playing a significant role in climate and environmental changes, in promoting green transition. The study concludes that the relations between the AU and the EU point to sustainable development initiatives; however, further research can be conducted on comparative analysis of the achievement of sustainable development and evaluating the challenges and opportunities between the AU and the EU.

In her study, titled *Turkey's Geopolitical Game in the Horn of Africa - Mediation and Middle Power Ambitions*, Florina Caloianu looks at the maritime deal signed by Ethiopia and Somaliland at the beginning of 2024, granting Ethiopia access to Somaliland's coastline in exchange for recognizing Somaliland's independence, which has sparked serious concerns in the Horn of Africa, as Somalia assessed that this deal poses a direct threat to its territorial integrity. External actors have shown their support for Somalia's concerns, mainly the African Union and the United States, but due to Ethiopia's growing influence and the possibility of because of the Islamist insurgency of Al-Shabaab, Somalia sought diplomatic resolution. Turkey emerged as the key mediator, as the country has good bilateral relations with Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as expertise in prior regional disputes. The author argues that Turkey's involvement in the Horn of Africa can be regarded as more than an extension of its grace as a good neighbor, but also as a middle power that seeks to maintain and project influence in a region highly disputed by great powers.

Carmen Duță titles her study *One Country, one System: John Lee's Departure from Ideological Discourse to Selective Depoliticization* and shows how John Lee's mandate has focused on the reintegration of Hong Kong into the mainland with an emphasis on national security and the erasure of political pluralism. The chapter uses discourse analysis to grasp the degree of depoliticization of Hong Kong via Lee's eleven speeches from July 2022 to January 2024 using Himmelstrand's 1962 theoretical framework. Moreover, it offers five characteristics of Lee's addresses, and a text analysis of the most and least used terms to support the hypothesis that Lee embodies the selectively apolitical politician type.

The study submitted by Ying Wang employs a discourse-historical approach to examine the stance(s) and (de)legitimizing strategies adopted by two mainstream Japanese English-language media, *Asahi Shimbun* (AS) and *Yomiuri Shinbun* (YS), regarding the Fukushima nuclear wastewater discharge (2021-2023). To achieve these objectives, both macro-level text mining and micro-level linguistic analysis are utilized. The findings indicate that both AS and YS take an overall supportive stance on the discharge; however, they legitimize it differently. The author's conclusion and main argument is that this creates a dual identity of Japan as both a victim and a problem solver, influenced by nationalism and opportunism within Japan's social-historical context.

The authors Petru-Cristian Negrea and Nina Dobrojan focus on climate change as a security challenge. Their paper investigates the complex interplay between climate crisis communication and global security challenges, emphasizing the importance of risk communication strategies. Despite the increasing recognition of climate change as a security threat by various stakeholders, the review reveals a significant gap in the literature regarding explicit risk communication strategies. Through a quantitative analysis of ten case studies, the paper highlights a broad awareness of the multifaceted impacts of climate change on security but underscores a lack of targeted communication strategies to address these risks. The findings suggest the need for dedicated research on effective risk communication tailored to climate change, aiming to inform policy and practical responses in areas such as national security, food security, and environmental management. The authors' conclusion and recommendation are that this study calls for an interdisciplinary approach to develop comprehensive risk communication frameworks that engage diverse stakeholders and adapt to evolving climate challenges.

The paper submitted by Ioana-Mădălina Miron analyses cyber-attacks in Tallinn, Estonia, during the so-called Bronze Soldier crisis, which involved a monument devoted to the Second World War. The crisis was known in the West as the first cyber strike between two states. The chapter is based on a theoretical framework that draws attention to the concept of politics of memory, contentious politics and the relationship of this youth movement with the civil society. All these concepts provide an overview of what the ideological struggle of the Nashi movement is all about.

Rebeca Rezuş believes that defining exactly what political discourse is and how we can be politically correct in a political text is essential for the topic of her paper. The focus of her study falls on understanding the terminology, as well as on observing how political discourse manages to go from an idea to an important tool used by political personalities in order to obtain the needed reaction and response from the public, online or on-site. She looks at how women are perceived in the field, emphasizing the difference that exists between men and women, from how they are perceived to how countries use the word feminine to describe a set of values, as well as a detailed analysis of how political correctness works for them in the current period, choosing as a case study two very-well known names that changed the game in the field.

Ramona Neagoş focuses on populism in the Western Balkan region. In her chapter, *The Rise of Populism in Serbia. An Analysis through Liberal Theory in International Relations*, she undertakes a liberal lens in order to assess the rise of right-wing populism in Serbia. The first part of the study engages the reader in an overview of chief and relevant tenets of liberalism in International Relations Theory. The second part aims to show how the breakdown in the social contract could be construed as main cause for the rise of populism in Serbia.

The last chapter, submitted by Irina Cosma and titled *Faith-based Diplomacy and Neo-Ottomanism*, focuses on Kemalism, a new Turkish identity, new Ottomanism and the social, political, institutional, cultural transformations associated with these concepts. Moreover, the author then argues that faith-based diplomacy represents the doctrinal placement of Neo-Ottomanism in the Turkish foreign policy.

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MEDIA-MILITARY RELATIONS: (SOCIAL) MEDIA AS A STRATEGIC WEAPON FOR SUCCESSFUL COUP EXECUTION IN AFRICA

Sisipho Mbalo and Ralph Musonza

Introduction

Media has been for centuries a resource used to make easier the art of communication and the proliferation of information between different actors in society through means such as radio, television, newspapers, word of mouth and social media platforms, such as Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Although media has a positive side to it and has made the world “smaller and more interconnected”, there is also a dark side as (social) media has been and continues to be used as a strategic weapon to initiate, spread cyber-propaganda and promote violence in the form of genocide, for example-as seen in 1994 in Rwanda - and coups d'état in Africa, in the context of this paper. With regards to the latter, most literature on coups in Africa arguably downplays the importance of (social) media to coup leaders during coup executions, hence, this study explores this aspect and argues that media and its capturing by coup leaders is in fact a vital primary resource during a coup d'état and contributes largely to their success. (Social) media has increasingly become an effective tool to communicate, mobilise, motivate and/or manipulate/influence citizens-through what scholars such as Howard and Bradshaw¹ have termed as “cyber-propaganda”- to support and sustain coups.

This is supported by scholars such as Eschenauer-Engler² and Milošević³, who have argued that media, whether traditional or modern, plays a role in how coups are successfully executed and how they help the conspirators carry them out. Thus, in this regard, this study conducts a critical analysis on the nexus between coup d'état success and (social) media, and seeks to answer the question: to what extent can the establishment of media-military relations (through the capturing/taking over of the media by coup militia) be attributed to the successful execution of the recent coups in Africa? The study adopts a qualitative research method and African countries that have recently experienced coups, namely Gabon, Burkina Faso, Niger etc., will be used as case studies. It is anticipated that it will be proven that indeed capturing the media has been a crucial means in the recent successful coups as it allowed coup leaders to control the narrative, discredit the previous regime, justify, and legitimise their actions as well as mobilise support for the coup, therefore furthering their interests. The study will also determine whether measures can be taken to ensure that media is not manipulated in countries that may be at a higher risk of experiencing a coup.

¹ Samantha Bradshaw and Phillip N. Howard, “The Global Organization of Social Media Disinformation Campaigns”, in Vol. 71, No. 1.5, Special Issue: *Contentious Narratives: Digital Technology and the Attack on Liberal Democratic Norms*, 2018, pp. 23-32.

² Tanja Eschenauer-Engler, “Armed forces and airwaves: media control and military coups in autocracies”, *Contemporary Politics*, 2023, 29(4), pp. 446-465.

³ Tanja Milošević and Nina Milošević, “The Role of Social Media in Coups d'État”, in PaKSoM 2022 4th Virtual International Conference *Path to a Knowledge Society-Managing Risks and Innovation*, 2022, p. 313.

Case studies: the use of (social) media as a strategic weapon for successful coup execution

Military coups are very sensitive and complex and, thus, to ensure their successful execution, coup plotters and leaders rely not only on “hard/physical” means/resources such as violence and military force to consolidate power, but also use “soft” means/resources such as (social) media.

Mali (August 2020 coup)

In the context of the Mali coup of 2020, social media played a significant role in the success of the coup that saw the ousting of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta from power. The coup occurred amidst widespread anti-government protests and thus the military did not have to do much work in terms of turning the people against the government and instead could capitalise on the ongoing unrest to mobilise support for the coup. The most crucial platform for this was social media as that is where majority of citizens were already voicing out their frustrations and calling for President Keïta’s resignation.⁴

In this regard, all the military did was to use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (X) to contribute to the already growing public discontent with Keïta’s administration and directing that anti-government traffic to support the coup. Moreover, social media platforms were used by the coup leaders to control the narrative and inform both the domestic and international community about the reason why the coup had to be executed. A spokesperson of the military junta gave a statement on the evening of the coup and asserted that “political patronage, the family management of state affairs, have ended up killing any opportunity for development in what little remains of this beautiful country” and further that “mismanagement, theft and bad governance have become virtues” thus the coup was necessary to “take our responsibilities before the people and before history.”⁵

Guinea (September 2021)

The Guinea coup of September 2021 saw the military deposit the long-time ruling president, Alpha Conde, and install the head of the Guinea Special Forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Mamady Doumbouya in his place.⁶ Mainstream media was a valuable resource for the coup plotters, as through the national broadcaster, the military was able to announce its coup and communicate its reasons for initiating the coup, which it cited to be, mainly, the mismanagement of the country and its resources by Conde’s administration.⁷ Moreover, the capture of the national broadcaster by the military coup executors was important as it served as an effective tool to help the military clamp down on independent media and control the

⁴ Vanguard, *Mali protest leaders call for president’s resignation over jihadist, inter-ethnic attacks*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/07/mali-protest-leaders-call-for-presidents-resignation-over-jihadist-inter-ethnic-attacks/>, accessed

⁵ The Organization for World Peace, *After Mali Coup, Civilian And Former Foreign Minister Moctar Ouane Named Interim Prime Minister*, 2020, Available on: <https://theowp.org/after-mali-coup-civilian-and-former-foreign-minister-moctar-ouane-named-interim-prime-minister/>

⁶ Al Jazeera, *Guinea coup: Military arrests president, dissolves government*, 2021. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/6/guinea-coup-military-arrest-president-dissolve-government>.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

narrative so as to ensure the coup regimes survival and is not threatened by independent media.⁸

Sudan (October 2021)

The Sudan coup of October 2021 saw General Adel Fattah al-Burhan seize control of the Sudanese government that was at the time being headed by the civilian Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok in a power sharing government between the military and the civilian population since the ousting of former dictator, Omar al-Bashir.⁹ Once again, media was an important weapon for the coup plotters to establish their legitimacy and garner support for their actions by announcing the coup via a televised speech. A similarity between both the Sudan coup plotters and Guinea coup plotters is that with both, the coup leaders made sure to suppress independent media so as to eliminate the threat this posed to their coup regime. In Sudan, this was seen through how the Sudanese military-imposed internet shutdowns and launched attacks against journalists and anyone who reported on the unrest that ensued after the military took power from the power sharing government.¹⁰ Sudan shows how the suppression of media that is independent of the state can be a tool in maintaining a coup.

Burkina Faso (January 2022 coup)

In Burkina Faso, radio and television are considered, by Reporters sans Frontières¹¹, to be the most important medium of communication in both urban and rural Burkina Faso, which has an estimated total of 185 radio stations and approximately 30 TV channels. Thus, capturing of both mainstream and social media by the 2022 coup leaders was of crucial importance to ensure the success of the coup by garnering domestic support. Already the government of then-president Roch Marc Christian Kaboré had on Monday morning of the coup issued a “call for calm” on the social media platform Twitter (X) asserting that “our nation is going through difficult moments. We must at this precise moment safeguard our democratic norms...I invite those who have taken up arms to lay them down in the higher interest of the nation” with the intention of countering the pending coup.^{12 13}

This call was widely circulated via social media to the population and the international community. However, by this time, the military coup leaders had surrounded and captured the national TV broadcaster, Radio Télévision du Burkina (RTB) and later used it to announce

⁸ VOA News, *Media Watchdog Urges Guinea Junta to Lift Restrictive Measures*, 2023a. Available from: <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/media-watchdog-urges-guinea-junta-to-lift-restrictive-measures/7398520.html>.

⁹ The Guardian, *Sudan's army seizes power in coup and detains prime minister*, 2021. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/25/sudan-coup-fears-amid-claims-military-have-arrested-senior-government-officials>.

¹⁰ Freedom House, *Freedom on the net 2022*, 2022. Available from: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan/freedom-net/2022>.

¹¹ Reporters sans Frontières, *Burkina Faso*, 2022. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/country/burkina-faso>

¹² Roch Kabore, 2022, Available from: <https://twitter.com/rochkaborepf/status/1485614809940910080?lang=en>.

¹³ Al Jazeera, *Burkina Faso President Kabore 'detained' by mutinous soldiers*, 2022. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/24/burkina-faso-president-kabore-detained-by-mutinous-soldiers>.

the change of regime^{14 15}). This capturing of the media was a crucial step by the coup leaders as it not only allowed them to counter the initial attempts of Kabore's regime to undermine the coup, but also to control the narrative, enforce their control, inform the population of its takeover and establish legitimacy in the eyes of the people and the international community, Bleck and Michelitch¹⁶ argue that media has great potential to grant a regime legitimacy and thus undemocratic regimes, such as those that gain power through coups, capture the media in order to influence the domestic population into supporting them and therefore in turn ensuring their survival as a fragile regime.^{17 18 19}

Gabon (2023 coup)

In the context of the Gabon coup, (social) media served as a strategic instrument to coup leaders as it was a tool for them to communicate their objectives to the citizens, and garner support for their actions. Media, more specifically the national TV station, Gabon 24 TV was captured by leaders of the 2023 coup and used as a resource to firstly inform mainly the Gabonese of the "revolution" that was underway. The coup leaders, moments after Bongo was declared by the electoral commission to have won a third seven year presidential term, announced on Gabon 24 TV station that they had seized power through a coup "on behalf of the Gabonese people" with the intentions to "defend the peace by putting an end to the current regime."²⁰ The coup leaders further announced that the earlier announced election results of August 26 that granted the Gabon president-President Ali Bongo 64.2% of the vote thus a third seven year term in office-were invalid and cancelled, all "institutions of the Republic" were dissolved, and all borders will be closed until further notice.^{21 22} Further announced that General Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema had been "unanimously" designated president of a transitional committee to lead the country and that he, as the new president,

¹⁴ Al Jazeera, *Burkina Faso President Kabore 'detained' by mutinous soldiers*, 2022. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/24/burkina-faso-president-kabore-detained-by-mutinous-soldiers>.

¹⁵ France24, *Gabon military officers claim to have seized power, election results annulled*, 2023. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uA7OsYR14R4>.

¹⁶ Jaimie Bleck and Kristin Michelitch, "Capturing the Airwaves, Capturing the Nation? A Field Experiment on State-Run Media Effects in the Wake of a Coup", *The Journal of Politics*, Volume 79, Number 3, 2017, pp. 873-889.

¹⁷ Milan W. Svobik, "Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes", *American Journal of Political Science* Volume, 53, Issue 2, 2009.

¹⁸ Edward N. Luttwak, *Coup d'état: A Practical Handbook*, New York, Knopf, 1969.

¹⁹ Naunihal Singh, *The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

²⁰ Jake Kwon et al, *Military officers in Gabon declare coup and place president under house arrest*, 2023. Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/08/30/africa/gabon-military-officers-say-power-seized-election-intl-hnk/index.html>.

²¹ Chinedu Asadu, *Some in Africa are celebrating the coups. Many are fed up and desperate for change, analysts say*, 2023. Available from: <https://apnews.com/article/gabon-coup-democracy-africa-military-10b02a6c1e3e864c009c71a6dda38d16>.

²² Al Jazeera, *Gabon President Bongo detained in coup attempt after winning third term*, 2023a. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/30/gabon-military-officers-claim-power-say-election-lacked-credibility>.

“insists on the need to maintain calm and serenity in our beautiful country...and will guarantee the peace, stability, and dignity of our beloved Gabon.”^{23 24 25}

In addition, coup leaders announced that “it is brought to the attention of the national and international community that Ali Bongo Ondimba is being kept under house arrest,” and that there will be the reconnection of international radio and television channels such as France 24, RFI and TV5 Monde, that were “banned” during the election process by Bongo’s government with the justification that it was necessary to prevent the spread of misinformation.²⁶ This national television announcement by coup leaders, as intended, gained the coup international attention, this was further exacerbated by ousted president Bongo who attempted to launch a counter-coup resistance through social media by posting a video, aired by the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency, during his house arrest, pleading for support for the ousted government and calling on the “friends of Gabon” to “make noise, to make noise really.”^{27 28 29} The same news agency also aired a video of soldiers in Libreville, the capital of Gabon, holding coup leader general Brice Oligui Nguema on their shoulders whilst chanting “president.”^{30 31} Not only was the coup only supported by the military but also the domestic population who also took to the streets of Libreville, celebrating the coup against an administration accused of milking the riches of the country’s natural resources for their own personal benefit and not the benefit of the people. One citizen, namely Yollande Okomo, is quoted by Africa News³² to have said “thank you, army. Finally, we’ve been waiting a long

²³ France24, *Gabon military officers claim to have seized power, election results annulled*, 2023. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uA7OsYR14R4>.

²⁴ The Guardian, *Gabonese military officers declare coup on national TV–video*, 2023a. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2023/aug/30/gabonese-military-officers-declare-coup-on-national-tv-video>.

²⁵ Al Jazeera, *Gabon President Bongo detained in coup attempt after winning third term*, 2023a. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/30/gabon-military-officers-claim-power-say-election-lacked-credibility>.

²⁶ Al Jazeera, *Gabon President Bongo detained in coup attempt after winning third term*, 2023a. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/30/gabon-military-officers-claim-power-say-election-lacked-credibility>.

²⁷ Agence France-Presse, *From house arrest, Gabon President Bongo calls on his friends around world to ‘make noise’*, 2023. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpbV8-KhAqw>.

²⁸ Jake Kwon *et al*, *Military officers in Gabon declare coup and place president under house arrest*, 2023. Available from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/08/30/africa/gabon-military-officers-say-power-seized-election-intl-hnk/index.html>.

²⁹ Sam Mednick and Yves Laurent Goma, *Mutineers in Gabon appoint a military leader after detaining the president, alleging corruption*, 2023. Available from: <https://apnews.com/article/gabon-mutiny-elections-power-a61d03963f75ae93ba85a4ba7eec3c71>.

³⁰ Sam Mednick and Yves Laurent Goma, *Mutineers in Gabon appoint a military leader after detaining the president, alleging corruption*, 2023. Available from: <https://apnews.com/article/gabon-mutiny-elections-power-a61d03963f75ae93ba85a4ba7eec3c71>.

³¹ VOA News, *Gabon Military Officers Say Deposed President is Under House Arrest*, 2023b. Available from: <https://www.voanews.com/a/gabon-military-officers-declare-coup-/7246936.html>.

³² Africa News, *Gabon’s mutinous soldiers announce new leader*, 2023. Available from: <https://www.africanews.com/2023/08/31/gabons-mutinous-soldiers-announce-new-leader/>.

time for this moment” whilst another, Jordy Dikaba shouted “long live our army.”³³ Thus, social media was crucial to paint the military as the “messiah” of the Gabonese people.

Niger (July 2023)

A coup took place in July 2023 in Niger when the defence and security forces took power from Nigerien president, Mohamed Bazoum. The leader of the coup was Colonel-Major Amadou Abdramane who said Niger’s national broadcaster that “the defence and security forces... have decided to put an end to the regime you are familiar with ...This follows the continuous deterioration of the security situation, the bad social and economic management.”³⁴ Colonel-Major Abdramane also installed himself as the leader of the country during this process. This case study demonstrates again the use of traditional media (state television) in being the primary way that coup conspirators announce the fact that they have taken power from the incumbent leader, as seen by Guinea. An important thing to note with Niger that of how social media has been attributed to causing chaos in the days after the coup. In the following days after the coup, there were a variety of social media posts on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok where anti-French and anti-ECOWAS statements were spread, especially with there being allegations that the two were going to intervene in Niger, had the coup leaders not restored democratic rule in the country.³⁵ The allegations were later proven to false, however they did show the power of social media being instrumental in justifying the intentions of the coup conspirators, because of the allegations that the former president, Bazoum, was friendlier with France and the West. Social media was also used in the early days of the coup for Russia to position itself as an alternative to the West that both the people and the military rulers of Niger could rely on. This is evidenced by how social media accounts that were linked with the Russian state were pushing information on social media that made Russia appear to be a genuine partner for Niger, and how they were spreading disinformation that would make Russia a more favourable partner for cooperation.³⁶ These instances demonstrate the power that social media has in further fuelling coups and justifying the reasons coup conspirators give in initiating coups.

Policy recommendations

The main recommendation by this paper is that - to help reduce the vulnerability of the media to being captured and manipulated to drive political instability and unrest in the form of coups – it is imperative for governments to foster and ensure the independence, decentralisation and deeper democratisation of the media, instead of its repression and suppression. With the majority of the cases explored above, it is evident that the media served not entirely as an independent entity, but, instead, was a puppet of state control (to sometimes

³³ NBC News, *Mutinuous soldiers in Gabon say they’ve ousted president whose family has ruled for 55 years*, 2023. Available from: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/gabon-military-officers-announce-seized-power-rcna102493>.

³⁴ Al Jazeera, *Timeline: What has happened in Niger since the coup?*, 2023b. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/8/20/timeline-what-has-happened-in-niger-since-the-coup>.

³⁵ Leiden University, *Influencers, X and WhatsApp: social media and the coup in Niger*, 2023. Available from: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2023/08/influencers-x-and-whatsapp-social-media-and-state-intervention-in-niger>.

³⁶ The Guardian, *Russia uses social media channels to exploit Niger coup*, 2023b. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/27/russia-uses-social-media-channels-to-exploit-niger-coup>.

spread propaganda) which in turn made it easy for coup leaders to - as they capture various government institution such as parliament-also in the same breath capture crucial national broadcasting TV stations. With other cases, although media freedom is evident, this is suppressed by the government through means such as deliberate internet shutdowns so as to limit the dissemination of crucial information to the people. The risk of this is that it grants coup plotters the opportunity to execute coups “in silence” without the prying eyes of the international community, therefore limiting any possible external coup-prevention interventions that could threaten the coups success. It is only after their successful seizure of power is the internet restored so as to further their agenda.

Conclusion

This study has recognised and emphasised the role of (social) media as a strategic weapon for successful coup execution and sustainability in contemporary Africa - through its use by coup leaders to communicate, mobilise support and spread cyber-propaganda - using the recent 2020-2023 coups as case studies. Through this recognition, the study has acknowledged that wholistic press freedom, in place of government repression and suppression of media freedom, is crucial to limit the vulnerability of the media in being captured and manipulated to drive coups.

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TACKLING THE CRISIS OF SUBSTANCE USE AMONG SOUTH AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS: AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION APPROACH

Seriane Morapeli

1. Introduction

Early adolescent alcohol use has become a growing problem in predominantly marginalised communities in South Africa, to the extent that adolescents as young as 10 years old have been reported to have consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime¹. Early adolescents are described as adolescents aged 10 to 14 years, who are at a critical stage of physical and cognitive development². Their consumption of alcohol can have detrimental short and long-term consequences on their development, ranging from alcohol use disorders, sexually transmitted diseases and stunted growth. Various factors have been attributed to underage drinking in marginalised communities including the historical abuse of alcohol as a result of the oppressive alcohol policies of the Apartheid regime in South Africa; the non-restrictive attitudes and behaviours of parents towards alcohol use, adolescent peer pressure, ease of access to alcohol and pervasive alcohol advertisements.^{3 4} Lobby groups such as the South African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA) have called for the implementation of the 2016 Liquor Amendment Bill, which aims to stringently penalise alcohol sales and advertising to minors, among other restrictions.⁵ Thus, different social organisations have attempted to curb underage drinking through different interventions, including family, community, environmental and school-based interventions. Family interventions focus on addressing the issue within the family⁶; community interventions strengthen community-building to discourage substance use⁷, while environmental interventions implement environmental

¹ Mthuthuzeli Ntseku, *Underage drinking reaching scary levels with kids starting from 10 years old*, 2019, [https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/underage-drinking-reaching-scary-levels-with-kids-starting-from-10-years-old-37409239], November 2024.

² WHO, 2024, [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-health-risks-and-solutions], November 2024.

³ Motshedisi Chauke; Hendry van der Heever, Muhammad Hoque, "Alcohol use amongst learners in rural high school in South Africa", *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*, 7, 1, 2015, e1-e6.

⁴ Mmampedi Mathibe, Lindiwe Cele, Perpetua Modjadji, "Alcohol use among high school learners in the peri-urban areas, South Africa: A descriptive study on accessibility, motivations and effects", *Children* (Basel, Switzerland), 9, 9, 2022, p. 1342.

⁵ Malcolm Libera, *Big changes to drinking laws in South Africa still coming*, 2024, [https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/793535/big-changes-to-drinking-laws-in-south-africa-still-coming/], November 2024.

⁶ Jai K Das, Rehana A Salam, Ahmed Arshad, Yaron Finkelstein, Zulfiqar A Bhutta, "Interventions for adolescent substance abuse: An overview of systematic reviews", *Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 59, (4S) 2016, pp. 61-75.

⁷ Zohre Fathian-Dastgerdi, Ahmad Ali Eslami, Fazlollah Ghofranipour, Firoozeh Mostafavi, *Effectiveness of community-based substance use prevention program among adolescents - using social cognitive theory*, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354459390_Effectiveness_of_Community-

measures that attempt to deter alcohol use.⁸ School-based interventions have been noted as ideal to influence adolescents within the school setting but the problem of underage drinking continues to persist as is evidenced by the 2022 Enyobeni tragedy that occurred in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa whereby 21 adolescents, the youngest aged 13 years old were killed by alcohol poisoning.⁹ The interventions seem to exclude the perceptions, experiences and ideas of key stakeholders, including those of early adolescents, which appears to be reducing the effectiveness of the interventions. Evidence-based school-based alcohol prevention interventions have proved that such inclusion can delay and inhibit early alcohol consumption.^{10 11} The inclusion of early adolescents, as experts of their own lived experiences is particularly essential in contemporary society where young people are developing and sustaining movements of their interest.^{12 13} Stakeholder theory elaborates that to excel in the current business landscape, it is important to acknowledge and include the needs and interests of key stakeholders in organisational decision-making.¹⁴ The theory explains that it is the input of stakeholders who possess the most power, urgency and legitimacy that should be prioritised. The key advantage of such an approach is relevant ideas and solutions that can develop or maintain stakeholder loyalty.¹⁵ However, in terms of early adolescents, scholars question their experience and cognitive abilities as minors, and their ability to meaningfully contribute to processes.¹⁶ Subsequently, there is a paucity of studies researching early

based_Substance_Use_Prevention_Program_Among_Adolescents_-Using_Social_Cognitive_Theory], November 2024.

⁸ Joel W Grube, "Environmental approaches to preventing drinking and drinking problems among youth", in Lawrence M Scheier (ed.), *Handbook of Drug Use Etiology: Theory, methods, and empirical findings*, American Psychological Association, pp. 493–509.

⁹ Vicky Stark, South Africa police investigating deaths of 21 teenagers in bar, 2022 [<https://www.voanews.com/a/south-africa-police-investigating-deaths-of-21-teenagers-in-bar/6634750.html>], November 2024.

¹⁰ Melissa H Stigler, Emily Neusel, Cherry L Perry, "School-based programs to prevent and reduce alcohol use among youth", in *Alcohol Research & Health: The journal of the national institute on alcohol abuse and alcoholism*, 34, 2, 2011, pp. 157–162.

¹¹ Tao Xu, Sachi Tomokawa, Ernesto R Gregorio Jr., Priya Mannava, Mari Nagai, Howard Sobel, "School-based interventions to promote adolescent health: A systematic review in low- and middle-income countries of WHO Western Pacific Region", in *PloS One*, 15, 3, 2020, e0230046.

¹² Tafadzwa Manganga, Youth demonstrations and their impact on political change and development in Africa, 2020, [<https://www.acord.org.za/conflict-trends/youth-demonstrations-and-their-impact-on-political-change-and-development-in-africa/>], November 2024.

¹³ Duncan Green, What can we learn from campaigns run by the world's children and young people? 2018, [<https://frompoverty.oxfam.org.uk/what-can-we-learn-from-campaigns-run-by-the-worlds-children-and-young-people/>], November 2024.

¹⁴ Paivi Myllykangas, Johanna Kujala, Hanna Lehtimäki, "Analyzing the essence of stakeholder relationships: What do we need in addition to power, legitimacy, and urgency?", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 96, 2010, pp. 65–72.

¹⁵ Mehran Kamali, Hadi Zarea, Zhan Su, Saeideh Soltani, "The influence of value co-creation on customer loyalty, behavioural intention, and customer satisfaction in emerging markets", in *AD-minister*, 39, 2021, pp. 5–24.

¹⁶ Petronella Grootens-Wiegers, Irma M Hein, Jos M Van den Broek, Martine C De Vries, "Medical decision-making in children and adolescents: Developmental and neuroscientific aspects", *Biomedical Pediatrics*, 17, 1, 2017, p. 120.

adolescents, especially concerning sensitive issues such as alcohol use.¹⁷ Agreeably, it is important to acknowledge that early adolescents are minors and are highly vulnerable to innumerable influences, and protecting their vulnerability through the inclusion of trusted adult guidance is essential.¹⁸ The objective of this study is to investigate how the crisis of underage drinking in South Africa can be tackled using stakeholder-inclusive school-based alcohol prevention interventions. The study focuses on early adolescents aged between 9 and 15 years old in three primary schools in Johannesburg, South Africa. Such a study is valuable because this age group comprises approximately 17% of the South African population, and protecting these young people's health and development through effective alcohol prevention interventions is important because they are the future workforce, parents and leaders.¹⁹

2. Methodology

Quantitative research was most applicable to the study because it permitted the broad investigation of the topic, and the opportunity to generalise the results to the general population²⁰. Probability sampling in the form of simple random sampling was used to select the respondents, who were randomly assigned by the school principals. The study disseminated a self-administered paper-based survey among 215 early adolescents (45% males and 55% females) in three primary schools in marginalised communities in Johannesburg, South Africa. The paper survey was most suitable because the early adolescents did not have access to mobile phones, and the researcher could reduce completion error.²¹ The survey asked the early adolescents about underage drinking and stakeholder-inclusive school-based alcohol prevention interventions. A combination of close-ended questions about the causes and dangers of underage drinking; and Likert scale questions about whether school-based alcohol prevention interventions should include adolescents' ideas and key stakeholders were asked. The collected data did not have missing values, as all 215 adolescents answered the survey questions. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics which provided summaries of the key features in the data that can be used to predict the behaviour of the population. To adhere to research ethics, it was pertinent to obtain permission from the University of Johannesburg (UJ) Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee (REC-01-241-2020). To adhere to the research guidelines of the South African department of education, permission was obtained from the South African Gauteng department of education and provincial education department to conduct research on early adolescents in three primary schools. Consent from the primary school principals who had permission from the learners' parents was also sought. Assent was requested from the

¹⁷ Vilde Skylstad, Juliet Ndimwibo Babirye, Juliet Kiguli, Ane-Marthe Solheim Skar, Melf-Jakob Kühl, Joyce Sserunjogi Nalugya, Ingunn Marie Stadskleiv Engebretsen, "Are we overlooking alcohol use by younger children?", in *BMJ Paediatrics Open*, 6, 1, 2022, e001242.

¹⁸ Wandile Ganya, Sharon Kling, Keymanthri Moodley, "Autonomy of the child in the South African context: Is a 12 year old of sufficient maturity to consent to medical treatment?", *Biomedical Medical Ethics*, 17, 1, 2016, p. 66.

¹⁹ Stats SA, The young and the restless - adolescent health in SA, 2022 [<https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=15261>], November 2024.

²⁰ John Bacon-Shone, Introduction to quantitative research methods. The University of Hong Kong, 2022.

²¹ Vania Ceccato, Gabriel Gliori, Per Näsman, Catherine Sundling, "Comparing responses from a paper-based survey with a web-based survey in environmental criminology", in *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 26, 2024, pp. 216–243.

adolescents before conducting the questionnaires, to ensure they understood the purpose of the research, the questions, and the instructions for completing the survey. The assent also assured their anonymity and clearly explained that the participation is voluntary, without incentives for participating.²²

3. Results

Concerning the results about the causes and dangers of underage drinking as evidenced in table 1 below, 100% of the adolescents reported that adolescents should not consume alcohol (45% males and 55% females). More than average (68%) of adolescents agreed that adolescents who do not know about the dangers of underage drinking may start consuming alcohol. Over sixty percent noted that ‘cool’ advertisements about alcohol and curiosity about alcohol can encourage underage drinking. More than 50% of adolescents agreed that peer-pressure can lead them to consume alcohol, with 51% sharing that seeing their friends drinking alcohol can incite underage drinking. However, more than half disagreed that experiencing problems at home and school encourages underage drinking. Over sixty percent noted that living close to shebeens or taverns selling alcohol can promote underage drinking. Over 85% of adolescents agreed that the consumption of alcohol by adolescents can cause brain and body damage. More than 78% of the adolescents concurred that underage drinking could lead to drug use and early sexual activity.

Table 1: Responses about causes and dangers of underage drinking

	% Yes	% No
Causes of underage drinking		
Aware of dangers of alcohol	67.9	32.1
Cool advertisements	63.7	36.3
Curiosity alcohol taste	65.6	34.4
Home problems	42.3	57.7
School problems	35.8	64.2
Peer-pressure	47.9	52.1
Friends drinking alcohol	50.7	49.3
Proximity to shebeens or taverns	39.1	60.9
Dangers of underage drinking		
Damage to brains	87.0	13.0
Damage to bodies	87.9	12.1
Drug use	77.7	22.3
Early sexual activity	78.6	21.4

In terms of the results about inclusive school-based alcohol prevention interventions, displayed in table 2 below, 60% of the adolescents reported that school programmes can

²² Nihaya A Al-Sheyab, Mahmoud A Alomari, Omar F Khabour, Khulood K Shattnawi, Karem H Alzoubi, “Assent and consent in pediatric and adolescent research: school children’s perspectives”, in *Adolescent Health, Medicine and Therapeutics*, 10, 2019, pp. 7–14.

reduce underage drinking. More than average of the adolescents shared that school-programmes that work with parents, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), use fun-learning activities, communicate with articulate language and develop their confidence may reduce underage drinking.

Table 2: Responses about inclusive school-based alcohol prevention interventions

	% Not at all	% A little bit	% Much	% Very much
School programmes	21.9	10.2	7.9	60.0
Working with parents	20.9	13.0	10.2	55.8
Working with NGOs	21.4	14.9	8.8	54.9
Including fun learning activities	26.5	13.0	9.3	51.2
Clear language	21.4	13.0	11.6	54.0
Confidence building	25.1	8.8	7.4	58.6

4. Discussion

In this study, the respondents revealed that adolescents should not consume alcohol, perhaps revealing their awareness that early adolescents as young as 10 years old are consuming alcohol²³. The adolescents' responses aligned with literature showing that underage drinking is caused by various factors such as incessant, aspirational alcohol advertisements, peer pressure and ease of access to alcohol. The early adolescents also noted that curiosity about the taste of alcohol can encourage underage drinking, this may likely be because of the fruity flavours of alcoholic beverages targeted at young people in the constant alcohol advertisements. Despite the perception that adolescents are minors, incapable of meaningful decision-making, the majority of early adolescents in the survey revealed that they are aware of the dangers of underage drinking such as damage to the physical and mental development of young people. Similarly, the early adolescent respondents also shared that inclusive school-based alcohol prevention would aid in the reduction of underage drinking. Currently, there is a lack of study about school-based alcohol prevention interventions in South Africa, however, studies in the global North have proved that inclusive prevention programmes are increasingly likely to reduce underage drinking. The adolescents agreed that such interventions ought to incorporate the ideas and experiences of adolescents, building their confidence about healthy decision-making, proving that the currently implemented interventions fail to acknowledge this critical information. Following the Enyobeni tragedy, the South African government and scholars called for more inclusive, and targeted

²³ Lubabalo Ngcukana, *Even 10-year-olds are drinking alcohol*, 2019 [<https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/even-10-year-olds-are-drinking-20190810>], November 2024.

approaches to early alcohol use²⁴. Agreeably, and in alignment with the recognition that adolescents are minors who require guidance from trusted adults, the adolescents reported that school-based alcohol prevention interventions that cooperate with parents and relevant NGOs may reduce underage drinking. The inclusion of parents is especially important as studies have proved that early alcohol use is often a result of permissive parental attitude and behaviour about alcohol²⁵. However, appealing to the mercurial nature of adolescents, the adolescents noted that the programmes should use engaging and fun learning activities that utilise clear language.

Stakeholder theory notes that acknowledging the interests and needs of the stakeholders can result in more relevant organisational outcomes. Thus, in the instance of this study, noting the incorporation of adolescents' knowledge about the causes and dangers of underage drinking, and working together with relevant stakeholders may develop inclusive school-based alcohol prevention interventions that may contribute to the reduction of underage drinking.

5. Conclusion and limitations

The study revealed that adolescents recognise the causes and dangers of underage drinking despite the lack of studies researching early adolescents and alcohol. The adolescents also shared that an inclusive approach to school-based alcohol prevention interventions would be ideal to reduce underage drinking. Of importance is that the adolescents recognised that the guidance of trusted adults in the programmes is important. This supports the literature that adolescents are minors and their involvement in research or interventions should be facilitated by trusted adults. It is thus evident that early adolescents do have a voice and can contribute meaningful insights to interventions targeted at them.

The study is not without limitations. Surveys may be subject to bias, such as social desirability bias whereby respondents provide answers that appear to be acceptable instead of accurate. Moreover, because adolescents are minors, recall bias can affect the sharing of precise information. However, to address this limitation, the researcher encouraged the respondents to be as honest as possible during the completion of the survey. A key recommendation is assessing the implementation of the inclusive school-based alcohol prevention intervention to measure the effectiveness of such an approach.

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²⁴ Gill Price, *Alcohol and substance abuse*, 2024 [<https://www.gcis.gov.za/Alcoholandsubstanceabuse/>], November 2024.

²⁵ Olivia M Maserumule, Linda Skaal, Sello L Sithole, "Alcohol use among high school learners in rural areas of Limpopo province", *South African Journal of Psychiatry*, 25, 0, 2019, a1183.

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THE INFLUENCE AND INVOLVEMENT OF STATE, NON-STATE ACTORS, AND AUDIENCES IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND MITIGATION

Noluthando Mncwango

1. Introduction

The rapidly increasing developments in technologies, particularly those utilised for communication and information sharing, have led to an easier and more efficient manner for information sharing. Communication has expanded beyond neighbours and borders as a result of digital media platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter). The information has proven to be reliable on some websites, such as legitimate websites, and even on social media itself. However, this is not to say that fake news does not exist. All products have their pros and cons, and digital media has proven that it has an advantage that is difficult to ignore and that it is the role it can play in humanitarian crises. Through digital media communication, circumstances where social media has acted as an informant on world news have become more common. Individuals share news on their circumstances such as the people of Ukraine and Russia, which has increased global awareness of these crises. However, this is not the only factor that digital media communication has contributed to. Through people known as opinion leaders, who share the information with their immediate groups such as their followers¹, the number of people who have contributed to crises mitigation continue to grow exponentially. These individuals help the world through their humanitarian efforts from the safe confines of their homes where they simply donate to humanitarian efforts that have been brought to their attention by the social media influencers they follow. Through simple mechanisms such as hashtags, important information is shared. This ranges from information on the crises around the globe to the humanitarian efforts that aim to alleviate them. To this end, the research question that this paper aims to address is: The implications of non-state actors, state actors and audiences on crisis mitigation and communication in the digital era. In providing this argument, this research paper conceptualises key terms that are focal to the research focus. These key terms include crisis communication, crisis mitigation and the responsibility to protect. These terms will commonly appear throughout the paper. The research question will be addressed through the provision of a case study analysis that will analyse the Russia-Ukraine War.

2. Conceptualising Key Terms

This section will introduce the three pivotal and intersecting concepts that will commonly appear throughout the paper. These concepts are as follows; crisis communication, crisis mitigation and the responsibility to protect. Each concept discussed below also provides a foundational basis upon which the analysis of non-state actor's role in crisis communication and mitigation in the selected case studies will be conducted. As a simultaneous basis to the

¹ Ayesh Perera, *Two-Step Flow Theory of Media Communication*, 2024 [<https://www.simplypsychology.org/two-step-flow-theory-of-communication.html>], 11 March 2024.

3 concepts that will be discussed and used in this paper's analysis, the term 'crisis' is used and referred to as in the case of conflicts

Crisis Communication

According to Salomonsen and Hart² crisis communication occurs when the government informs the community on what is currently going on and the implications of what is going on. Crisis communication further elaborates how individuals should act with regards to a certain crisis². In the context of this paper, crisis communication refers to the manner in which information on a crisis is communicated to the world. In this paper, the word 'crisis' is used in the context of current armed conflicts and humanitarian crises — with crisis communication discussed and analysed as predominantly administered through the means of social media.

Crisis Mitigation

Crisis mitigation can be conceptualised as the strategies utilised by either non-state actors, state actors or audiences to either limit the struggle of those experiencing the crisis, to try and stop the crisis from occurring, or even to cease its continuation entirely once it has occurred. In the context of this paper, the word 'crisis' is used to refer to the wars or armed conflicts between Ukraine and Russia, and Palestine and Israel as crises that have been communicated by social media influencers as non-state actors. This avenue of crisis communication through social media is also discussed as a means of contributing to or bolstering crisis mitigation efforts and strategies.

Responsibility to Protect

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P, hereon) is a doctrine that is defined by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001 and in the favour of supremacy in every state per the territory³. This doctrine's phrase is illustratively centered on a state-centric responsibility to protect populations from identified crimes constitutive of crimes against humanity.

R2P states that each state holds a responsibility which is to protect its people, and the United Nations holds the responsibility of peacekeeping at the international level³. Through this norm or institution, as would contentiously be argued by scholars of the subject matter, non-state actors with recognised power and jurisdiction to exercise R2P like the United Nations may only do so through humanitarian, diplomatic, and peaceful means³. R2P may only be applied through four crimes which are genocidal crimes, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity³.

3. Research methodology

This paper makes use of the qualitative research methodology to analyse its research problem. This is applied through the use of content analysis and a case study analysis. The

² Heidi Salomonsen and Paul Hart, *Communicating and managing crisis in the world of politics*, Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2020, p. 2.

³ Thomas Weiss., Ramesh Thakur, Mary O'Connel, Aidan Hehir, Alex Bellamy, David Chandler, Rodger Shanahan, Rachel Gerber, Abiodun Williams and Gareth Evans, "Introduction", in Alex Stark (ed), *The Responsibility to Protect: challenges & opportunities in light of the Libyan intervention*, Bristol: E-International Relations, 2007, p. 4.

content analysis is utilised in order to synthesize the data that is gathered while the case study analysis is applied through the provision of a case study that analyses the Russia-Ukraine War and how communication regards it as a crisis has been shared through social media, state actors, non-state actors and audiences. This paper further analyses how the crisis is mitigated through the use of social media, state actors, non-state actors and the audiences.

4. Case study analysis

This section will elaborate on the case studies that will be covered within the paper. This case study will analyse the way state actors, non-state actors and audiences contribute to crisis communication and crisis mitigation through social media. The case study will focus on the Russia-Ukraine War.

Case Study: Russia-Ukraine War

Tensions between Russia and Ukraine have been high since Ukraine gained its independence in the early 1990s⁴. However, the independence led to Ukraine facing internal tensions due to the ethnic, religious and linguistic division between different regions of the country such as the Crimea and Donetsk regions that believed that they belonged to Russia⁴. According to a report by the Center for Preventive Action⁵ the Russian-Ukraine conflict, however, began in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea, a Ukrainian region, by Russia. This resulted in the armed conflict between the Ukrainian military and the Russian forces⁵. Upon Russia's denial of military involvement against Ukraine, the conflict soon converted to a stalemate with regular disputes at the Ukrainian-Russian eastern borders⁵.

2015 welcomed a 16-hour conversation between the presidents of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany to administer a Minsk ceasefire in which both Ukraine and Russia were to withdraw their heavy weapons from the shared frontline⁶. According to the Center for Preventive Action⁵ these diplomatic proceedings proved to be unsuccessful as 2016 saw the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deploying battalions across Eastern Europe to dissuade any possible future Russian attacks. This was followed by the imposition of new sanctions on some Russian officers along with an approval for sale of non-tank weapons to Ukraine by the United States in 2018⁵.

During 2021, Moscow was accused by Kyiv, the Capital of the Ukraine, and their international partners of unprovoked concentration as the Russian troops and equipment were settled along the Ukrainian border⁷. This follows a request to cease military activity around Eastern Europe by Russia to NATO and the United States⁵. These demands were rejected by NATO allies and the United States with threats of imposing severe economic sanctions on Russia if they were to attack Ukraine⁵.

February 2022 witnessed the largest military deployment from Russia since the end of the cold war⁵. Russia denied any claims of a possible invasion citing the military deployment as a function to ensure peace whilst ordering troops to the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk⁵.

⁴ Bartosz Gierczak, *The Russo-Ukrainian Conflict*, Manhattan College, 2020, p. 2.

⁵ Center for Preventive Action, *War in Ukraine*, 2024 [<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>], 16 March 2024.

⁶ BBC News, *Ukraine ceasefire: New Minsk agreement key points*, 2015 [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31436513>], 16 March 2024.

⁷ Center for Strategic and International Studies, *The Russian and Ukrainian Spring 2021 War Scare*, 2021 [<https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-and-ukrainian-spring-2021-war-scare>], 17 March 2024.

As a response, the United States imposed sanctions on Russia's two largest financial institutions, the Promsvyazbank Public Joint Stock Company (PSB) and the Corporation Bank for Development and Foreign Economic Affairs Vnesheconombank (VEB) with their subsidiaries, which would inevitably cripple Russia's defence sector⁸. However, these sanctions proved to be futile as Russia announced a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022⁵.

Severe sanctions were further imposed on Russia by the United States and its European Allies on four of Russia's banks, and on its oil and gas industry, as an attempt to mitigate the war⁵. The United Nations' member states voted for an emergency military withdrawal by Russia from Ukraine which was partially honoured by Russia as they withdrew from Kyiv and its surrounding areas only for Russia to launch an attack on Eastern Ukraine where they remained along with Southern Ukraine⁵.

The Influence of State Actors in Crisis Communication and Mitigation

According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center on the percentage of U.S adults that get their news from TikTok from 2020 to 2023, findings of the study make it evident that a significantly large number of 18–29-year-olds regularly get news from TikTok. The survey also illustrates that the number of adults that regularly get their news from TikTok has quadrupled from approximately 3% in 2020 to 14% in 2023 - indicating a reliance on TikTok as a social media platform for daily news. Amidst the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, footages of lodged explosive attacks within the Gaza Strip have since gone viral on the website⁹ (Lockhurst, 2021). This has effectively communicated the crisis in the area resulting in the global citizens' awareness of the crisis. This has allowed for the youth to be made aware as they are more prone to using digital media rather than traditional media platforms.

Responsively, influencers and other social media figures have thus utilised social media platforms including TikTok, in creating awareness and sharing information that has evidently been key for crisis communication and mitigation.

State actors in this context refer to governments including those neighbouring Ukraine and Russia who assisted in the crisis mitigation between the two countries. In this case, the United States, France and Germany. The first form of mitigation exercised by State actors was conducted during the meeting between the presidents of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine in 2015⁶. The attempt to administer a Minsk ceasefire between the two countries acted as a crisis mitigation strategy during the time. Furthermore, in the course of the periods before the war had officially begun and even after it had begun and the United States intervened through the imposed sanctions on Russia, the United States was administering a crisis mitigation as a State Actor that supported Ukraine⁵.

⁸ U.S. Department of the Treasury, *U.S. Treasury Imposes Immediate Economic Costs in Response to Actions in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions*, 2022 [<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0602>], 17 March 2024.

⁹ Toby Luckhurst, *TikTok: How Israeli-Palestinian conflict plays out on social media*, 2021 [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57112614>], 18 March 2024.

The Influence of Non-State Actors in Crisis Communication and Mitigation

In the case of this paper, non-state actors refer to social media influencers and celebrities who assisted with crisis communication and mitigation when the Ukraine-Russia war began.

The Influence of Social Media Influencers/Celebrities

According to Ellie Harrison, Louis Chilton, Maanya Sachdeva¹⁰ (2022) celebrities reacted following the announcement of the full-scale war in Ukraine. They state that celebrities such as Miley Cyrus shared messages on X (formerly known as Twitter) about the war and their standings¹⁰. This included the sharing of a reposted article that invited viewers to a rally that stood with refugees in Ukraine and around the globe¹¹. This information was shared to her followers who surpass 40 million. From this, one can discern that her posts communicated this crisis and a mitigation strategy to a large number of people at one time. Through this it is visible that due to her large following, her outreach was effective in sharing the information

Furthermore, when many celebrities such as J.K Rowling, Gigi Hadid, Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher, and Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds contributed to the crisis communication and mitigation through their voices and influence by speaking out against the military operations and offering supporting to those affected by the war¹². Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds pledged up to 1 million dollars in relief as a crisis mitigation strategy to assist those affected by the war whilst urging their fans who surpass 1 million and 20 million, respectively on X, to aid Ukrainian refugees which inevitably communicated the crisis to their fans¹². Mila Kunis and her husband Ashton Kutcher donated over 20 million in charity to the country and released a GoFundMe campaign that had a goal of 30 million¹² which surpassed its goals two weeks after it was launched through the support of their followers.¹³

The Influence of Hashtags

According to a study done by Laucuka¹⁴ hashtags have numerous uses including those of providing additional information on certain topics, assembling information on a topic and even initiating movements. Sarkar and Bhattacharya¹⁵ further elaborate on the purpose of hashtags as a means to create conversations. In the case of the two-step flow theory, through the usage of hashtags such as *#ukraine*, *#russia*, *#standwithukraine* and *#standwithputin*¹⁶ which

¹⁰ Ellie Harrison, Louis Chilton, Maanya Sachdeva, *The good, the bad and the ugly: How celebrities reacted to the Ukraine-Russia crisis*, 2022 [<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/ukraine-russia-putin-hollywood-b2024691.html>], 17 March 2024.

¹¹ Miley Cyrus, 2022. [X] 8 April [<https://twitter.com/MileyCyrus/status/1512462721131810817>], 17 March 2024.

¹² Volunteer FDIP, *Celebrities Supporting Ukraine amid the Russian Invasion*, 2023 [<https://www.volunteerfdip.org/celebrities-supporting-ukraine-amid-the-russian-invasion/>], 17 March 2024.

¹³ Emly Kirkpatrick, *Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher Pass \$30 Million Goal for Ukraine Fundraiser*, 2022 [<https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2022/03/mila-kunis-ashton-kutcher-ukraine-fundraiser-passed-30-million-goal>], 17 March 2024.

¹⁴ Aleksandra Laucuka, "Communicative functions of hashtags", *Economics and Culture*, 15(1), 2018, p. 61.

¹⁵ Arindam Sarkar and Udayan Bhattacharya, "# Hashtag: A Special Feature to Organize and Classify Unstructured Information in Social Media", 2019.

¹⁶ Haris Zia, Ehsan Haq, Ignacio Castro, Pan Hui, and Gareth Tyson, "An Analysis of Twitter Discourse on the War Between Russia and Ukraine", in *arXiv preprint arXiv:2306.11390*, 2023, p. 3.

are started by a few opinion leaders before spreading throughout the audience, these hashtags act as both an initiation of movements and as a form of crisis communication as they provide information on the topic which is the Ukraine-Russia war in this context to the audiences on the platform in which they are utilised¹⁴.

The Influence of Audiences in Crisis Communication and Mitigation

According to von Tunzelmann¹⁷ social media users are not just observers of events online, they interact and react towards the events through their donations, through their support (for instance, by having a Ukrainian flag after their name). Through social media, information is speedily shared to the audiences and thus, crisis communication is also administered¹⁷. This thus highlights the importance of audiences on social media in sharing information through their interaction with events through hashtags and donations. Even as the audience is influenced by the celebrities and social media influencers whom they admire, ultimately, they are the reason events such as the campaigning succeeds. Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher's campaign that had a goal of 30 million dollars only succeeded because over 65 000 of their followers donated funds to their GoFundMe account which shows that crisis mitigation strategies are more achievable if the audience is willing to interact.¹³

The Responsibility to Protect

The role of the R2P explains the reason countries such as the United States only used threats and sanctions as a warning and mitigation strategy against Russia instead of involving themselves on a military level in the war between the two countries⁵. However, who the R2P do not acknowledge as actors are non-state actors and the audience. R2P only analyses state actors as those bound to its doctrine. It only views state actors as the individuals that are required and deliver on the R2P doctrine. The paper has elaborated on the role of non-state actors in the context of celebrities as social media influencers who partake in humanitarian work through GoFundMe projects and donations to assist refugees, children and anyone who is affected by the wars. Furthermore, it has shown how audiences willingly donate their funds to these causes. These efforts have shown that the doctrine does not only apply to state actors but rather everyone regardless of their role. It has shown that non-state actors and audiences also partake in the R2P as the funders of this humanitarian work. Both non-state actors and the audience participate at the international level through different efforts that contribute to the livelihoods of those suffering such as the displaced refugees whom they protect. For instance, celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio have donated to CARE, a humanitarian organisation that provides assistance to refugees in support of Ukraine.¹²

5. Discussion

The paper aimed to analyse the impact the digital landscape has had on the participation of state actors, non-state actors and audiences in crisis communication and mitigation. The findings of the paper are that the digital landscape has allowed for crisis communication to be done via social media platforms. This has been made evident online from posts such as Miley Cyrus' who shared the news with her followers. This alerted a large number of people on the crisis in one time and thus, effectively communicated the crisis.

¹⁷ Von Tunzelmann, *The big idea: can social media change the course of war?*, 2022 [https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/apr/25/the-big-idea-can-social-media-change-the-course-of-war], 17 March 2024.

Through a large number of hashtags that gained a significant audience reception, the information further spread reaching even more people. Through the robust sharing of these hashtags between audiences, the communication expands until the crisis has been communicated to most of the globe, if not all. What this highlighted was the power of social media influencers through their outreach. Their large number of followers make it easier for information sharing as important information reaches people at a fast rate and at a large portion. These influencers further engage with humanitarian efforts through efforts such as GoFundMe accounts that allow for donations that can alleviate the strain that comes with a crisis such as food and clothing shortages. When they post the links to their GoFundMe accounts and ask their audiences for assistance, their audiences react and assist which means they contribute to the crisis mitigation without even knowing it. This shows that both audiences and non-state actors on social media platforms feel the R2P. They feel the need to help humanitarian efforts and through their contributions they do contribute to these efforts and ultimately, crisis mitigation. This shows that digital media has made it easier for all actors to participate in crisis communication and crisis mitigation.

6. Conclusion

It is therefore evident that digital media, including the role and actions of social media influencers, have had a profound influence on crisis communication and mitigation within humanitarian crises such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The importance of social media tools such as hashtags has been highlighted as well as the importance of social media influencers that act as opinion leaders that assist in sharing information and driving humanitarian efforts that aim to mitigate crises. The paper has shown how state actors, non-state actors and audiences all partake in R2P through crisis communication and mitigation through different means such as social media. This paper has further highlighted the extension of R2P as a responsibility that was known to be harboured by state actors alone. It has shown that R2P is harboured by not only state actors but also audiences through digital media communication. This paper has thus shown the importance and power of digital media, state actors, non-state actors and audiences in crisis communication and mitigation processes.

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COMMUNICATION CRISIS: TROUBLE IN PARADISE- LADY R VS. SOUTH AFRICA AND THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Laurika Mashaba and Thando Mncwango

Introduction

Crisis communication is an essential tool that states utilise not only to mitigate crises, but also to protect relations between them and their allies. It has been exercised by numerous states, with some managing to mitigate the crisis through this tool, and others not. In May 2023, South Africa and the United States encountered what we define as a crisis, which required them to execute crisis communication when Reuben Brigety, the US ambassador to South Africa, stated in a public conference that South Africa was shipping arms to Russia, using the *Lady R*, this allegation led to the introduction of tension between the two states and tested the capabilities of South Africa and the United States to execute crisis communication. The incident serves as a case study for this research. The paper aims to answer the following research question: did crisis communication mitigate the implications of the Lady R incident on South Africa and South Africa-US relations? To this end, it argues that the *Lady R* incident between the Ambassador of the United States, Reuben E. Brigety, and South Africa may be considered a crisis, and aims to highlight whether crisis communication was used in an effective way to mitigate the crisis and protect South Africa-US relations. Additionally, the paper aims to investigate the implications of the incident, especially for South Africa. In order to do this, the study makes use of a mixed-method approach and relies on secondary data, which was collected from reputable sources, including government websites, in order to provide information on the types of communication undertaken, as well as to explain the potential reasonings behind the variables that are provided by the statistical data set. It will make use of two indices, which include the exchange rate and data on the stock market exchange, which are statistical data sets that constitute the quantitative research, which will be consulted along with qualitative research in order to provide better insight on the incident and to supplement onto the information gathered from the indices. This will be done through analysing trade between the two countries during the period of investigation using the US Census Bureau. The Exchange Rate will be used to highlight the changes in the South African currency's value during the course of the crisis. The Financial Times Stock Exchange South Africa Index (FTSE) which is one of the indices that track the performance of the stock market in South Africa will be utilised alongside the exchange rate. They will measure and determine whether the crisis communication utilised was able to mitigate the effects of the crisis during the period of incident and the period of investigation. Additionally, they will be used to analyse the impact of the crisis on South Africa and on South Africa-US relations therefore indicating whether the crisis was mitigated or not through the communication that was undertaken by the officials of the two countries.

The importance of this paper is that it contributes to the pool of knowledge on crisis communication. Scholars have written literature on crisis communication based on the global pandemic- the Covid19 pandemic. However, little to no knowledge has been produced on some of the everyday issues that the states may experience which inform crisis

communication. This study contributes to new knowledge by taking a direction of crisis communication in a case between two states influenced by misinterpretation of information and the spread of it through media. It briefly makes reference to how media was used to communicate this crisis, and it was also used to mend ties between the two main states involved- the USA and South Africa, even though they have an underlying tension due to the relationship between Russia and South Africa and South Africa's decision to remain neutral during the Russia- Ukraine war. The study adopts the Image Repair Theory (IRT) to analyse crisis communications, with specific reference to the chosen case, and to discuss how the relations between the two countries were affected. Firstly, the study will discuss how the crisis posed a threat to South Africa's image and its relations with the US. Secondly, it discusses how the rand depreciated during this period as a consequence of the crisis. Thirdly, the study looks at how the trade relation was negatively impacted. An analysis of crisis communication then follows, which is supported by the discussion of the Image Repair Theory as a suitable theory to analyse this case. The study then proposes policy recommendations in dealing with crisis communication in international relations, especially between states with close relations. The study concludes with a brief summary of the argument of the study and its findings.

2. Exchange rate, trade and market reaction

Although "crisis" is a contentious term, this study makes use of the definition provided by the South African Department of Government Communication and Information Systems¹ which defines crises as events that not only unexpectedly occur, but also yield negative consequences while further posing a threat to institutional operations when they do occur. Therefore, the incident between South Africa and the US may be considered a crisis. Not only was the occurrence of the incident sudden but it threatened not only South Africa's overall image, but also its relations with the US, one of its top 5 trading partners.²³ Additionally, the allegations would also indicate that South Africa had violated its stance in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), a treaty which not only aims to monitor the international trade of conventional weapons, but also aims to eradicate the illegal trade of conventional weapons⁴ with the assistance of its state parties who are bounded by the treaty to implement policies in accordance with the it. South Africa, a state party illegally providing arms to Russia would indicate not only the violation of their stance of non-alignment to the Russia-Ukraine conflict but would have also violated the treaty by taking part in arms trafficking. Additionally, these allegations threatened the South Africa-US relations and South Africa's inclusion in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)⁵ a significant trade agreement which provides developing African countries with preferential access to the US market through providing the

¹ South African Department of Government Communication and Information Systems, Crisis Communication, 2018, p. 38.

[https://www.gcis.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/resourcecentre/guidelines/handbook/Chapter22\(149-157\).pdf](https://www.gcis.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/resourcecentre/guidelines/handbook/Chapter22(149-157).pdf). Accessed on 17 March 2024.

² Trading Economics, South Africa Imports by Country, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/imports-by-country>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

³ South African Revenue Services, 2024, <https://www.sars.gov.za/customs-and-excise/trade-statistics/>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

⁴ Arms Trade Treaty, 2014, p. 2.

⁵ Nozibusiso Mazibuko, *Lady R report sent to Ramaphosa*, 2023, <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/lady-r-report-sent-to-ramaphosa-8-august-2023/>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

sub-Saharan amongst others with duty-free to the market⁶ In South Africa not only has the programme has led to job creation, but it has also led to the being prominent growth in terms of South Africa's exports to the US which rose from US\$2billion in 2021 to US\$3billion in 2022. Through AGOA South Africa was able to become a significant trade partner to the US.⁷ Therefore, AGOA may be considered a significant programme for South Africa-US trade.

The period of the Lady R incident gave rise to some short-term consequences such as the decline of the South African Rand to the United States Dollar therefore reducing South Africa's buying power to an extent indicated South Africa's favourability as a weakening currency at times indicates investor sentiment who in this instance would have disinvested from South Africa due to the instability in the country therefore affecting the South African economy. An expected reaction from investors who are reactive to domestic events which have the ability of changing a countries credibility therefore increasing its credit risk. This perception is what has the capabilities to trigger increased exchange rate volatility of a country.⁸ Considering the allegations that were made against South Africa it is not surprising that there were some changes that arose as a result of the tensions between the US and South Africa.

2.1.1. Exchange Rate and Investor Sentiment

The study makes use of the exchange rate and the FTSE to observe and determine whether and to what extent the crisis seems to have affected South Africa. The index and the exchange rate also assist in highlighting investor sentiment and market reaction and performance in South Africa which is essential for the economy.

Table 2.1.1: Exchange Rate and FTSE (R= Rand/ \$1)

Day	10 May	11 May	12 May	1 September	3 Septem ber	4 September
Exch ange Rate	R1 8.841	R1 9.182	R1 9.315	R1 8.845	N /A	R1 9.121
FTS E	3,9 01.52	3,8 19.90	3,8 68.26	3,8 49.59	N /A	3,8 71.06

Source: Exchange Rate (2024)⁹ and Financial Times Stock Exchange South Africa Index (2024)¹⁰

⁶ Mkhululi Chimoio, *AGOA: How access to US market changed the fortunes of two South African sisters*, 2024, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/june-2024/agoa-how-access-us-market-changed-fortunes-two-south-african-sisters>. Accessed on 5 December 2024.

⁷ South African Government, *The extension of AGOA could help transform African economies*, 2023, <https://www.gov.za/blog/extension-agoa-could-help-transform-african-economies>. Accessed on 5 December 2024.

⁸ Nasha Maveé, Roberto Perrelli, Axel Schimmelpfennig, *Surprise, Surprise: What Drives the Rand / U.S. Dollar Exchange Rate Volatility?* International Monetary Fund, 2016, <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm?abstractid=2882641>.

⁹ Exchange Rates, *US Dollar (USD) to South African Rand (ZAR) Exchange Rate History for 2023, 2024*, <https://www.exchange-rates.org/exchange-rate-history/usd-zar-2023>, 17 March 2024.

¹⁰ Financial Times Stock Exchange South Africa, *FTSE South Africa Historical Data*, 2024, <https://www.investing.com/indices/ftse-south-africa-historical-data>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

As highlighted in the table above, on the 11th of May, which was the date that Ambassador Reuben Brigety announced his allegations, the Rand depreciated to the dollar from R18.841 to \$1 on the 10th to R19.182 to \$1¹¹. The Rand continued to depreciate to R19.315 to \$1 on the 12th of May. This decline was noted to be a result of the allegations, and even though SA declined these allegations the market showcased a similar reaction as the FTSE South Africa¹² displayed a dip from 3,901.52 on the 10th of May in 2023 to 3,819.90 on the 11th of May, however it showcased an improvement on the 12th of May to 3,868.26 unlike the rand to dollar exchange rate.

The presidency officially released the executive summary of the results to the public on the 3rd of September. On the next day, the rand depreciated to the dollar from R18.845 to \$1 on the 1st on the first of September, to R19.121 to \$1 on the 4th of September¹¹ (the currency and the index did not change on the 3rd due to the nature of the weekday). The executive summary showcased partial results which received scepticism from the public who desired the full report. Additionally, prominent figures such as investors were also left with the partial results therefore, potentially increasing their scepticism. However, the FTSE⁷ indicated an increase from the 1st of September 2023, when it was 3,849.59 to 3,871.06 on the 4th of September 2023.

2.2. South Africa-United States Trade

This section of the study aims to highlight whether and how trade changed during the course of the crisis. Table 2.1 has been derived from US Census Bureau and illustrates US exports to South Africa as well US imports from South Africa.

Table 2.2 United States-South Africa Trade

Month	Exports	Imports	Balance
January 2024	429.1	1,160.7	-731.7
February 2024	442.3	967.6	-525.3
March 2024	526.6	974.3	-447.7
April 2024	505.8	918.5	-412.7
May 2024	449.1	1,035.6	-586.5
June 2024	506.0	1,161.9	-655.9
July 2024	501.4	1,682.6	-1,181.2
August 2024	545.5	1,336.8	-791.3
September 2024	414.1	1,325.3	-911.2
October 2024	548.6	1,309.5	-760.9
TOTAL 2024	4,868.5	11,873.0	-7,004.5

Source: US Census Bureau (2024)¹³

In the same way that the exchange fluctuated during the period of the crises, Trade between the two countries also showcased a fluctuation as indicated by the table above. As

¹¹ Exchange Rates, *US Dollar (USD) to South African Rand (ZAR) Exchange Rate History for 2023, 2024*, <https://www.exchange-rates.org/exchange-rate-history/usd-zar-2023>, 17 March 2024.

¹² Financial Times Stock Exchange South Africa, *FTSE South Africa Historical Data*, 2024, <https://www.investing.com/indices/ftse-south-africa-historical-data>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

¹³ US Census Bureau, *Trade in Goods with South Africa*, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c7910.html>, Accessed on 17 March 2024.

observed in the table above, US exports to South Africa declined from \$698.6m in April to \$672.7m in May and further dropped to \$514.0m in June¹⁴, an overall decline of 35.92%. However, following the conclusion of the investigations and the executive release of the report, exports from the US to South Africa in September were at \$758.6m, a sizable increase of 22.8%, from \$617.8m in the month prior however it dropped to \$587.7m in October. A potential indication of displeasure or tension between the two countries over the investigation results which were expected to conclude the *Lady R* case.

Imports from SA to the US also fluctuated; however, unlike the exports, the imports from SA saw a sizable increase from \$979.8m in April 2023, to \$1663.6m¹⁴ in May, indicating a roughly 69.8% increase. However, imports dropped to \$1393.4m in June, following the period of the allegations, which, although there was a 19,39% drop, showcases trade levels that remain 42.21% higher than what they initially were in April, prior to the incident. Potentially, it is a result of the manifestation of the actual impact of the allegation. In September, the results of the investigation were released, following the August declaration stating that SA was not illegally transporting weapons to Russia and during that period, US imports from SA slightly decreased from \$1276.5m in August to \$1253.8m in September, and further declined to \$1020.1m in October.

2.3. Analysis of Communication Crises between the US and South Africa

Discussing crises through the lens of communication requires analysing the nature of the crisis. A crisis may be characterised by the extent of the damage, the stakeholders involved and the reputation. Crisis communication requires involvement of both parts of the spectrum in problem solving, ethics and effective communication. US ambassador to South Africa, Reuben Brigety sparked a crisis through the media which caused a bit of tension between the USA and South Africa when he accused the South African government of providing arms to Russia.¹⁵

Rueben Brigety became the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa following his nomination by President Joseph R. Biden on February 10, 2022.¹⁵ He has taken the helms of the ambassadorship since then. The role of an ambassador or diplomat is to establish and ensure there are effective relations between their home country and the country they have been placed in. During this period, the diplomat ensures that both the interests of his home country and of the host country are protected. In this case, it can be assumed that this is what Rueben Brigety was trying to achieve as an ambassador whose first priority was to protect his nation's interests. Following his allegation Brigety was summoned by the South African ministry to discuss the claims.¹⁶ The ambassador, through a public conference, communicated what he saw as an opportunity to clear out the misinterpretation of what was received as allegations by the South African government.¹⁷ Despite having publicly stated that he would bet his life

¹⁴ US Census Bureau, *Trade in Goods with South Africa*, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c7910.html>, Accessed on 17 March 2024.

¹⁵ Charles A. Ray, *When Diplomats are Undiplomatic*, 2023, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/06/when-diplomats-are-undiplomatic/>. Accessed on 16 March 2024.

¹⁶ Gerald Imray, *South Africa summons US ambassador over weapons for Russia allegations*. AP News, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/united-states-south-africa-russia-weapons-sanctions-f54587d43db7bb5d13d043fa87d2e87a>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

¹⁷ Jason Felix, *UPDATE | US ambassador off-the-hook after making bombshell Russia allegations*, 2023. <https://www.news24.com/news24/politics/government/off-the-hook-us-ambassador-to-host-media-since-first-making-bombshell-russia-allegations-20230607>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

on the accuracy of the US intelligence surrounding this issue, the tension was evident and observable through the fluctuations in the trade relations between the two states during the course of the allegations, atop the declining values of the South African currency to the Dollar. In response to Brigety's statement, while no action was taken against the Ambassador, the then International Relations and Cooperation Minister Naledi Pandor, expressed her disappointment at the allegations.¹⁷

The US government's reaction to Brigety's statement did not come as a surprise. Few governments would let such statements go without some kind of response, especially considering that there are people in the United States who would argue that his statement was undiplomatic¹⁵. This is while it may be argued that a diplomat does not always have to agree with what will favour the host countries' government and not offend them. Following the allegations made by Reuben Brigety, the South African government released a statement on the official government website, expressing that the Ambassador's remarks disregarded the cooperation and relationship between the USA and South Africa¹⁸, which was perplexing, given the mutually beneficial nature of the relation¹⁹. The cooperation between the two countries was characterised by the engagements between officials from the US government and the South African delegation, under the leadership of Dr Sydney Mufumadi, a National Security Special Advisor to the President, around the period of the allegations.

In September 2023, the Ambassador visited the University of Johannesburg where he delivered a public lecture about the relationship between the United States and South Africa. During this visit, he placed an emphasis on the history of South Africa and the US, and highlighted how the shared history between the two states was the driving force behind the strengthening of ties of the countries.²⁰ Additionally, the ambassador referenced the goals of the Presidents and officials of both countries, which would contribute to achieving their national objectives while also allowing them to address international challenges together.²⁰ This public lecture, which resulted in papers being written about the "special relationship" between the US and South Africa can be seen as a former damage control, as the ambassador made emphasis on wanting to focus on the positives and not the negatives that were making headlines, with reference to the *Lady R* situation.²¹ This statement was used to ensure that the relationship between the US and South Africa is not discredited and redeems both parties' public image, as in essence the allegations against South Africa were being cleared without directly stating it, and the US was also putting itself in a better position in the country.

Considering the above, it can be deduced that crisis communication was effectively conducted considering how regardless of declines, SA-US relations, although strained, did

¹⁸ South African Government, *Presidency responds to claims of weapons supply to Russia made by the US Ambassador*, 2023, <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/presidency-responds-claims-weapons-supply-russia-made-us-ambassador-11-may>. Accessed on 17 March 2024.

¹⁹ Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, *The South African Government demarches the US Ambassador*, 2023, <https://dirco.gov.za/the-south-african-government-demarches-the-us-ambassador/>. Accessed on 1 December 2024.

²⁰ University of Johannesburg, *US Ambassador highlights shared history to strengthen South Africa-US ties*, 2023, <https://news.uj.ac.za/news/us-ambassador-highlights-shared-history-to-strengthen-south-africa-us-ties/>. Accessed on 18 March 2024.

²¹ Mission U.S., *Remarks by U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, Reuben E. Brigety II: The Significance of the partnership between South Africa & The United States*. U.S. Embassy & Consulates in South Africa, 2023, <https://za.usembassy.gov/the-significance-of-the-partnership-between-south-africa-the-united-states-uj-20-september-2023/>. Accessed on 18 March 2024.

not give away. Trade levels between the two countries although fluctuating showcased growth. In September 2023 alone trade between the two countries was higher than it was prior to the incident, most specifically when observing the trade levels of April to those of September. Therefore, this illustrates that South Africa-US relations remain intact with potential for growth.

3. Practical implementation of the theory

In addressing the allegations made by the US Ambassador to South Africa about the *Lady R* situation, the study adopts the Image Repair theory. Image repair theory is a set of principles designed to examine and for understanding the maintenance of reputation when it is damaged or threatened²², such as during a crisis. A response to how a crisis is communicated is based on the image repair theory and is influenced by the nature or severity of the crisis. The image repair theory derives some of its aspects from the apologia theory and therefore comprises some of the theory's features including conducting an analysis which is based on the presence of "denial", "bolstering", "differentiation" and "transcendence".²³ The theory of apologia was applied mostly in the context of crisis communication in corporate, an organisation and in political misconduct. In a situation when an individual or even a state is faced with a situation that threatens the image and reputation, different measures are considered to clear their names, and this is where the image repair theory comes in.

The Image Repair Theory (IRT) consists of principles that serve as tools to assess situations threatening one's reputation, with the aim of restoring and maintaining reputation. It consists of first, blame shifting or a straightforward denial and not holding yourself accountable. Secondly, is stating that there was a lack of control, that the outcome was an accident or that the act was not done with bad intention. Thirdly, eliminating the intensity of the offence of the event, this entails an attempt at making the audience feel less offended by the event.²⁴ Additionally, the other typologies under the theory are corrective action whereby a state restores its affairs and mortification which is when a state/individual/party issues an apology. This theory involves sub- categories being bolstering, minimising negative feelings, differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser and compensation. In the case of South Africa and the United States, the category that best suits the event is the category of 'minimising of negative feelings' which entails releasing a public statement talking about the positive attributes, which the Ambassador did when delivering a speech about the close relations between the US and South Africa and how they plan on working together going forward. In this regard the image of the US is repaired as their intentions were questionable after the wrongful allegations were made by the Ambassador who represents the US.

After a public effort was made to shift away from the allegations, civilians had a bit of hope restored that the two countries could continue to have effective relations. In relation to the selected theory, the second applicable strategy under the theory of IRT is 'denial', which occurred when Minister Naledi Pandor of South Africa stated that the allegations were in fact

²² Kwabena Sarfo Sarfo-Kantankah, "Apologia, image repair and rhetoric in the defence of electoral defeat", *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 3, 10, 2019, p. 2.

²³ Lee B. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, "They spoke in defence of themselves: on the generic criticism of apologia", *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 1973, p. 275.

²⁴ William L. Benoit, *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: a theory of image restoration strategies*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

not true and misrepresented the South African government²⁵ The minister also clarified that it was/ is companies from the private sector and not the South African government.²⁵ The strategy of corrective action is also applied as South Africa, in trying to repair their image, proposed that investigations be conducted which were conducted and the outcome stated that the evidence proved the offloading of arms instead of loading.²⁶ This outcome also complements the theory of transcendence as the South African government was able to defend itself by stating that the order was since awaited from 2018 for the national defence force, but the manufacturing and packaging was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine²⁶. In justifying the use of the US sanctioned Russian ship, South Africa stated that it had no control over the choice of vessel to transport the arms, and neither the South African Defence Force (SANDF), AB Logistics and the division of Armscor responsible for providing logistic freight and travel services had any control over the selection.²⁶

4. Policy recommendation

In an effort to mitigate crises, especially in addressing matters relating to other states, which may potentially affect state relations, leaders and diplomats should avoid responding to matters impulsively using the adequate diplomatic channels. This can be achieved by ensuring that they use only credible sources with verified information, to avoid compromising their own image and the reputation of the parties involved. This is because not only does publicising harmful information ruin the reputation of parties involved, but it also harms the well-being of a country, and this is evident through the economic (in)stability of one or more of the states involved following the crisis. While diplomats are expected to respond effectively and in a timely manner when unexpected issues arise that may affect their home country's interests and reputation, they need to respond in a manner that aligns with their own and host country's value's, interests and objectives and they must follow the necessary proper channels so as to ensure that information is verified before statements are released. This in turn will assist with ensuring that false information is not spread and that the integrity of all involved parties is protected.

There have been a number of countries that have used this strategy successfully. For example, Canada. Canada is well known for its prioritisation of multilateral diplomacy and therefore ensures that they rely on verified intelligence and credible sources when dealing with international issues²⁷. When faced with a crisis diplomats and leaders in Canada ensure that their response to the situation aligns with national values of peace and stability.²⁷ They achieve this by encouraging collaboration through institutions like the United Nations, to ensure that there is alignment. This is particularly relevant given Canada's status as a founding member of the UN, implying its reliance on the UN Charter to develop and maintain friendly relations between nations even in times of crisis. Canada as one of the countries that

²⁵ Malaika Ditabo, *#LadyRussiagate | US ambassador 'totally misrepresented our country and government' - Naledi Pandor*, 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/politics/government/ladyrussiagate-us-ambassador-totally-misrepresented-our-country-and-government-naledi-pandor-20230516>. Accessed on 19 March 2024.

²⁶ Rédaction Africanews, *Arms-to-Russia inquiry: what has the South African investigation revealed*, 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/09/06/arms-to-russia-inquiry-what-has-the-south-african-investigation-revealed/>. Accessed on 19 March 2024.

²⁷ Government of Canada, *Canada and The United Nations*, 2024 https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/un-onu/index.aspx?lang=eng. Accessed 6 Dec. 2024.

have been active participants in resolving the conflict between Palestine and Israel, has been able to voice out its concerns through the UN following the guidelines of the UN Charter.²⁸ In 1978 Canada used the UN as a channel to express its opposition in Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and through this institution Canada was able to defend the importance of respecting Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial autonomy.²⁹ This illustrates that states using institutions such as the UN to resolve conflicts while also protecting their nations interests is an effective option to curb a crisis between states.

Another country that can be used as a point of reference is Japan. Japan, when faced with challenges with its neighbouring countries such as China, it ensures the usage of restraint as a diplomatic strategy in addressing issues.³⁰ For example, when Japan was responding to the East China Sea dispute, it relied on credible diplomatic channels, rather than inflammatory rhetoric, and this was effective in easing tensions while protecting its own interests. Japan essentially responding by making a request to China to abide with the law and order in the international community³¹ Japan also took the responsibility of enlightening the international community about the dispute, to give understanding of the situation. This was after China's constant incursions into Japan's waters around the Senkaku islands.

5. Conclusion

This paper analysed crisis communication and its ability to mitigate the Lady R incident/ crisis in South Africa that occurred in May 2023. It was able to answer the research question and deduce that the was indeed a crisis communication that was undertaken by the two countries involved assisted in mitigating the effects of the crisis and in protecting South Africa-US relations. In its pursuit to analyse the effects of the crisis communication, the study firstly indicated that the Lady R incident that occurred may be considered a crisis considering how it posed as a threat to South Africa-US relations, and posed as a threat to South Africa's image in the global arena considering for example South Africa's position as a state party in the ATT. Additionally, it analysed the short term implications of the crisis on the South African Rand to Dollar exchange rate which showcased a decline as during the period the onset of the crisis, and also investigated the trade between the two countries which, although it initially declined, later showed improvements during the period of investigation. In the same way as the currency declined following the allegations the FTSE South Africa Index, also indicated a depreciation as the market's reaction to the allegations, however it was quick to showcase an improvement following the initial date of the allegations. Furthermore, the paper analysed the execution of communication during and following the investigation period, which showcased diplomatic exchanges between the two countries, therefore adequately executing crisis communication and mitigating the impact of the crisis. Utilising the Image Repair Theory, the paper was able to highlight that three out of the five topologies of strategies indicated by this theory, could be identified, namely, denial, reducing effectiveness of event, more specifically transcendence and corrective action. These strategies are also an indication

²⁸ Amelia C. Arsenault and Costanza Musu, "Canada, the United Nations, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 2021, 1 27, p. 102, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2020.1867596>.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ Research & Commentary Site, *Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty*, 2019, https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo_eg/index.html. Accessed 5 December 2024.

³¹ Amelia C. Arsenault; Costanza Musu, *op. cit*.

that South Africa executed crisis communication as a means of mitigating the crisis and safeguarding South Africa-US relations. Lastly the study provides a policy recommendation, which can work as a tool to prevent and mitigation the rise of similar crises which can be sparked by miscommunication, misinterpretation and misinformation when leaders or diplomats have to make public statements.

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THE PASSION FOR THE REAL IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA: IMAGINATION BETWEEN IMMEDIACY AND OPACITY

Călina Părau

Introduction

News series reassure us of their intention "to ditch the spin"¹ and present the unvarnished truth; TV soap operas depicting politics project a "backstage of politics"², implicitly promising dramatized access to a 'behind the scenes' truth or political 'real'; the truth-weight of the past is still a work in progress with the recent (April 24, 2021) U.S. recognition of the Armenian genocide, or the failures in implementing the Stormont Agreement and dealing with the legacy of the Troubles in the UK and Northern Ireland. How exactly are these affective relations to the 'real' and the embedded processes of 'unveiling' the truth constructed or played out in the media and within the dynamics of our cultural landscapes? The dynamics of spreading and consuming information in our present-day society is marked by a necessary coordinated or uncoordinated attempt at confining falsehood, disinformation, and negotiating our present relation to the historical past. I believe this is a great endeavour that points to our collective and individual responsibility towards the need for developing media and global literacies.

Consequently, I think that a critical perspective upon the mystified attempt at conjuring the 'real' in various discourses across distinct types of media should work hand in hand with the efforts mentioned above. This mystification is supported by the mental picture of a heroized consumer of information grappling with misinformation in the name of a factual, universal or inflexible truth. The self-awareness regarding vulnerability to media bias has been completely taken over by the widely spread individual confidence of safely and accurately navigating the information flow. Opinions are dressed up as instruments in the 'battle' for truth, while the democratic 'truth'—fostering differences, nuanced perspectives, considerate negotiation, and openness to the other—is less solemnly advocated for in general. As opposed to biases, theories, interpretations, narratives or not yet debunked myths, this sought-after 'truth' is framed as a beacon of 'resistance' in Western cultural democracies. This quest for 'truth' is often seen as the possibility of gazing at events and situations by rising above the tide of manipulation and ideology (irrespective of the impossibility of such a position) and exposing, thus, the mechanisms of power that rest (from this heroized perspective) *outside* the individual, not within the construction of self and identity. This perspective on power dynamics as laying "outside" the coordinates of subjectivity could be misleading, as it fails to bring into the spotlight the inherent power mechanisms through which we articulate thoughts and opinions.

¹ Unspun World with John Simpson.

² Ruth Wodak and Bernhard Forchtner, "The Fictionalization of Politics", in Ruth Wodak, Bernhard Forchtner (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics*, New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. 572-585.

The Quest for True Identity: Primordial Sentiment or the 'Work of the Imagination'?

Different forms of attachment to foundational 'truths' are essential for the articulation of ethnic, national or cultural identity. According to the theory of primordialism, national and ethnic identities are entrenched, enduring, and ancient. Appadurai believes that Western modernity implicitly brought about a distancing from such primordialist traps, through technological progress, modern science and mass participation in politics. This project of modernity, imposed on the non-Western world as well, has not been very successful in counteracting the disparities informing the ethnic violence associated to the primordialist affect: "there is increasing evidence that Western models of political participation, education, mobilization, and economic growth, which were calculated to distance the new nations from their most retrograde primordialisms, have had just the opposite effect."³ Consequently, the question Appadurai advances is "why ethnic primordialisms are more alive than ever?"⁴ Appadurai suggests that in trying to answer this delicate question, we need to avoid focusing on the "mechanical workings of the primordial homunculus that drives group politics, especially in the Third World"⁵ and thus acknowledge the vital importance of imagination in politics. In other words, a deeper understanding of conflicts (mostly ethnic) cannot be achieved by assuming that something like a mechanics of primordial sentiment prevails at the level of groups/collectivities. Instead, we shall recognize the centrality of the "work of the imagination", which entails that "affect is in many important ways learned,"⁶ thus socially situated and culturally constructed, not inherent. Rather than taking a look at how lurking sentiments breed opinions, action, collective mobilization, Appadurai invites us to observe a reversed cause and effect relation by considering "how cultural and political schemata imprint themselves upon bodily experience."⁷

In my opinion, our relation to existing discourses of "truth" and quests for the "real" in our volatile contemporary world is also bred by the schemata of the primordialist trap. Our desire for realness, fixed identities, graspable certainties or factual information stripped of context (generally) is framed as an inherent, "natural" drive of our inquisitive human mind in search for reliability. If I apply Appadurai's ideas to the relation between power and affects, then this contemporary desire for realness needs to be viewed as an imprint of cultural and political schemata. Affects are different from emotions, feelings, predispositions, and they are not confined to individuals, groups or domains of life. As Ben Anderson claims, affects display a combinatorial complexity allowing for a careful observation of how "forms of power work through affective life."⁸ Affects also open up "a moment of indetermination into the mediation of life"⁹ supporting the inter-related conditions for change. Thus, I would like to look into how the need and construct of reliability and the sense of realness in our present-day society is attached to or combines with various collective affects that perpetuate the effects of power, but could also disrupt them.

³ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁸ Ben Anderson, *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2014, p. 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Distrust and Imagination in the Post-Truth Era

In order to carry out this brief analysis, I will focus on those affects that are tied to the set of values that determines our perceptions upon reliability, namely honesty, transparency, and proximity to the 'wound' (meaning the emotional involvement of the witness). The interpretation and circulation of discourses is significantly influenced not only by our perceptions of the different levels of 'truth' or 'realness', but also by our appreciation of the distinct possibilities of reading into inaccessible truths and distant domains of the real. The promise of 'truth' framed as genuineness, factual-based, objectivity/neutrality or in terms of privileged access to an experience is underlined by a powerful collective affect: the sense of the real. I believe that a theoretical inquiry into the negotiation of our mediated sense of realness (at the level of mass communication) and the intricate ways in which people/experiences are entrusted to discourses is noteworthy in a post-truth world, marked by distrust, confusion or radicalization.

Post-truth is a concept that sheds light on a phenomenon related to the media, and the dynamics of spreading and consuming information. As Matthew D'Ancona asserts, the "collapse of trust is the social basis of the Post-Truth era."¹⁰ The spread of mistrust has many layers encompassing institutions, businesses, scientific discourses etc. Moreover, this erosion of trust results in society becoming "an atomised collection of individuals."¹¹ Thus, the process of digging for the truth and the quest for unveiling the real falls entirely upon the atomised individuals navigating strings of overwhelmingly contradictory opinions, emotions and affects. As D'Ancona points out, emotions are an unreliable and inadequate foundation for the contours of a shared reality: "surprise, pleasure, recognition and indignation are fundamental to the human experience: but they are an insufficient basis upon which to base our versions of reality."¹² Given the rise of this fragmentation of reality in the post-truth era, the quest for the truth turns into a pursuit of self-legitimization. Consequently, the 'struggle' for the real is not actually a defence of veracity against falsehood, but it also becomes a battle for power waged by the ways in which symbolic realities get to be appropriated at a personal, individual level.

I believe imagination is key for the possibility of taking one step out of intransigent emotions in a post-truth era. By 'imagination' I understand more than the simple individual exercise of coming to terms with a confusing and chaotic symbolic reality. Imagination is viewed more in connection to Arjun Appadurai's conceptualization of the term, understood as "a property of collectives", meaning as the dynamics of conflicting products of the imagination that sets the ground for envisioning ways of living and possibilities of action within a transnational, global landscape. Imagination mediates the relation between large-scale realities and local ones, in the sense that it configures or restructures the realisms through which ordinary lives are reflected. As Appadurai puts it, "the power of the imagination in the fabrication of social lives is inescapably tied up with images, ideas, and opportunities that come from elsewhere, often moved around by the vehicles of mass media."¹³ It is through the power of the imagination that individuals draw on the realisms of this "elsewhere" they are

¹⁰ Matthew D'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back*, London: Ebury Press, 2017, p. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 54.

exposed to, in order to tackle the large-scale realities they can imaginatively articulate. Moreover, I believe imagination could be understood also in relation to dis-alienation in the post-truth era and the possibility of understanding the hybrid character of representations and symbolic reality. Additionally, the efforts of imagination in a post-truth era should enable people to embrace a nuanced, multifaceted passion for the real which is not connected to identity, but to the unrepresentable excess of reality. As Alberto Toscano remarks, in a digital age, seemingly reconciled by affluence and technology, it might seem like various forms of fanaticism have been rendered implausible. Despite this, the frailty of our contemporary "common sense" should not come as a surprise. The "common sense forged in a supposedly post-utopian age"¹⁴ has been superseded by contradictions, mistrust, confusion and atomisation. The efforts of the imagination should underlie our passion for the real outside or beyond "an intransigent politics of conviction."¹⁵ I believe the inadequacy of "common sense" to social reality can only be dealt with through the power of the imagination.

Mediation and the Passion for the Real

As Rosemary Overell and Brett Nicholls point out, in the context of our contemporary global world "to be literate and savvy is to be able to ascertain the real from the fake."¹⁶ The "crisis of realness" associated with the 'post-truth' era comes under scrutiny being viewed also as an instrument of power, rather than simply as a proliferation of uncertainty in the Western world. "Screeds against 'fake' presidents, news and polls dominate public debate. With this designation of the 'fake' comes the implication—and appeal to—the real as virtuous, moral and somehow...lost—or at least misplaced—in the current moment."¹⁷ To question the framing of the real as 'in crisis' or to view realness "as a site for an affective phantasy"¹⁸ are key to tackling the problem of representation and that of the share of truth in our contemporary world.

Alain Badiou had already theorized the underling project of the twentieth century in terms of "the passion for the real". Badiou believed that the century's thinking was imbued with the obsession for understanding the relation between violence and the mask, thus aesthetically and politically seeking to articulate the possibility of an "unmasked" real (or, in other words, a naked truth). This is, according to Badiou, the reason why the last century was one of destruction, one that tried to isolate the real through purging and purification, rather than treating and understanding the real as a gap (an idea already suggested by the avant-garde): "There exists a passion for the real that is obsessed with identity: to grasp real identity, to unmask its copies, to discredit fakes. [...] This passion can only be fulfilled as destruction."¹⁹ I argue that the 21st century has got its own "passion for the real" which is characterized by a desire for grasping a non-mediated reality, realizing a sense of the real founded on the erasure of traces of mediation, immediacy, and emotional participation.

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin differentiate between two types of mediation which comprise the underlying practices of cultural productions. On the one hand, there is hypermedia, a type of mediation that constructs representations by focusing on exposing the

¹⁴ Alberto Toscano, *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea*, London: Verso, 2010, p. 252.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

¹⁶ Rosemary Overell, Brett Nichols (eds.), *Post-Truth and the Mediation of Reality: New Conjunctures*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. vii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁹ Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. by Alberto Toscano, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 56.

inherent mechanism of the medium being employed, playing with the conventions and the limitations of that medium, and allowing the viewer or the consumer to become a witness of the hypermediated real, enjoying the opacity of the media. On the other hand, there is transparent media that seeks to use the medium of representation as a transparent lens, employing the logic of immediacy, which is supposed to bypass the medium and "leave us in the presence of the thing represented."²⁰ Both of these tendencies are viewed as "opposite manifestations of the same desire: the desire to get past the limits of representation and to achieve the real."²¹ The real is mostly understood by David Bolter and Grusin as emotional response. Craving for the real "behind the stages" in a media-saturated reality, we feel less inclined to acknowledge the idea that all media (implicitly all representations) are a remediation of the real or to embrace the mediated experience of the real.

New media enthusiasts had suggested at the end of the twentieth century that the Internet would bring about a new democracy, "arguing that digital technology offers us, a transparent democracy, in which the medium of political representation disappears and citizens can communicate their political will directly with each other or with their government."²² As we have seen in the past decades, ways of thinking aligned to the logic of immediacy and transparency fall short of empowering the citizens as they are blind to the intricate multilayered structures of technology-mediated social participation and engagement. Moreover, digital technologies gave rise to simplified and schematic interpretations of events, perpetuating polarization, and, thus, conflating the experience of the real to these intense dynamics of opinion manufacturing. For Nina Cvar and Robert Bobnič, our technologically mediated experience of the real is very much linked to "sensory alienation"²³ which leads to the "aestheticization of politics" and "the problem of the imaginary"²⁴ (in its relation to politics). This technology mediated real is intertwined with a fragmented subjectivity that wishes to overcome its alienation through "phantasmagoria" (the illusion of wholeness). Thus, the post-truth digital world has generated the "digital flâneur", "a self-centered, all-knowing subjectivity, incessantly floating in its phantasmagorical autistic imaginarium, pushing itself into the abyss of fascism."²⁵ Additionally, the underlying media principle "Real is communicational, the communicational is real"²⁶ has indirectly bred this post-truth aestheticized regime of politics, failing to provide the audience with a way out of this fallacy (and out of this overwhelmingly saturated digital environment). Thus, the 21st century's passion for the real might as well be seen as a trap for the political imagination which cannot accommodate the incommunicable, the digitally unimaginable and the non-truth. Moreover, the contemporary political imagination seems to forget that the real is only possible as "the finiteness of representation."²⁷

²⁰ Jay David Bolter, Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000, p. 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²³ Nina Cvar, Robert Bobnič, "Truth, Post-truth, Non-truth: New Aestheticized Digital Regime of Truth", in Rosemary Overll, Brett Nichols (eds.), *Post-Truth and the Mediation of Reality: New Conjectures*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 82.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Stories, Abstractions, and the Conflict of Interpretations

The passion for the real in our century is imbricated with what Patrick Colm Hogan terms "a passion for plot" which stems from the emotional organization of stories, the overarching structure of our engagement with the world. Hogan argues that "our minds appear to operate significantly through prototypes or, roughly, average cases of given categories."²⁸ The ways in which we respond to incidents and interpret events are wired by our "emotion systems" which play out this passion for plot. I believe averaging and prototypical stories define the *modus operandi* of our era and implicitly influence our quest for the truth. Acknowledgment of the possibilities and limitations of the passion for plot goes hand in hand with a thorough understanding of the relation between the fictional and the factual. I believe that, sometimes, the passion for the real gets articulated as a reaffirmation of the factual above the fictional. This attempts at isolating the fictional or excluding it from the mechanism of the real seems to completely disregard the ways in which our minds draw on storytelling. Moreover, negotiating the real (or discourses of truth) as resting outside this passion for plot fuels the "intransigent politics of conviction". Talking about narrativity in postmodernism, Frederic Jameson mentions a "crisis of the fictional" intertwined with "new defenses of reality and the factual."²⁹ In an information society characterized by the conflation of reality and information, fiction is viewed as a glitch or an excess within the mechanics of information production and consumption. Jameson analyses the opening lines of Alexander Kluge's tale "Mass Fatality in Venice" which mimics a reportage writing style. The tale bears no traces of authorial presence, provides no context or any other clues that would enable the reader to tell if the narrative is a figment of Kluge's imagination or a newspaper clipping. Jameson remarks that this "weakening of the fictional also tends to undermine its opposite number, the category of the factual."³⁰ This storytelling style marked by neutrality sheds light on the following issue concerning the global readership and the ways in which they read into events. Given the absence of context and the futility of explanations regarding the frame of the narrative, readers operate with "the abstraction of the pure empirical facts themselves."³¹ I believe the contemporary passion for the real is galvanized by these kind of abstractions which generally confine interpretations and readings to the plane of immediacy.

Another dilemma of our inherent passion for the real is, in my opinion, linked to the general (im)possibility of interpreting, integrating or engaging with difference (which then becomes an abstraction). In her book *Cultural Diversity and Global Media: The Mediation of Difference*, Eugenia Siapera implicitly provides an answer to the question how "real" are our encounters with difference in a globalized world. She argues that all our encounters with differences are "always-already mediated"³² despite the transparency with which the media ostensibly conjures them. According to Siapera, there are mainly three regimes of representing difference. Firstly, there is the regime characterized by the "racialization" of subjects belonging to certain cultures, underlying themes of violence and irrationality, usually constructing

²⁸ Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*, Lincoln: University Press, 2011, p. 25.

²⁹ Frederic Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism*, London: Verso, 2013, pp. 189-190.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

³² Eugenia Siapera, *Cultural Diversity and Global Media: The Mediation of Difference*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p. 5.

subjects as "weak victims."³³ Secondly, differences can be domesticated by insisting on sameness, hybridization or the banality of difference, making us turn a blind eye to inequalities. Thirdly, the regime of commodification "involves the transformation of identity into a commodity to be consumed"³⁴, leading for instance to the manufacturing of ethnic "Barbie" dolls. None of these regimes of representing differences in the global media underlies the realness of differences as fracture or irreducible otherness. The tendency to objectify, commodify or domesticate difference is embedded in a simplified rendition which plays out our passion for the real as a power mechanism that diminishes or completely effaces opacity, heterogeneity, and the unassimilable.

Another valence of the 21st century's passion for the real comprises the graphic mediatized portrayal of violence and human suffering. Mark Seltzer describes "the wound culture" as "the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound."³⁵ This phenomenon leads to what Seltzer calls the "personalization" of politics, meaning "the narrowing of public experience to scenes of privacy and the scene of the trauma."³⁶ This passion for the real constructed on the wound entails a short-circuited relation to the world where shock-value experiences replace the intricate "work of the imagination". In this case, the affect of realness aims to organize perception and interpretation by exploiting emotional reality as the horizon of truth. As Gianni Vattimo explains in *A Farewell to Truth*, our present-day society wants to grasp the whole, engaging with the truth as correspondence (Vattimo is talking about paradigmatic, not objective correspondence). Thus, Vattimo suggests that incomprehensible life forms are being rendered "more emotionally participative"³⁷ within this game of correspondence that strives to appropriate totality. This makes us easily "dispense with the conflict of interpretations"³⁸ and embrace an instrumentalized passion for the real, despite the pluralistic character of our culture.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I believe that discourses which draw on a weaponized passion for the real in the media need to come under closer scrutiny. Our desire for the real "behind the scenes" should always be viewed in context and understood within the framework of the "work of the imagination", rather than as a universal, trans-cultural pursuit of objectivity or reliability. Media discourses drawing on the underlying idea of a fully comprehensible and emotionally accessible reality need to be counter-balanced by an imagination that integrates opacity (and the incommunicable) or by the awareness regarding processes of mediation. The power to reaffirm the place of the fictional alongside the legitimate passion for the real (in all its distinct versions) onto the political and social stages might have a positive impact on how we read into narratives and events, pushing us to acknowledge various forms and layers of

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁵ Mark Seltzer, "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere", in *The MIT Press October Magazine*, Vol. 80 (Spring, 1997), p. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁷ Gianni Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth*, trans. by William McCuaig, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, p. xxxiv.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

mediation. This could lead to the possibility of having a more nuanced perception of otherness and its forms of difference in media discourses. Additionally, in a post-truth era that capitalizes significantly on how people engage with information, understanding more about the drives and needs of the citizens in safeguarding a sense of coherence or identity based on the passion for the real is crucial for the development of global literacies. Imagination plays a role in how we tackle this sense of loss of the real in a fragmented global reality, allowing us to envision the world beyond the power mechanisms of primordialisms and truths.

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THE PERPETUATION OF THE CRISIS AT THE LEVEL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. IT'S TIME FOR RESILIENCE

Dorin-Mircea Dobra

Introduction

Beginning with the historical development of the term "resilience" in both academic literature and the *acquis communautaire*, we can observe that it coincides with a period in the European Union's history where crises appear to have become a constant presence. However, the Union, through its predecessor institutions, has also experienced crises before the period outlined by us, that is, the last 15 years. Whether we are talking about the Empty Chair Crisis or the Oil Crisis, they could also be signalled in the previous period, through a much longer period of time. It is precisely this focus that our present work focuses on, with the inherent research question: "Have the last fifteen years of almost continuous crises at the level of the Union brought a new type of necessary institutional reaction, namely resilience?". And, from here, automatically, the answer to this question will naturally lead to others: "How exactly do the current crises differ from those in the history of the Union?", and, primarily, "To what extent does the Union respond to the objective of resilience, respectively of strengthening, optimizing and consolidating the European construct?".

We will try to bring into the discussion a classification of crises throughout the entire history of the European Union, then seek to emphasize their meaning, within an analytical evaluation, in order to answer the main research question.

The first crises of the Union

We will first refer to several crises that the European Communities, then the European Union, have experienced during this period, crises inherent to institutional or continental developments.

In chronological order, we will mention the "Empty Chair Crisis", because of the negotiations, more precisely their failure, on budgetary, institutional or voting quorum issues in the new Single Commission of the European Communities. "The French government wanted these issues separated so that progress might be made with the CAP but a stop placed on further powers and resources for Community institutions."¹ Overcoming the dissensions required the outcome known as the "Luxembourg Compromise", which included the future orientation of the Council towards the imposition of unanimous voting. „(...) In this way, each state actually acquired the right of veto, which led to a slowdown in the integration process for more than two decades, until the adoption of the Single European Act."²

Then, the oil crisis of 1973, which profoundly affected the economic evolution of the European Communities (Varoufakis?) and called into question the ability of the member states to sustain the assumed "social economy". "In the 1960s, the economies of the CEE member countries developed at an unusually fast pace. This success has attracted other

¹ Clive Archer, *Organising Europe*, Edward Arnold, London, 1994, p. 108.

² Luciana-Alexandra Ghica (coord.), *The Encyclopaedia of the European Union*, Meronia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, p. 35.

European nations to this thriving group."³ Against this background, the European Common Market is facing tensions in the oil market. "The energy crisis has caused an era of revaluations in the United States and Europe. Governments and individuals began to carefully squeeze money. Surprisingly, the Common Market, as it was also called the EC, has successfully overcome this situation."⁴

Subsequently, on June 2, 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was rejected by the Danes, and on May 29 and June 1, 2005, France and the Netherlands rejected the draft European Constitution. „To all these variables is added the ignorance of the CT content, 32% of the Dutch who voted "no" declaring that they have no information regarding the document submitted for approval through the referendum."⁵ We place the two crises in the same place, treating them as institutional, especially due to the way in which the leaders of the Union knew how to overcome the moments mentioned through negotiations with the Danish Government, the abandonment of the draft Constitution and its partial takeover in the Treaty of Lisbon.

Entering an era of crises (permanence of crises)

"Considering what the last century has meant for Europe, the continent looks surprisingly good. The overall economy is fine, no European power threatens to upset peace or the balance of power in the rest of the continent, and the economy is progressively moving towards globalization, becoming, at least theoretically, less unstable."⁶

However, these were the evaluations of 2006, made by one of the historians of the European Union. Objectively, it showed the macro landscape of the continent, fitting into the periodization that we have already proposed in our work. Despite its degree of accuracy, the assessment made in 2006 could not have predicted what was to unfold in the following year.

In turn, the four major crises, one of which is ongoing at the time of writing, namely the global monetary crisis (2007), the immigrant crisis (2015), the COVID pandemic (2020) and the Russian-Ukrainian war (2022-present), form a series of events (to which we have not added the Brexit crisis) that puts us in the situation of remaining either the followers of the "exceptionalism of crises", or to assume their permanence. "In 2008, however, Europe was shaken by an increasingly acute series of crises. The Kosovo Assembly unilaterally declared its independence from the former Yugoslavia in February. Shortly afterwards, in June 2008, the Irish people rejected the Treaty of Lisbon in a referendum. (...) Two months later, Europe was shaken by a new crisis. After NATO had announced that Ukraine and Georgia could be admitted in principle, Russia intensified its pressure on the Caucasian state, (...). Europe was still stable in September 2008, when the Western financial system collapsed unexpectedly. (...)."⁷

From the aforementioned perspective, that of the ongoing nature of crises, we have chosen the above quote to show another obvious fact: that among the major crises, the landmark crises mentioned by us, the authors list others, of lesser magnitude, but treated as

³ John Barber, *Istoria Europei moderne*, Lider, București, 1993, p. 522.

⁴ Nathan Barber, *The History of Europe*, Curtea Veche Publishing House, Bucharest 2012, p. 397.

⁵ Sergiu Gherghina, *Tratatul Constituțional între deziluzie și pragmatism*, in F. Pop, S. Gherghina (eds.), *European Union after 50 years*, Argonaut Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 42.

⁶ Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

⁷ Brendan Simms, *Europe – the Struggle for Supremacy (from 1453 to the present)*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2015, p. 379.

such. This fact led to another phenomenon that we call "crisis literature", by which we understand the flood of articles and papers that identified crises at the level of the European Union and analysed them. Starting from the definition of crisis, we will seek to assess whether the language of European crisis has legitimately installed itself in the up-to-date historical evaluation or has represented a phenomenon induced by a certain state of mind.

Defined as "a situation when people become less confident and start to worry"⁸ or as "a time of great danger, difficulty or doubt when problems must be solved or important decisions must be made."⁹, the tension side that the term implies becomes evident. Relating this significance to the extent and influence that the moments already outlined have had on the evolution of the EU, we consider it appropriate to assess them as "crises".

The question we ask at this point in our work is this: "Are crisis periods a surprise, something unexpected, in the history and evolution of the EU?" Because, from some perspectives, things should not be this way. The literature dedicated to crises and their prevention or management methods is rich, and the term "resilience" has made a career in the field, becoming common since 2010 and becoming part of the development of European strategies and policies. "Resilience is defined as the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges, but also to go through transitions in a sustainable, fair and democratic manner."¹⁰, as transposed into a Union Strategy Paper, the definition of the term stemming from the paper 'Building a scientific narrative towards a more resilient EU society'. "A *resilient society* is able to cope with and react to shocks or persistent structural changes by either resisting to it (absorptive capacity) or by adopting a degree of flexibility and making small changes to the system (adaptive capacity). At the limit, when disturbances are not manageable anymore, the system needs to engineer bigger changes, which in extreme cases will lead to a transformation (transformative capacity)."¹¹

We evaluate the reference to "transformations" as being of vital importance. Below, the mentioned text emphasizes the importance of the effects of crises, COVID in this case. "(...), it is clear that Europe needs to further strengthen its resilience and make progress, that is, not only to recover, but to emerge from the crisis stronger by stepping up these transitions."¹² We identify here, with the introduction of the term "resilience to the crisis", a positive dimension of the processuality imposed by the responses required in the face of challenges. It is about those new configurations, new mechanisms and new resources that a crisis produces and enhances in the case of an architecture of the European Union. "We summarize the rhetoric regarding the opportunity offered by a crisis emphasising the duality of the afore side one thus beyond the negative effect of the individual, state and / or world threat, the path for individual reset and systemic reconfiguration emerges under the auspices of the balancing moment."¹³

⁸ dictionary.cambridge.org

⁹ oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com

¹⁰ COM 2020/493 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0493&from=en>, accessed on 03.07.2024.

¹¹ Manca, Benczur, Giovanini, *Building a scientific narrative towards a more resilient EU society*, 2017, p. 5.

¹² COM 2020/493 final, *op. cit.*

¹³ Dănuț M. Chiriac, Floris-Adrian Ionescu, *Implications of NATO's transformation Process on Romania's National Security*, in *The EU and NATO Approaches to the Black Sea Region*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2022, p. 127.

Positive dimensions of crises, therefore. Through resilience, the EU's institutions and decision-making mechanisms can become stronger, adjusted and sometimes even regenerated. Automatically, we think of Jean Monnet's famous quote. "Europe will be forged in crises and will sum up the solutions adopted for these crises."¹⁴ Based on the statement of the founding father, we can identify another dimension of the crisis – its evaluation as an inevitable opportunity, and, hence, the need to transform it into resilience at the level of the Union.

A final thought, related to the question raised earlier, seems necessary: *At this moment, in relation to the historical evolution of the Union, the current crises, of the last 15 years, seem to us to be of greater depth and magnitude than those of the previous ones.* Is this the framework we have to get used to?

The EU's response to crises

Returning to "an opportunity for regulation, adjustment and for regeneration", we will briefly recall what the EU's institutional response to the crises it has experienced in the last two decades was.

In this regard, we will recall that after the financial crisis of the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Union came up with the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance, also known as the Fiscal Compact.¹⁵ aimed at imposing more financial responsibility on the governments of the Member States, building in particular on the Greek experience. "In October 2009, Greece's newly elected socialist government announced that the country's real deficit exceeded 12% of national income (instead of the expected 6.5%, already more than double the limit set in Maastricht."¹⁶

Subsequently, following the migrant crisis, even during it, the EU found it necessary to reassess the Dublin Treaty on the modalities for managing the refugee situation. Embodied in the European Agenda on Migration¹⁷, the EU's concern in this regard is still taking shape today, especially as waves of migrants continue to arrive on the southern shores of the Union.

Following the global pandemic experience, the Union adopted Building a European Health Union¹⁸, which has consistently highlighted the need for collective responses. "The collective effort to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other future health emergencies, requires enhanced coordination at EU level."¹⁹, a reality that puts the "Health Security Committee" into action.

Finally, the EU's reaction both, initially, through the "Council of Europe Conclusions" of 24 February 2022²⁰ and, subsequently, through the adoption of the "Ukraine Mechanism",

¹⁴ Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, Third Millenium, London, 1978, p. 8.

¹⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/RO/legal-content/summary/treaty-on-stability-coordination-and-governance-in-the-economic-and-monetary-union-also-known-as-the-fiscal-compact.html>, accessed on 03.07.2024.

¹⁶ Yannis Varoufakis, *The Global Minotaur*, Ed. Comunicare.ro, Bucharest, 2017, p. 2024.

¹⁷ COM (2016) 197 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0197>, accessed on 03.07.2024.

¹⁸ COM (2020) 724 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0724>, accessed on 03.07.2024.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2022/02/24/european-council-conclusions-24-february-2022/>, accessed on 03.07.2024.

²¹which consistently and sustainably commits the Union to supporting the Ukrainian state and their efforts to maintain its territorial integrity, can naturally be included among the EU's responses to crises and automatically to the creation of its resilience.

Conclusions

In evaluating the above-mentioned period, we put forward a classification of the crises faced by the European Union, from the perspective of their sources: we will first refer to endogenous crises, i.e. those whose source is internal to the Union; we will remember them as we have already referred to them, namely the Empty Chair Crisis, the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty 1992, and the fall of the Constitutional Treaty. Subsequently, we classify as exogenous crises the Oil Crisis, the 2008 Financial Crisis, the Immigrant Crisis, the 2020 Global Pandemic, and the War in Ukraine. The first proposed conclusion is that, in the last 15 years, the crises that have affected the Union are exclusively exogenous, excluding Brexit.

Consequently, we will refer to the dimensions and implications of the crises of the last 15 years, affirming, as a second conclusion, that they are considerable in size and affect the key socio-economic areas of the EU and its population. The impairment of financial stability, the putting of pressure on European solidarity, the questioning of the health security of the EU population, and then, through the war in Ukraine, of European security and peace itself, all prove considerable dimensions and implications that have put to a real test (as we have shown) the capacities of the European leadership to cope with such periods.

Finally, we will affirm with all conviction that the last 15 years in the history of the EU have been marked by consistent crises that have forced the European leadership to constantly refer to the term "resilience", which has thus entered the usual institutional vocabulary.

As for the way and extent to which the EU has managed to respond to these crises, especially institutionally, we will argue that, in relation to their scale and implications, the EU has managed to formulate reactions and create mechanisms that have either improved the state of affairs or have settled crises along the way, at least for the moment. However, with the four frameworks already presented as the EU's response to the crises, the Union is better prepared and equipped with mechanisms to help it cope with crises. The question that still arises is this: How much of the EU's evolution remains at the initiative of the leaders and peoples of the Union, since the great trajectories of recent years have been dictated mainly by responses to crises?

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 COM (2016) 197 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0197>, accessed on 03.07.2024.

²¹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6380-2024-INIT/en/pdf>, accessed on 03.07.2024.

- COM (2020) 724 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0724>, accessed on 03.07.2024.
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GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AFRICAN UNION AND EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS

Cathrine Kudzai Bingisai

Introduction

Contemporary global events can be best understood as contributing to the restructuring of the international system. Climate change, Coronavirus (Covid 19), the 2022 Russian-Ukraine war and the Israeli-Hamas war of 2023 are some of the challenges confronting the global arena, including the African and the European regions. Such challenges are not limited to geographical borders and have a huge impact on the prospects of global development. For instance, the Russian-Ukraine war compromises the achievement of global sustainable development in terms of social and economic sectors and trade opportunities.¹ In addition to that State, international relations are also restructured by global events, because there is a change in the international system. On the other hand, there is an increasing assumption of the role of international institutions towards sustainable development². Such a response is important for bringing State and non-state actors to address global crises. International cooperation needs to address global challenges.³ The international system is witnessing a radical rise in challenges, which gives an urgent need to closely monitor global peace, security and development trends in the global arena.

Despite its comprehensiveness, the achievement of sustainable development can be a significant factor in international relations. This study seeks to analyse global sustainable development in the relations between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU). Both the AU and the EU are driven by the zeal to promote global sustainable development, peace and security⁴. The two Unions have significantly adopted the priorities for promoting sustainable development. The AU and the EU have established a strategic partnership for development based on mutual benefit despite the geographical locations. In their 2022 Summit, the two Unions emphasised global challenges as a major concern for a joint Vision of 2030⁵. The summit expressed the Agenda for sustainable development and inclusive growth. The effects of the global challenges are evident in threatening human security factors. Hence, in the complexity of the international system, this paper argues that the AU and the

¹ P. Pereira, W. Zhao, L. Symochko, M. Inacio, I. Bogunovic and D. Barcelo, "The Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict will push back the sustainable development goals", *Geography and Sustainability*, 3(3), 2022, pp. 277-287.

² J. S. Nye and R. O. Keohane, *Power and interdependence*, Harper Collins, 1990.

³ S. Caria, "Cooperation regimes and hegemonic struggle: Opportunities and challenges for developing countries", *Politics and Governance*, 10(2), 2022, pp. 71-81.

⁴ S. Tagliapietra, "The European Union's Global Gateway: An institutional and economic overview", *The World Economy*, 47(4), 2024, pp. 1326-1335.

⁵ 6th European Union - African Union summit, Brussels, 17-18 February 2022. Accessed on 30 September 2024, Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54381/final-20220216-eu-au-background-briefing.pdf>.

EU are committed to confronting the challenges and opportunities in the quest for global sustainable development.

This study sought to analyse global sustainable development in the AU and the EU relations. This paper begins with a brief understanding of the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), then highlights the AU and the EU developments, and an overview of the historical transformations of the relations between the AU and the EU follows this. This paper also looks at the liberal intergovernmentalism theory and its approach to international relations. The study is guided by the following research objectives; to determine the key areas for the engagement of the AU and the EU in the promotion of sustainable development and to determine the perceptions between the AU and the EU in the complexity of crisis management.

Literature review

The United Nations

The United Nations (UN) presents the vulnerability of the present and future generations due to the challenges of the 21st century. The UN presented the Global Goals, on the 1st of January 2016 to the global community expected to be achieved by 2030. The UN Agenda 2030 has therefore identified 17 SDGs as an approach to international development and growth.⁶ These SDGs as listed below:

“Goal 1. End poverty, Goal 2. End hunger, Goal 3. Healthy lives, Goal 4. Quality education, Goal 5. gender equality, Goal 6. water and sanitation, Goal 7. Energy security, Goal 8. Economic growth, Goal 9. Resilient infrastructure and innovation, Goal 10. Reduce inequalities, Goal 11. cities and human settlements, Goal 12. sustainable consumption and production, Goal 13. climate change; Goal 14. Sustainable water resources, Goal 15. Land protection, Goal 16. Peace and justice, Goal 17. Global Partnership.” (UN, 2015).

The Agenda 2030 expressed a shared commitment to address the emerging risks, challenges and opportunities on the planet. During the 46th UN Session, held from the 29th of April to the 24th of May 2024, it was discussed concerns about the manifestation of varied challenges of climate change, inequalities, food and energy insecurity issues, armed conflicts inclusive of the Russian-Ukraine war and the Israel-Gaza crisis in the global arena⁷. Through globalization, geographical borders have increasingly become more connected. All the countries in the global arena are confronted by the crisis of sustainable development. Globalization has accelerated the integration of global economies, governance and environmental issues⁸. The socio-economic and political challenges have exacerbated the inequities and compromised the potential of achieving sustainable development goals. This paper argues that the Goals and targets for sustainable development can be achieved through multilateralism and global partnership. With the manifestation of geopolitics and geostrategies, whose hands lie the responsibility to promote global stability and development? The member parties are encouraged to develop different approaches at

⁶ United Nations, *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1, 2015.

⁷ Report of the Committee on Information Forty-sixth session (29 April–24 May 2024) General Assembly Official Records Seventy-ninth Session Supplement No. 21.

⁸ J. N. Rosenau, *Globalization and governance: bleak prospects for sustainability*, Routledge, 2017, pp. 201-216.

national, regional and global levels to address global issues and embrace opportunities for sustainable development⁹. Hence, this study sought to analyse the relations between the AU and the EU relations in promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth in the international system.

The African Union

The African Union (AU) was established in 2002 after its predecessor the Organization of African Unity (OAU)¹⁰. The AU is guided by the principles of collective self-determination and regional integration. The AU was established with the primary objective to promote unity among the member states and without any doubt this objective has transformed to incorporate socio-economic and political security. The AU is comprised of 55 countries and eight RECs namely the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). The AU Constitutive Act, Article 3 (j) presents that the member states seek to promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies. Further Article, 3(e) acknowledges the Union's commitment and collaboration with international actors in alignment with the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 3(n) provides the objective to work with international actors in support of the health sector¹¹. The AU also seeks to navigate the complex global arena and contribute to strategic decision-making and the achievement of sustainable development.

The AU member countries have explicitly increased their focus on promoting sustainable development witnessed by linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Agenda 2063 can be identified as a key milestone in its history for promoting a significant leap towards regional development and international relations. Agenda 2063 commends Africa's aspirations as a prosperous continent¹². Aspiration 7 presents the AU's desire to develop as a united influential global actor. Furthermore, the AU's admission to the G20 presents the opportunity to contribute to global negotiations and decision-making processes¹³, as well as marked progress in its endeavours toward global participation. This paper therefore sought to analyse the AU relations with its partner the EU towards promoting sustainable development.

The European Union

The development of the EU in 1993 can be traced back to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 which later transformed into the European Economic

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *The African Union Handbook. A Guide For Those Working With And Within The African Union*, African Union Commission and New Zealand Crown, 2023. Accessed on 30 September 2024. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31829-doc-African_Union_Handbook_2023_ENGLISH.pdf

¹¹ Constitutive Act of the African Union, 11th July 2000.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹³ P. Gopaul and J. Oluoch, *Africa's Role in the G20*, CUPEA Cuadernos de Política Exterior Argentina, (138), 2023, pp. 45-54.

Community (EEC) in 1957¹⁴. Unlike, its previously mentioned counterpart the AU, the EU is comprised of 27 countries and is indeed no exception to the confrontation of global challenges. In its Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, the EU acknowledged the Covid 19, the Russian-Ukraine war, and climate change as major crises in the global arena¹⁵ and committed to addressing the challenges. The strategy further emphasizes the importance of regional unity in upholding EU values and achievement of SDGs, promoting peace and security in the region and beyond towards a prosperous Europe. In addition, The European Commission (EC) acknowledges the challenging times of the partnership with the African region and extends its commitment to promote transformative projects for present and future partnerships between Africa and Europe¹⁶.

As a result of the global challenges and the restructuring of the global arena, the EU is transforming its relations with international actors including the African region, as a strategy to promote global peace, security and sustainable development. This paper, however, does not seek to provide the similarities and differences between the AU and the EU instead it analyses the relations between the two in approaching global sustainable development.

Historical transformations between the AU and the EU relations

The AU and the EU relations have rapidly developed in the global arena. The Yaoundé Conventions signed by the European Commission (EC) and Association of African and Malagasy States (AAMS) provided for the evolution of economic relations with a specific preference for trade and development aid. The Africa-EU relations have transformed since the Yaoundé Conventions of 1963 to 1969 under the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ACP) countries which developed into the Lome Conventions of 1975 to 1989^{17,18}. Sakr refers to the period of the Yaoundé Conventions as the decolonisation period¹⁹. The Lome Conventions extended the commitment towards working together as the Conventions provided duty-free access to the EEC for most ACP agricultural and mineral exports as well as a quota system for products such as sugar and beef. Article 2 of the Lome Convention of 1975 provides free customs duty and charges for products originating from ACP countries. The Yaoundé and the Lome Conventions acted as economic relations between the EU as independent countries²⁰. These Conventions contributed to promoting the ties between the present AU and the EU relations, however, did not effectively respond to the then-prevailing challenges leading to the 2000 Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

Subsequently, the year 2000 marked the first summit between the AU and the EU relations which saw the establishment of the Cotonou Agreement which opened broad

¹⁴ *The History of the European Union*. Accessed on 30 September 2024. Available at https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59_en.

¹⁵ European Commission (EC), *Strategic Agenda 2024-2029*, 2023. Accessed on 30 September 2024. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/4aldqfl2/2024_557_new-strategic-agenda.pdf

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹⁷ I. Dobrowolska, "European Union policy for the socio-economic development of Africa", *Annals of Marketing Management and Economics*, 2(1), 2016, pp. 25-38.

¹⁸ European Union External Action, *Africa and the EU*, 30 November 2022. Accessed on 22 August 2024. Available at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/africa-and-eu_en.

¹⁹ R. L. Sakr, *The Making of EU-Africa Trade Regionalism: The Law and Governance of the Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions (1963-1974)*, 2020.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

avenues of cooperation. Article 1 of the Cotonou Agreement Revised in 2010 provided the recognition of the global challenges including climate change. Ever since 2000, there have been annual summits to discuss issues of common concern between Africa and Europe. The Summits presented inter-regional partnerships to foster socio-economic and political cooperation. Throughout history, the AU and the EU relations have played an important role in establishing policies as well as reshaping the global economic, social and political landscape. It was during the 2nd Summit of Africa-EU in 2007 when the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted and reflected a deepened cooperation of partners in responding to their regional and international challenges. The two Unions shared a common vision of promoting sustainable continent-to-continent strategic partnership²¹. Furthermore, the 3rd EU-Africa Summit was held in Tripoli, Libya in 2010, this was followed by the 2014 Summit in Brussels. Following the continuous changes in the global arena, in 2017, the two Unions held their 5th Summit in Ivory Coast. In the year 2022, the AU and the EU further deepened their relations in various developmental sectors such as green transition, digital transformation, health security and economic integration.^{22,23} The Summit delivered The Global Gateway Africa and Europe Investment Package which €150 billion was pledged by the EU towards supporting its relations with Africa in promoting development and inclusive growth²⁴. It is established that the AU and the EU relations continue to work in diplomatic relations as well as supporting efforts to address challenges in the global arena.

This study argues that there is not much of a qualitative analytical perspective on the relations between the AU and the EU relating to sustainable development. Yet, there is a continuous manifestation of global challenges, negotiations and decision-making processes towards the promotion of global sustainable development. This concern brings forth the importance of this study to shed more light on the joint relations between the AU and the EU. Hence, this study saw it fit to provide an overview of a qualitative research methodology on the global sustainable development and the relations between the AU and the EU.

Theory of Liberal Intergovernmentalism

The theoretical explanation of this paper is guided by the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) which was proposed by Moravcsik to determine the relations between the AU and the EU in promoting sustainable development. Moravcsik established three stages of LI namely the rational state behaviour and preferences, intergovernmental bargaining and institutional setting²⁵. LI highlights States as rational actors aimed to align their national interests through negotiation and bargaining within supranational institutions. In this case, the effective policymaking of the member states is a reflection of their national interests²⁶. The researcher further explains that foreign policymaking is rooted in domestic and international agendas. The assumption is that state-society relations are diverse in responding to domestic groups. Liberalists argue that States are capable of working together

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²⁵ A. Moravcsik, "Preferences and power in the European Community: A liberal intergovernmentalist approach", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31(4), 1993, pp. 473-524.

²⁶ A. Moravcsik, *Why the European Union strengthens the state: domestic politics and international cooperation*. New York, 1994.

collectively to address a certain problem through decision-making. Moravcsik argues that global crisis and cooperation are Heads of State governments to define their interests and bargain on the outcome. This theory views institutions as a platform for States to promote cooperation and establish their agreements. However, despite the rationality of global challenges, it is established that LI failed to interpret the causes of integration crises in the global arena²⁷.

Without a doubt, the Member countries use the AU and the EU relations to address common issues of concern. Henceforth, the socio-economic and political interests have been widely perceived as advancing common preferences in deepening the partnership in their agenda meetings. Thus, research on the AU and the EU relations generally employs this theory to analyse the relationship between the two Unions in the complex global arena and their efforts to solve global challenges. Furthermore, using liberal intergovernmentalism, it can be established that the AU and the EU relations provide a platform for cooperation towards the achievement of global sustainable development. This paper argues that the achievement of global sustainable development is inseparable from the role of the AU and EU relations, especially in promoting regional and international peace and security. LI can therefore be applied to understanding the AU and the EU relations as part of the solution to the global challenges with their strategic partnership.

Methodology

The study made use of qualitative data analysis. Data was collected using an extensive review of secondary data (reports, books, journals) and sixteen interview discussions with the policy key experts from the AU and EU delegations. Primary data is considered to have the potential to provide vast and reliable information, hence, the study considered incorporating participants from both the AU and the EU. The study is guided by the following research objectives; to determine the key areas for the engagement of the AU and the EU relations in promoting global sustainable development and to determine the perceptions between the AU and the EU relations in the complexity of crisis management. A content analysis approach was used to analyse the research findings from which shared interests and divergences were presented to determine the AU and EU relations towards promoting sustainable development.

Response Rate

The study managed to conduct 16 interviews out of the intended 20 interview participants from both the AU and the EU Delegations and policymakers. Only 2 interviews were conducted face to face whilst 14 interviews were held on the WEBEX platform. The researcher selected the participants upon reviewing their professional affiliations in terms of their previous or present field of occupation and academic qualifications. The targeted participants were contacted between November 2023 and August 2024 via email requesting to conduct an interview discussion of not more than 30 minutes duration. The study respected the ethical codes of conduct in research upon which participants were informed that they were going to be identified as interviewees in the study and there was no harm in contributing to the interview discussion on the analysis of the relations between the AU and the EU as a joint partnership to address global challenges.

²⁷ F. Schimmelfennig, *Liberal intergovernmentalism*, Springer International Publishing, 2021.

Results and discussion of findings

All the participants expressed their understanding that global order is restructuring due to global events and problems. The findings presented global challenges such as climate change and armed conflicts compromise the effective achievement of SDGs and the socio-economic and political environment. Interviewee 1 expressed that despite the complex international system, the role of international institutions in promoting global sustainable development remains relevant. It was established that the position of the relations between the AU and the EU emerges as a critical factor in cooperation to confront the problems.

Furthermore, the AU's admission to the G20 as a full member following the 2023 Summit in India reflects a restructuring role of the member countries to contribute to global discussions and a voice in decision-making²⁸. The 2023 Summit acknowledged the importance of the voice of developing and less developing countries in decision-making and policy-making towards promoting sustainable development and joint efforts to solve complex global challenges. Such participation impacts the AU's ability and empowerment as a global actor in international forums. On another note, Interviewee 4 expressed that, G20's admission of the AU has strengthened the image of Africa as a global actor in dealing with global challenges.

Interviewee 12 further expressed that G20 admission provides an opportunity for the AU to extend its collaboration with the global actors in the international system. Global South (2024) published that Africa's expectance of population growth by 2050, signifies the potential elevation of the continent's global economy. In this case, the G20 summit is to be held in November 2024 under the presidency of Brazil²⁹. It therefore remains to be witnessed the AU member countries contributing to the discussions, negotiations and decision-making since South Africa has been the only African country representing the voice of Africa in the previous Summits.

Climate and environmental changes were identified as complex problems inducing changes in terms of social, economic and political policies. The relations between the AU and the EU have made substantive contributions towards climate change. Interviewee 3 expressed that the continuous climate changes have stood out as a top priority on the agenda of regional and international organisations. The participant further expressed that confronted by climate change, the two Unions are thriving to promote the green transition and use of renewable energy sources for a sustainable future.

The challenges of climate change and environmental changes have long been the most important and vibrant component of the AU and EU relations. During the interview discussions, interviewee 7 expressed that The EU Green Deal was identified by the EC as a cross-cutting strategy to promote sustainable development. The participant further expressed that the EU Green Deal makes a significant contribution to addressing energy insecurity in

²⁸ Global South, *African Union in the G20: a geopolitical and economic leap for the continent*, 22 January 2024. Accessed on 30 September 2024. Available at <https://www.g20.org/en/news/african-union-in-the-g20-a-geopolitical-and-economic-leap-for-the-continent#:~:text=The%20African%20Union's%20entry%20into,offering%20new%20perspectives%20and%20approaches>.

²⁹ H. Tran, *How the African Union Can Amplify Its Influence in the G20*, Policy Brief. PB - 39/24, 13 August 2024.

the region and beyond. It was established that as set by the European Climate law, the Green Deal reflects the action plan of the EU States towards carbon neutrality by 2050³⁰.

In concurrence with the previous discussions, Interviewee 11 expressed that there is a general global understanding of the challenges of environmental and climate changes, this is also reflected in the AU strategy on climate change. The participant expressed that the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032) was established to promote a sustainable, prosperous, equitable and climate-resilient Africa as indicated in the vision³¹. The AU Growth Agenda is also initiated towards the Green Transition. It was also estimated by the African Development Bank (AfDB) that investment costs of more than US\$3 trillion are required for effective mitigation and adaptation of climate change. On the same note, Global South (2024) presented that 60% of the world's renewable energy assets and 50% of the minerals for low-carbon technologies are found in the African region. In this case, the EU also supports the AU countries with adaptation and projects to address the challenges of climate change. The launch of the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative (AEGEI) project which aims by 2030 to promote at least 50GW of renewable electricity to at least 100 million people seeks to promote energy efficiency and accessibility. The objective is that green transition and renewable energy sources contribute towards the promotion of energy security.

Furthermore, it was established that, like climate change, the challenges of Covid 19 have been felt in diverse sectors and presently the AU and the EU find themselves in a post-pandemic recovery era. The findings expressed that the pandemic came at a time when Africa and the global world have already been battling several challenges threatening socio-economic and political stability. Nevertheless, the pandemic has been followed by actions to promote economic recovery as well as rising unemployment issues. Most of the participants, however, acknowledged the Next Generation EU (NGEU) Recovery Plan as a plan to provide relief on health challenges and economic instability. Hence, to promote Covid 19 recovery, the two Unions ought to jointly work together. In the same vein of understanding, Covid 19 worsened African socioeconomic engagements and food insecurities³². In addition to that, Interviewee 5 expressed that despite African economies being affected by the lockdowns during the pandemic, the member states positioned themselves to contain the challenge. Agenda 2063 reinforces the Africa Health Strategy 2016 – 2030 which seeks to promote citizens' well-being against diseases. This study argues that the action plans to address the impact of Covid 19 have a relative approach to respond to the challenges.

The research findings presented that the AU and the EU are working together to manage the post-Covid 19 pandemic era. The two Unions have played and continue to play a key role towards mobilizing resources and coordination to address the impact of Covid 19 on policy areas. Under the Global Gateway flagship projects, several projects have been identified to promote the development of the health sector for example projects in South Africa, Rwanda, and Senegal aimed at promoting digital technology in the health industry,

³⁰ The European Commission, *Climate action and the Green Deal*, European Commission, 2024. Accessed on 30 September 2024. Available at https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/climate-action-and-green-deal_en#:~:text=Documents-Path%20to%20climate%20neutrality,2030%2C%20compared%20to%201990%20levels.

³¹ AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032).

³² J. C. Anyanwu and A. O. Salami, "The impact of COVID-19 on African economies: An introduction", *African Development Review*, 33 (Suppl 1), 2021.

promoting the production and access of vaccines³³. Specifically, the AU and the EU tend to prioritise the address of health policy as an area of priority in alignment with the SDGs. Notably, the joint partnership in responding to global challenges reflects concurrence with the LI towards providing mechanisms for sustainable development.

The research findings further presented that trade and economics act as the foundation of the relations between the AU and the EU. Ever since the partnership between Europe and ACP countries, the major purpose that has driven the relations has been to address common challenges and promote economic development. It comes as no surprise that the two Unions seek to promote economic relations as this was one of the driving factors for the Africa-EU relations. However, the nature of the economic partnership has drastically changed. In terms of promoting economic development, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) was identified as having the potential to transform regional and international economic sectors. The EU's role in promoting AfCFTA is a significant factor in promoting economic development. This emphasises the role of LI towards promoting economic development. Despite, the AU and the EU's relations to promote economic development being in coherence with the UN SDGs, the issue of funding is questioned in the AU and the EU relationship. In 2023, \$654 million reflected two-thirds budget of the AU from external sources such as the EU, the US and China.³⁴ Furthermore, the unbalanced level of development between the AU and the EU brings questions to the notion of equal partnership. Subsequently, the countries are left to accept the funding towards the budget. The research interviews suggested that the AU member States contributing to its budget or pooling financial resources could contribute to its effectiveness in bilateral relations.

In addition, the study found that the AU and the EU are confronted by peace and security challenges evidenced by the surging armed conflicts in the international system. Following the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war, the complexity of the crisis in the international system was reinforced. Although offering different threats to different countries across the regions, the conflict has increasingly been heralded on the international scene. Interviewee 16 expressed that; the outbreak of the Russian-Ukraine war posed a major threat to the international system. Indeed, there are undoubtedly challenges in promoting sustainable development in the absence of peace and security. The effects of the war present a compromised socio-economic development, peace and security in the international system. The Russian-Ukraine war has affected the achievement of SDGs across countries in the global arena.³⁵ The war made clear the importance of cooperation and multilateralism in confronting social and economic challenges. The major concern is the potential for the AU and the EU to promote regional and international peace.

In addition, interviewee 1 expressed in particular that despite the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict, the African region is confronted with political challenges manifesting in terms of the electoral process, civil wars and military coups. Accordingly, the interview discussions expressed the importance of continual monitoring of peace and security in the region. The findings presented that regional instability in the

³³ Global Gateway, *Flagship projects – Infographics*. europa. eu, 2023. Accessed on 29 September 2024. Available at https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ed505ccf-18ef-4fe9-816b-587d28f10633_en?filename=infographics-global-gateway-flagship-projects-2023-2024-eu-africa_en.pdf

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

African region not only affects the member countries' development statuses but also spills over to migration issues, security and economic trade issues in the international system. Interviewee 11 expressed the role of the EU Military Assistance Mission Mozambique (EUMAM Mozambique) which was established in 2021 and was recently extended to 2026. The establishment of UMAM Mozambique aimed to restore peace and security in Cabo Delgado which threatened regional and international peace and security³⁶ and the decision was passed on Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1143 of 12 July 2021 on a European Union Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique). Article 1 provides the Mission, and section 3(a) states that the EUTM Mozambique shall,

“provide the selected units of the Mozambican armed forces and their leadership with military training including operational preparation, specialized training including on counter-terrorism, and training and education on compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, and on respect for the rule of law.”³⁷

The research findings presented that significantly, Cabo Delgado's fragile security on the civilian population led the EU Training Mission to establish training and support Mozambique's armed forces to combat terrorism. The participants expressed that the EUMAM expressed commitment and training support on security forces. The study established a commitment to promote peace and security in the region through the EU mechanism of training missions.

Regarding the presented findings on the challenges in the international system, the AU and the EU can be defined as strategic partners or mere relationships. It is also pertinent to explore the perceptions that lie behind the relationship between the AU and the EU in the complex global arena. Having highlighted that the two Unions are located in different geographic zones, how do these Unions perceive each other in their bilateral relationship? The ongoing debate on whether the AU and the EU should be considered partners in the complex global arena should be revisited. The findings presented that the AU and the EU relations are two Unions with a Joint Vision for promoting sustainable development. One of the participants expressed that it is important to note that there has been an increase in exchange dialogues, recurring summits, research and innovation between the two regions. The EU Commission (2022) expressed its commitment to a strategic partnership with Africa in a complex global arena. Interviewee 8 expressed that there are vast opportunities for cooperation and discussion between the AU and the EU bilateral relations. The research findings presented that the manifestation of global events and the restructuring of the international system present a pressing need for joint relations to establish agreements. It is therefore expected that the AU and the EU relations, would jointly respond to the global challenges and promote sustainable growth.

³⁶ European Commission, *Mozambique: The Council extends the mandate of the EU training mission until 2026 and paves the way for its evolution into an EU Military Assistance Mission*, Council of the EU, 14 May 2024. Accessed on 2 October 2024. Available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/05/14/mozambique-council-extends-the-mandate-of-the-eu-training-mission-until-2026-and-paves-the-way-for-its-evolution-into-a-eu-military-assistance-mission/>

³⁷ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1143 of 12 July 2021 on a European Union Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique). Official Journal of the European Union. L 247/93.

The Delegations and Diplomats who participated in the study further expressed the significance of promoting bilateral relations between the AU and the EU. Among them, Interviewee 6 noted that the partnership provides a roadmap and impetus to address common issues of concern and enhance mutual benefit, cooperation and aspirations for the two Unions. The research findings found that it is worth noting that the AU and the EU relations are developing rapidly in various fields including bilateral cultural exchanges within the younger generation. Hence, through this approach, there is a promotion of cross-cultural cooperation, an important factor in promoting integration and peace.

But, at the same time, the global order is restructuring witnessed by an increased multipolarity in the international arena³⁸. The global arena reflects that the AU and the EU maintain bilateral relations with other external regional actors such as the United States of America, India, Japan, and China, while ensuring that no actor jeopardizes any relationship with another. Inclusive of the African region, the EU has flagship projects under Global Gateway with other regions comprised of Western Balkans, Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU-Asia projects such as the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) in Indonesia, supporting quality energy in Nepal, and supporting trade and agricultural investments in Laos³⁹. However, as the Russian-Ukraine war rapidly continues to escalate, the Russia-Africa relations explain varied geopolitical reasons in the African region and beyond. Another interviewee expressed concern about Africa's ties with Russia, whether they imply true friendship or there are hidden interests. Nevertheless, it was established in the study that beyond the AU and the EU relations also lies the relevance of other international actors towards promoting the achievement of sustainable development. In this case, the study found that other regional actors are also important to a comprehensive global partnership for development. Such external relations do not demerit the AU and the EU relations. Using LI, this paper argues that in the restructuring of the global order, one cannot survive alone, hence the importance of maintaining a balance in strategic cooperation.

Conclusions and recommendations

The global challenges trigger global instability and have an impact on the achievement of sustainable development. This paper argues that the AU and the EU relations underpin the zeal to address common challenges and promote inclusive growth and development. With the continual restructuring of the international system, the urgent need for effective relations between the AU and the EU is undeniable towards sustainable development. The study established that global including armed conflicts, economic challenges, health challenges and climate change provide for the deepened partnership of two Unions (AU and the EU) in the global arena. The study findings presented that the AU and the EU consider each other as strategic partners for socio-economic and political development, despite the unbalanced development levels of member countries. This study concludes that global sustainable development cannot be driven by a sole institution's

³⁸ L. Richardson, *The Shift to a Multipolar World: The Opportunities and Challenges this will present to the African Union in achieving its Objectives set out in Agenda 2063*, University of Ottawa, 2024.

³⁹ EU-Asia and the Pacific flagship projects. May 2024. European Commission. Accessed on 16 September 2024. Available at https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/90a126e5-5f6a-48d2-8aba-43a4b5e25ac6_en?filename=infographics-global-gateway-flagship-projects-2023-2024-eu-asia-pacific_en.pdf.

interests or achieved by a single entity but by an effective collaboration of intergovernmentalism in the global arena.

Looking ahead, the achievement of global sustainable development for the present and future generations also lies in the capabilities of the AU and the EU to carefully navigate through the troubled waters. The contemporary world is without any doubt transforming and restructuring. This study recommends the AU and the EU uphold a perception that the strategic partnership can generate sustainable development and reinforce their commitment to the aspiration projects.

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TURKEY'S GEOPOLITICAL GAME IN THE HORN OF AFRICA. MEDIATION AND MIDDLE POWER AMBITIONS

Anamaria Florina Caloianu

Introduction

On the first day of this year, a maritime deal set between Ethiopia and Somaliland sparked a stir in the Horn of Africa as it presented a new configuration for the geopolitics of the region: promising Ethiopia's access to a stretch of Somaliland's coastline and the sea in exchange for the recognition of Somaliland's independence - as expected, the Somali authorities have expressed their concerns related to the state's territorial integrity, reflecting upon this deal as an act of aggression. Various international actors have expressed their concerns related to the deal, with the African Union and the US showcasing their support for Somalia's territorial integrity and Turkey's intent of carrying out the mediation between the parties and facilitating their peaceful resolution of the conflict that arose.

This article intends to address a recent event that has deep roots in the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa with the intent of reflecting upon Turkey's involvement in the region as a mediator and how that plays out into the state's middle power aspirations.

The dynamics between Somaliland and Somalia have been tackled in numerous studies, tackling the different colonial rule as well as the strive for independence in contrast to ensuring territorial integrity, as the self-governing Somaliland has expressed its desire for independence and recognition for over three decades, and while there is no international actors recognizing this status, its presence in the Horn of Africa can be distinguished from Somalia's - particularly in relation to signing deals with Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates through ports investments.

At the end of 2013, Somalia expressed some timid intentions of negotiation with Somaliland to solve their disputes, under the auspices of neighbour state Djibouti¹; as already mentioned, this intention was immediately whipped off the table as Somaliland announced the deal with Ethiopia concerning the Port of Berbera. For Somalia, the intentions of influential neighbouring state Ethiopia are raising further concerns related to polarization if the Al-Shabaab, the Islamist insurgency in Somalia, would intervene. Somaliland is also faced with the prospect of elections in the upcoming months as the current term of the president has been prolonged for two years because of financial restraints.

The official records of the deal have not been made public, therefore the details are rather opaque² as the observers for the Crisis Group have signalled, by comparing the speeches given by the Somaliland and Ethiopian representatives – the naval base at the centre of both parties interests has been presented as entailing military and commercial purposes by

¹ Mariel Ferragamo, "Somaliland: The Horn of Africa's Breakaway State", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 25 January 2024, www.cfr.org/backgrounders/somaliland-horn-africas-breakaway-state, accessed 3 October 2024.

² "The Stakes in the Ethiopia-Somaliland Deal", *Crisis Group*, 6 March 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia-somaliland/stakes-ethiopia-somaliland-deal>. Accessed 3 October 2024.

the Ethiopian officials, while the Somaliland officials have maintained that it would play a significant role in relation to trade; there are unclarities concerning the supposed location of this base, the size of land promised to Ethiopia and the prospect of sea access.³

The reactions in Somalia in the aftermath of the Memorandum of Understanding between Somaliland and Ethiopia ranged from declaring the deal a national priority, the presidential decree declaring it null and void⁴, protests erupting in Mogadishu in the following weeks of January 2024,⁵ taking advantage of the rights concerning airspace and denying a high-level Ethiopian delegation access in the country intended to discuss the deal⁶ as well as raising public support at home and abroad in order to showcase the fears concerning territorial integrity – an important moment arising with Somalia’s President speech at the African Union Summit held in February in Ethiopia, in the course of which President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud accused the host of attempts at annexation.⁷

The main sources of discontent with the deal on Somalia’s part entail the recognition of Somaliland – which in itself presents a threat to its sovereignty and is discouraged by neighbouring states alongside the African Union in order to not inflate the risks of secessionist movements, the prospect of the Ethiopian military stationing on Somali territory and finally, the unclarities posed by this deal – as it had not been made public in its integrity and there are conflicted statements surrounding it, Somalia does not have all the information needed in order to be assured that this deal has solely an interest in trade or could extend to military, coastlines, inhabited lands etc.

Despite these arguments, Somalia approaches the shift in the relations with Ethiopia with caution, seeking to persuade the other party to give up the deal and gather international support in this regard: “It has been able to convene emergency summits and meetings of the League of Arab States, the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a Horn of Africa body, and the UN Security Council. (Lacking outside recognition, Somaliland is excluded from all these organisations.)”⁸

In February, Turkey and Somalia signed a defence cooperation deal intended to provide support in the field of maritime security as a development for the existing support given in the fight against terrorism. In March, the two states signed an oil and gas cooperation deal furthering Turkey’s presence in a region highly disputed by Great Powers. President Erdogan’s visit in 2011 in Somalia as the first non-African leader has been the incipient moment of Turkey’s steady integration in the Somali domestic landscape through investments, infrastructure and aid.

It is worth mentioning that these deals have gained a reactionary response from Somaliland, as the timing cannot be ignored and the extent of intervention of the Turkish military presence in the Somaliland waters, which from the Turkish official perspective belong

³ *Ibidem.*

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ Mohamed Dhaysane, “Protest against Ethiopia’s Red Sea access deal rocks Somali capital”, 11 January 2024, www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/protest-against-ethiopia-s-red-sea-access-deal-rocks-somali-capital/3106328, accessed 3 October 2024.

⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷ Al Jazeera, “Somalia president accuses Ethiopia of trying to annex part of its territory”, *Al Jazeera*, 17 February 2024, www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/17/somalia-president-accuses-ethiopia-of-trying-to-annex-part-of-its-territory, accessed 5 October 2024.

⁸ “The Stakes in the Ethiopia-Somaliland Deal”, *Crisis Group*, art. cit.

to Somalia.⁹ As noted by Associate Professor Brendon J. Cannon, the deal should be regarded as: “a good-faith agreement signed between asymmetric powers whose interests overlap a little, at present”¹⁰ as Turkey intended a way to bolster its involvement in the region and emerge as a security partner more approachable than the US or other Western powers, and Somalia sought the deal with the purpose of building its offshore defence capabilities. According to this author, the deal should be regarded separately from the deal signed in January – as it does not entail a new reconfiguration of regional alliances.¹¹

If a Memorandum of Understanding has given rise to the crisis, then another one was proposed to solve it, this time set between Somalia and Ethiopia under the auspices of Turkish mediation, as the country has good relations with both. In the aftermath of a meeting in Ankara, the Turkish Foreign Minister announced a joint statement on the agreement between the parties: “agreed to pursue the ongoing dialogue with a view to resolving their issues and ensuring regional stability”¹² as well as pinpointing Turkey’s commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and both parties trust in the state’s capacity of hosting the dialogue “reiterated their commitment to the peaceful resolution of differences, and expressed their appreciation to Türkiye for its facilitation, as well as its constructive contributions.”¹³

Turkey’s role as a mediator

The relations between Somalia and Turkey date back to the Ottoman Empire’s extended influence in the Horn around the 16th century, intended for the securing of Red Sea trade routes. Since the fall of the Empire, Somalia and Turkey remained in good relations through the post-colonial years, leading to an improvement in cooperation in the 2000s, once Turkey shifted its focus towards a broader agenda, securing closer relations with African nations.

The Turkish engagement accentuated with the visit conducted by President Erdogan in 2011, as Turkey advanced infrastructure projects, humanitarian aid and institutional support, and in the realm of soft power, contributed to education and healthcare services.¹⁴ Turkey’s encompassing agenda portrayed the state in a favourable light, contrasting the narratives surrounding other NATO members in the area. In the following years, Turkey pushed in the direction of security cooperation, due to Ankara’s focus on signing deals with the authorities and providing Somali security forces with training to strengthen their institutions. Since the region of the Horn is vital for trade and there are plenty of actors competing there, Turkey stands out as a solid, non – invasive presence.

⁹ Kiran Baez, “Turkey signed two major deals with Somalia. Will it be able to implement them?”, *Atlantic Council*, 18 June 2024, www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/turkeysource/turkey-signed-two-major-deals-with-somalia-will-it-be-able-to-implement-them, accessed 3 October 2024.

¹⁰ Brendon J. Cannon, “Somalia-Turkey maritime deal is a win for both countries, and not a power play for the Horn of Africa”, *The Conversation*, theconversation.com/somalia-turkey-maritime-deal-is-a-win-for-both-countries-and-not-a-power-play-for-the-horn-of-africa-225023, accessed 3 October 2024.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² “Somalia, Ethiopia sign MoU to resolve diplomatic dispute under Türkiye’s mediation”, *Mediate*, 5 July 2024, mediate.com/news/somalia-ethiopia-sign-mou-to-resolve-diplomatic-dispute-under-turkiyes-mediation, accessed 3 October 2024.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Jordán Olivér Petrőcz, “Turkey in the Horn of Africa: Turkish-Somali Military Connections Focused on the Turkish Military Camp in Mogadishu, Somalia”, *Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4, January 2023, pp. 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.59569/jceas.2023.3.4.220>.

The relations with Ethiopia have started around the same time, through the Ottoman Empire, yet it needs to be noted that Ethiopia – Abyssinia at the time, maintained its relations with the Ottoman Empire as an independent nation. The Ottoman Empire opened a consulate in Harar in 1896. The relations became more significant after Turkey became a republic in the 20th century, with the formalization of relations in 1926.

In the 2000s and 2010s, Turkey's presence in Africa intensified and reached Ethiopia as well, in the spheres of investments, construction, textiles, infrastructure, tourism. Turkey has become one of the main foreign investors in the country. Therefore, the agreement to have the negotiations with Somalia mediated by Ankara presented a reasonable and beneficial platform for both states, as they have a timely relation with the state, its presence in the region has been stabilizing and beneficial for both.

Turkey's mediation between Somalia and Ethiopia involved several key phases, and it is worth mentioning that the dispute has not been solved yet, and there are discussions concerning new directions and meetings between the parties. In July 2024, Turkey hosted the first round of talks between Somali and Ethiopian representatives in Ankara – these have been welcomed by experts, noting the good bilateral relations with the parties and the close ties between President Erdogan and the leaders of Ethiopia and Somalia, as there have been instances of phone calls between them.¹⁵ In the aftermath of the first round of talks, a sentiment of optimism surrounded the negotiation process, with the Turkish President anticipating concrete results with the second round of talks.

On the 12th of August, the second round of talks took place without reaching a deal. While the trust in the Turkish mediation hasn't wavered, there's a toned-down reaction to Turkey's promises of facilitating a deal through the prospect of future rounds of talks. While the Turkish Foreign Minister announced that the second round managed to constitute considerable progress,¹⁶ Turkey's abilities as a mediator are put on the line, since Ankara managed to get promises and temporary deals in place, as it had been proven with JCPOA and the Grain Deal, but neither managed to be sustainable.

The third round of talks was planned for September 17th, unfortunately, they have been postponed without further announcements, the Turkish mediators are currently seeking discussions with both parties to further the agenda.

The Ankara Process agreement related to this dispute presented for the public stipulates that Somalia is the only legal authority that can grant the use of territorial ports to neighbouring states,¹⁷ therefore maintaining Turkey's position in relation to Somaliland, and recognizes the needs articulated by Ethiopia in the region.¹⁸ Another component to the Ankara Process, the deal between Eritrea and Ethiopia would safeguard Ethiopia's interests on the topic of ports.

¹⁵ Trt Afrika, "Türkiye's mediation in Ethiopia-Somalia talks fosters regional stability", *TRT Afrika*, 12 August 2024, www.trtafrika.com/turkey/turkiyes-mediation-in-ethiopia-somalia-talks-fosters-regional-stability-18194898, accessed 14 September 2024.

¹⁶ Giulia Paravicini, "Second round of Somalia-Ethiopia talks in Turkey ends with no deal but progress made", *Reuters*, 13 August 2024, www.reuters.com/world/africa/second-round-somalia-ethiopia-talks-turkey-ends-with-no-deal-progress-made-2024-08-13, accessed 14 September 2024.

¹⁷ Omar Hashi, "Turkey's Grand Mediation and Peace in the Horn of Africa (Omar Hashi)", *Borkena Ethiopian News*, 10 September 2024, borkena.com/2024/09/10/turkeys-grand-mediation-and-peace-in-the-horn-of-africa-omar-hash, accessed 14 September 2024.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

As mentioned prior, the negotiation process is ongoing, yet it can be noted that within less than a year, Turkey managed to bring both sides to Ankara and facilitate dialogue. Until recently, Turkey had reflected upon the Grain Deal as being the most significant effort in its mediation pursuits. The constraints and evolution of Russo – Ukrainian war impacted the success of the deal, while here, if the mediation would lead to a positive outcome, then Turkey could signal that its commitment to solving disputes through mediation and positioning itself as a facilitator for such efforts express a successful pattern for its foreign policy and therefore solidify its presence on the international arena as a mediator.

Turkey's position as a middle power and the mediation dimension

The concept of middle powers has been stressed throughout history as it is a simple link between the great powers – strong states that have undisputed impact on the international arena, and those that come in second and yet, have varied levels of influence in the same arena. While the debate on the characteristics, attributes and a clear definition of middle power is maintained even in present day academia, there has been a consensus ever since the end of the Cold War and by extension the dissolution of the bilateral world order, that Turkey shall be regarded as a middle power considering its geographical position, demography, resources and capacity of influencing its neighbouring regions.

Middle powers can impact international affairs although usually more localized, while the actions of great powers reverberate throughout the globe in varied extents: “Beyond the general personalisation of mediation, emerging Powers’ activism in mediation has nonetheless led to a varying degree of institutionalisation of mediation activities at different levels.”¹⁹ Authors such as Carsten Holbraad and Alan K. Henrikson have noted that these states can impact disputes and project influence through mediation, a tool that fits perfectly within the framework of international organizations, here lobbying and initiatives keep these actors in a neutral position without risking involvement and therefore jeopardize the negotiation process.²⁰

The Turkish discourse surrounding the importance of mediation for the Turkish foreign policy has been stressed in other works, and in various formats, as it is Ankara’s priority to emerge as a hub for hosting difficult negotiations processes – this has been seen through the consistent push to have negotiations for the Russo – Ukrainian war there, and the signing of the Grain Deal.

The declarations of the Turkish President, who impacts the foreign policy of the state to a greater extent than other state organs, contrasts the demure role traditionally assigned to middle powers, as harnessers of great powers policies – Turkey seeks to project more than other middle powers,²¹ its geographical position is contributing to these aspirations, at the

¹⁹ Milena Dieckhoff, “International Mediation: A Specific Diplomatic Tool for Emerging Countries?”, *European Review of International Studies*, 2014, 1 (2), pp. 107-123. [ff10.3224/eris.v1i2.16506ff.fhal03460342f](https://doi.org/10.3224/eris.v1i2.16506ff.fhal03460342f), p. 116.

²⁰ Alan K. Henrikson, “Middle Powers as Managers: International Mediation within, across, and outside Institutions”, in Andrew F. Cooper (ed.), *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War, Studies in Diplomacy*, General Editor: G. R. Berridge, Centre for the Study of Diplomacy, University of Leicester, 1994, p. 47.

²¹ Caloianu AnaMaria Florina, “Middle Powers as Mediators: The Role of Türkiye and Brazil in the JCPOA, the Ukrainian Grain Deal, and Further Developments in the War in Ukraine”, *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Studia Europaea* 69, no. 1 (June 27, 2024): 219–32. <https://doi.org/10.24193/subbeuropaea.2024.1.12>.

crossroads of continents and the middle point for trade, energy and migration routes, Turkey has a very particular insight on the Middle East, Europe, Central Asia and Africa.

The discrepancies between discourses of peace and the actions undertaken by the states have been noted by author Milena Diekhoff and attributed to economic considerations as well as underlying attitudes associated with being placed hierarchically below great powers, but still benefitting from the system created by these states: "What is more, in entering a field that is above all dominated by Western actors, emerging countries have some difficulty in avoiding the accusation of sharing with developed countries an imperialist attitude or at least of being motivated by purely national interests."²²

Turkey sought to position itself as a mediator in disputes that are in its proximity and in which the actors could reflect upon it as an open partner that distances from alliances and great power's plans for the disputes – Ankara assumed to embodiment of this role with the accusations that may arise – those of duplicity behaviour, as it was reflected mainly in the Russo – Ukrainian case. Author Emel Parlar Dal reflects upon these perceptions as emerging from the assumed role as a regional or rising power intended to bridge the West and the East: "Overall, Turkey as an emerging middle power is expected to pursue a balanced relationship with the Western world and developing nations with a strong commitment to international peace, democracy, human rights and open trade."²³

It is also worth mentioning that Turkey was more present when it came to negotiations in its geographical proximity, as Ankara could emerge as the ideal place for negotiations, at the crossroads of continents, alliances etc. Author Nimet Beriker points out the importance of linkages in the process of mediation: "In other occasions, however, for instance, when there are competing interests, mediation might trigger the same mechanism but this time allowing the middle power to extract concessions from its alliance partner, a competitive strategy. Moreover, cultural ties play a role in building linkages."²⁴

In summary, Turkey's role as a middle power is shaped by its geographical position, demography and resources, allowing the pursuit of playing a more active role than traditional middle powers, which are embodying a supportive role for the aspirations of great powers in relation to international disputes. This departure from the perceptions of a traditional middle power attracts accusations of roughness or duplicity from Turkey's Western powers yet promote Turkey as the best third party in intervening in disputes in which the discussions are caught in deadlock or the parties to the conflict are favouring Turkey's presence as a mediator more than any other parties interested in serving this role.

Conclusions

The maritime agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland has escalated the tensions in the Horn of Africa as Somalia has regarded it as a direct threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, this has led to a variety of actions taken at domestic level as well as building support for its claims from international actors. Among these actors, Turkey has emerged as one of the most favourable for engaging in these negotiations in the role of the mediator, as the state has good bilateral relations with the parties and its presence in the Horn

²² Milena Diekhoff, *art. cit.*, p. 119.

²³ Emel Parlar Dal, "Profiling Middle Powers in Global Governance and the Turkish Case: An Introduction", *Springer eBooks*, 2018, pp. 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72365-5_1, p. 2.

²⁴ Nimet Beriker, "Mediation as Politics: How Nations Leverage Peace Engagements?", *International Negotiation*, vol. 22, no. 3, July 2017, pp. 431–50. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718069-12341360>, p. 440.

has been regarded positively in contrast to other external actors. The negotiations are still ongoing, therefore there is no final agreement, yet this case serves as another outlet through which Turkey has been showcasing its broader strategy of strengthening its influence regionally and globally by positioning itself as a stabilizing actor in a highly contested region.

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ONE COUNTRY, ONE SYSTEM: JOHN LEE'S DEPARTURE FROM IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE TO SELECTIVE DEPOLITICIZATION

Carmen Duță

I. Research questions and methodology

Since taking office as Chief Executive (hereinafter CE) in July 2022, John Lee has facilitated Hong Kong's fast reintegration into the mainland politically and security-related first, and economically, socially, and linguistically second. His role as the region's leader after the 2019-2020 protests points to the paramount role of national security to the detriment of other areas of development, prompting some scholars to name this process one of recolonization¹, where the long-term political future of the region comes from the outside, from the central authorities. As CE, John Lee's mandate differs from that of his predecessor Carrie Lam not only in policies but also in visuals, as the tone of his public appearances points to a major priority shift, from a certain level of pluralism to a monopoly of authority by the state and obedience to Beijing's rule, from public discussions on both ideology and policies to an apparent lack of political debate.

In this light, this study aims to analyse the role of ideological discourse or its lack thereof in John Lee's speeches as CE from July 2022 to January 2024. The central research question of this paper is "In what manner does John Lee utilize the presence and absence of ideology in his addresses as CE, and what are the repercussions of this use for Hong Kong's political development?" Other additional questions arise, particularly on the role of economic discourse as a replacement for political discourse.

Eleven official speeches are analysed, two from 2022 (at the inaugural ceremony of the government and one at the South China Morning Post conference), eight from 2023 (at the Bay Area Summit, SCMP conference, anniversary of the establishment of HKSAR, Belt and Road summit, ASEAN summit, Belt and Road forum in Beijing, US-China relations forum, Greater Bay Area conference) and one from 2024 (at the Asian Financial Forum). Discourse analysis is used as the main methodological instrument, given the qualitative nature of the study. The official statements sum more than 15,000 words, hence, an SEO Scout tool is used to determine the most common themes, as well as the most and least commonly used terms. As such, five characteristics arise from Lee's selected speeches: (1) an emphasis on stability rather than political diversity, also seen as turmoil, (2) economic development over political pluralism (3) paranoia surrounding foreign interferences, (4) a tight-knit relationship with the mainland and President Xi, including the emphasis on common infrastructure projects such as the Belt and Road initiative, and (5) a focus on patriotic education. It must be stressed that these are not the only significant themes in John Lee's communication as CE, rather, they are the main points in the eleven selected addresses. It is beyond the purpose of this paper to delve into all of Lee's agenda, however, some other common points worth addressing in future research

¹ Gary Chi-hung Luk, ed. "From a British to a Chinese Colony?: Hong Kong before and after the 1997 Handover". *Institute of East Asian Studies*, University of California, Berkeley, 2017. JSTOR, [https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.7762610]. Accessed Jul 1, 2024.

deal with his housing policy, land reclamation, his approach to the healthcare industry crisis, the issue of emigration, as well as Hong Kong's alliance shift from the US and European space to the Arab world and other Chinese allies.

II. Theorization and hypothesis

The theoretical framework employed is that of depoliticization as analysed by Himmelstrand², pointing to the shift from ideological discourse to pragmatism, and Sautman's³ depoliticization work in the Chinese schooling system. Consequently, this study proposes the hypothesis that, by selectively removing ideological discourse from the public sphere and focusing on practical policies, often economic and leading to Hong Kong's further integration into the mainland, John Lee creates the image of a new class of politicians in the region, the selectively apolitical politician.

Is Hong Kong going through a process of depoliticization, selective depoliticization, repoliticization, or hyperpoliticization? Similar categories have been debated by Sautman in the context of the Chinese education system in the 1990s. In present-day Hong Kong, however, it is evident that the political environment suffered drastic changes since the passing of the National Security Law (hereinafter NSL) in 2020, and its consequences are visible in the public political discourse. One can witness a change from debates on different ideologies as was the case in 2019 to an overfocus on practical matters, policies, and economic changes to the detriment of political talk. In the case of John Lee, there has been little room for debate, despite the Legislative Council's mention of being "broadly representative and inclusive"⁴. When there is no acknowledgment of a pluralistic view of ideology, politics become practical, but selectively apolitical. Himmelstrand comments on this process as follows:

"Depoliticization then seems to imply a transformation of political ideologies into a set of more or less distinct administrative technologies based on a widespread consensus as to what kind of goals one should try to attain. Even if ideological differences are not wiped out altogether ideological differences are deemphasized in a depoliticized political community. (...) When issues with purely factual, technical or economic implications become more frequent at the cost of references to values prominent in traditional political ideologies, we might speak of an increasing degree of depoliticization."⁵

² Ulf Himmelstrand. "A Theoretical and Empirical Approach to Depoliticization and Political Involvement." *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 6, no. 1/2, 1962, pp. 83–110. *JSTOR*, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/4193553]. Accessed Aug 21, 2024.

³ Sautman, Barry. "Politicization, Hyperpoliticization, and Depoliticization of Chinese Education." *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1991, pp. 669–89. *JSTOR*, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/1188111]. Accessed Aug 21, 2024.

⁴ For the claims of political inclusivity, see the characterization of the Candidate Eligibility Review Committee: "it is broadly representative. The new electoral system has attracted an impressive range of candidates from a diversity of backgrounds. Among them are representatives of business, academia and the professions, as well as workers, employees, and operators of small and medium-sized enterprises from the grassroots", in "Hong Kong Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two System", the White paper, *The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China*, 2021, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/node_8027477.html]. Accessed Sep 1, 2024.

⁵ Himmelstrand, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-5.

Starting from this nuance of degrees of depoliticization, it can be argued that Hong Kong suffers from what Sautman calls “selective depoliticization”⁶, as on the one hand, it tries to discourage public mentions of political thought, particularly relating to the pro-democratic camp, and, on the other, pushes the ideology of the CCP as the default. This process deserves an ample analysis via the points that follow. Depoliticization can be seen in the decline of freedom of speech, media, and academia⁷, as well as in the citizens’ private lives, with people being apprehensive about commenting on political topics with their acquaintances⁸. Regarding Lee’s discursive approach, it must be noted that this change is unprecedented compared to previous CEs, particularly in his mentions of Beijing’s role and his repeated quoting of President Xi⁹. Therefore, the shift from plural ideological discourse to practicality, economic pragmatism, reflects not a disappearance of ideology, but a weakening to the extent to which it hardly impacts policies, as Himmelstrand mentions:

“depoliticization may imply that the impact of ideology in practical politics is becoming weaker. Even if there is considerable ideological dissensus left at the level of manifest ideological statements there may be much less dissensus on the level of specific political decisions. This might indicate that ideology has little influence over practical politics.”¹⁰

III. Five discursive characteristics

First of all, Lee’s communication strategy follows the line of internal peace, also understood as political apathy, to the detriment of political pluralism. This comes as no surprise given his involvement in the crackdown of the 2019-2020 region-wide protests, as well as his election as CE after Carrie Lam’s failure to peacefully manage the movement by implementing the Five Demands¹¹. Most notably, on his first day as CE, at the inaugural ceremony of the sixth term of the government, Lee reinforces the “one country, two systems” approach, emphasizing the role of reintegration into the mainland. This approach, he notes, is predicated by authorities as the “institutional safeguard of Hong Kong’s (...) long-term prosperity and stability”¹². He further comments on the conflictual nature of democratic regimes, mentioning a series of civic unrest Hong Kong has gone through in the last decades:

⁶ Sautman, *op. cit.*, p. 669.

⁷ Kelly Ho. “Hong Kong’s academic freedom saw ‘substantial’ decline over past decade, index finds”, *Hong Kong Free Press*, 2024, [https://hongkongfp.com/2024/04/05/hong-kongs-academic-freedom-saw-substantial-decline-over-past-decade-index-finds/]. Accessed Aug 20, 2024.

⁸ Ray Chung. “Under new security law, Hong Kongers fear ‘saying the wrong thing’”, *Radio Free Asia*, 2024, [https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/hong-kong-article-23-fear-03252024235220.html]. Accessed Aug 20, 2024.

⁹ Tiffany May and Austin Ramzy. “For Hong Kong’s Beijing-Backed Officials, Xi’s All That”, *The New York Times*, 2022, [https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/27/world/asia/xi-jinping-hong-kong.html]. Accessed Aug 20, 2024.

¹⁰ Himmelstrand, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

¹¹ Francis L. F. Lee et al. “Five Demands and (Not Quite) Beyond: Claim Making and Ideology in Hong Kong’s Anti-Extradition Bill Movement.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2020, pp. 22–40. *JSTOR*, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/48610599]. Accessed Aug 5, 2024.

¹² “CE’s speech at Inaugural Ceremony of Sixth-term Government”, *HK Gov.*, July 1, 2022, [https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202207/01/P2022070100398.htm]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

“Hong Kong has of course also encountered various challenges, including the global financial crisis, the unlawful occupy movement in 2014, the Mong Kok riots in 2016, the riots and violence in 2019 together with the interference in Hong Kong’s affairs by external forces which threatened our national security, and the COVID-19 pandemic.”¹³

Given the so-called challenges in governance due to social movements after the handover, such as in 2003, the Umbrella Movement in 2014, and the 2019 protests, Lee aspires to the Confucian idea of balance and stability, to the detriment of political turmoil, under the effigy of the communist party. The need for stability is a core theme for Lee’s depoliticizing speech, as he notes one year later, in 2023, that the global geopolitical scene is volatile, which can be attributed to the plurality of ideologies, along with other social and economic factors: “We are all living in a world with growing volatility and tensions in geopolitics”¹⁴. Given these changes, Lee strives not only for security but for sameness, which is impossible given Hong Kong’s 2047 deadline.

Moreover, during the US-China relations summit, he highlighted the want for harmony and peace to the detriment of political diversity seen as conflictual: “A gentleman seeks harmony, not conformity. Hong Kong, thanks to our deep-rooted Chinese culture, is always a strong advocate for peace and harmony”¹⁵. By mentioning Hong Kong’s Chineseness, he symbolically reinforces the idea of Hong Kong as part of the motherland culturally and politically. Therefore, on this end, the ideas of harmony, stability, and peace are understood as opposites to conflict, which in this lingo is understood as a contrasting ideology. This is, thus, a core instance of depoliticization of Hong Kong, as the institution of the CE presides over the Legislative Council and other institutions, particularly those of the police and security bureaus in the case of Lee’s background.

A second characteristic of Lee’s speeches as CE is the effort dedicated to economic development, which relates to a decreased importance of ideology. Whether being apolitical and economically driven is a Hongkongese characteristic has long been debated in the literature¹⁶. For this argument, it is sufficient to note that the economy has an increased priority given the economic damage caused by the 2019-2020 protests, continued by the COVID-19 shutdowns, as well as by the recent waves of emigration¹⁷. In this context, Lee’s emphasis on Hong Kong’s status as a global business centre comes naturally, despite being contrasted to the real legislative changes that have been chasing foreign business away¹⁸.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ “Speech by CE at SCMP China Conference Hong Kong 2023”, *HK Gov.*, June 20, 2023. [https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202306/20/P2023062000524.htm]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

¹⁵ “Speech by CE at Hong Kong Forum on US-China Relations 2023 Welcome Dinner”, *HK Gov.*, November 9, 2023, [https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202311/09/P2023110900627.htm]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

¹⁶ Chun Chun Ting. “The Star and the Queen: Heritage Conservation and the Emergence of a New Hong Kong Subject.” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 25, no. 2, Modern Chinese Literature and Culture, Foreign Language Publications, 2013, pp. 80–129, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/43492534].

¹⁷ Vera Yuen. “Hong Kong’s economy struggles to get back on its feet”, *East Asia Forum*, 2024, [https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/01/03/hong-kongs-economy-struggles-to-get-back-on-its-feet/]. Accessed Aug 9, 2024.

¹⁸ Logan Wright. “Rebranding Hong Kong.” *Fractured Foundations: Assessing Risks to Hong Kong’s Business Environment*, Atlantic Council, 2023, pp. 2–8. JSTOR, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep47433.5]. Accessed Aug 9, 2024.

Hong Kong's status for the mainland authorities is vastly dictated by its economic success. Since the British colonial times, the region has been stereotypically seen as a meeting point between "the West and East"¹⁹, a cliché often quoted by John Lee. Financial Secretary Paul Chan mentions three economic pillars of the region to ensure that Hong Kong is still a viable place for business: the common law system, an independent judiciary, and the free flow of capital²⁰. Wright points out "The fact that Chan had to make this reassurance highlighted the rising perceptions that all were at risk"²¹. This economic development, however, is now seen as integrated into China's economic structure, as Lee notes: "Apart from strengthening our established sectors and reinforcing Hong Kong's status as an international financial, transportation and trading centre, we will strive to fully develop a range of emerging industries under the National 14th Five-Year Plan."²² There has hardly been any mention of five-year plans in prior CE's speeches. Consequently, despite repeatedly mentioning the idea of Asia's global city, world economic centre, and prominence, Lee's discourse places Hong Kong as a pawn in China's economic strategy, drawing attention to Hong Kong's position as the "world's largest offshore Renminbi hub"²³. From the perspective of the depoliticization theory, the emphasis on economic development comes at the expense of political expression, creating "men as economic animals" rather than men as praxis or political entities²⁴.

The third characteristic of Lee's addresses is that of political oppression due to paranoia of the inevitable interference of foreign forces, which further leads to depoliticization. Passed in 2020, the NSL legally criminalized the offense of "collusion with foreign forces". The administration took a step further since, by bringing to public attention the intention to criminalize "soft resistance". Traditional resistance refers to the acts of the pro-democratic camp, seen as separatist or violent²⁵, while soft resistance is understood by the former director of the Liaison Office Luo Huining as "disseminating disinformation, creating panic, maliciously attacking the SAR government and the central authorities and distorting the Basic Law"²⁶. In an Orwellian sense, the government can criminalize criticism of the institutions, even the intent to criticize or incitement to criticism. Examples of soft resistance are the selling of banned books and comics, social media posts, blogs, and anti-establishment

¹⁹ "CE's speech at Inaugural Ceremony of Sixth-term Government" *HK Gov.*, July 1, 2022, [https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202207/01/P2022070100398.htm]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

²⁰ Paul Chan at "Future Investment Initiative", Sixth Edition, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 25, 2022; *FII Institute*, 3h:20': [https://www.youtube.com/live/x1n_kT-hAfw?feature=share&t=12003]. Accessed Sep 1, 2024.

²¹ Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²² "CE's speech at Inaugural Ceremony of Sixth-term Government", *HK Gov.*, July 1, 2022, [https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202207/01/P2022070100398.htm]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

²³ "Speech by CE at SCMP China Conference Hong Kong 2023", *HK Gov.*, June 20, 2023, [https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202306/20/P2023062000524.htm]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

²⁴ Petrović, G. 'Man as economic animal and man as praxis an Interpretation of Marx', *Inquiry*, vol 6(1-4), pp. 35-56, 1963, doi: 10.1080/00201746308601366.

²⁵ "Carrie Lam's speech in full: Hong Kong leader speaks to city on protests in TV address", *SCMP*, September 2019, [https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3025780/carrie-lams-speech-full-hong-kong-leader-speaks-city]. Accessed Aug 15, 2024.

²⁶ "What is 'soft resistance'? Hong Kong officials vow to take a hard line against it, but provide no definition", *Hong Kong Free Press*, August 2023, [https://hongkongfp.com/2023/08/05/explainer-what-is-soft-resistance-hong-kong-officials-vow-to-take-a-hard-line-against-it-but-provide-no-definition/]. Accessed Aug 15, 2024.

media, as well as lying flat and refusing to participate in society economically or politically. In the words of John Lee:

"I have full confidence in Hong Kong, yet we must stay alert. While society is largely stable, we know that we are intentionally targeted and oppressed by some countries which have misjudged the peaceful development of our motherland. Destructive forces using "soft resistance" means are still lurking in our city. We must stay vigilant and be proactive in safeguarding national security, and should fully and faithfully implement the principle of "one country, two systems".²⁷

The fourth characteristic pertains to the intertwinement of the central and local authorities, leading to local depoliticization. The degree to which Lee's language adopted the lingo of the mainland authorities cannot be understated. Quoting mainland politicians, mentioning President Xi in every address, and using language that is not clearly defined²⁸ are common themes of Lee's discourse as CE. He continuously refers to President Xi's agenda through the years to explain Hong Kong's development and its direction for the future. For example, in one of his first speeches in 2022, he notes that: "President Xi Jinping, who was in Hong Kong for the 25th anniversary of the HKSAR, spoke of Hong Kong on July 1 - and I quote - "proactively integrating itself into the country's overall development and carving out its role in national strategies"²⁹ or that "On this, President Xi reassured us all. He said, "The more firmly the 'one country' principle is upheld, the greater strength the 'two systems' will be unleashed for the development of the SAR."³⁰ At the same time, Lee has been presenting himself as a subordinate to Xi personally rather than a public servant or the leader of Asia's top city: "I can tell you that President Xi was speaking directly to you, to each and every one of you, whatever your ambitions. Whatever you want to accomplish, the doors to Hong Kong remain wide open and welcoming."³¹ This framework creates a monopoly of authority in the central authorities and delegitimizes other competitors for power, such as the opposition. This phenomenon in turn further leads to an environment in which politics carry a symbolic role, rather than a fundamental one with power to change the trajectory of the region.

Additionally, Lee repeatedly emphasizes Hong Kong's development within a broader framework of China's infrastructure projects, particularly those in the Great Bay and the Belt and Road Initiative. At the 2023 Belt and Road Summit, Lee commented that: "President Xi's vision, then as now, was to see the extraordinary promise in pursuing common development and prosperity for all"³², remapping Hong Kong within the mainland vision of President Xi.

²⁷ "Speech by CE at reception in celebration of 26th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR", *HK Gov.*, July 1, 2023, [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202307/01/P2023070100227.htm>]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

²⁸ This is a characteristic of present-day political development in Hong Kong and can be seen beyond public speeches even in legislature. For instance, both the NSL and Art. 23 include a series of offences that are not clearly defined. Another example is introducing arbitrary selection criteria for elections, such as the "patriots only policy", while no quantifiable definition of the term "patriot" is given.

²⁹ "Speech by CE at SCMP China Conference Hong Kong 2022", *HK Gov.*, July 27, 2022, [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202207/27/P2022072700481.htm>]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

³⁰ *Ibidem.*

³¹ *Ibidem.*

³² "Speech by CE at the eighth Belt and Road Summit", *HK Gov.*, September 13, 2023, [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202309/13/P2023091300209.htm>]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

The overemphasis on infrastructure projects, economic development, and integration proves Himmelstrand's interpretation of the end of ideology.

Furthermore, there are more subtle ways of adopting mainland figures of speech. For instance, at the 26th anniversary of the HKSAR, he highlighted Hong Kong's role in China's development: "We will promote high-quality development and contribute to building China into a great modern country and to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."³³ The pathos of this rhetoric, particularly the mentioning of the unity of the Chinese nation bears a strong resemblance to the discourse carried by mainland officials in the region on the same occasion. The idea of rejuvenation has been a common theme among China's officials in the past years, given the declining birth rate and the aging population of the country³⁴. Moreover, this address offers other examples of appeals to emotion in unusual and propagandistic language. For instance, when referring to the reopening of Hong Kong since COVID-19, Lee mentions the reintegration of the region in the mainland, given the relations between one country, and one people: "I still recall the day of our resumption of normal travel with the mainland, when family and friends hugged each other in joyful tears."³⁵ While on the surface this does not indicate a direct influence on the degree of depoliticization of the region, it can be argued that the usage of mainland rhetoric has a symbolic meaning by diverting attention from ideological, and political language to practical matters.

The fifth and last characteristic analysed in this paper is the role of patriotic education in the formation of a selectively depoliticized identity, as reflected in Lee's communication strategy. It is beyond the purpose of this paper to analyse the educational changes happening since the passing of the NSL, such as the introduction of mandatory patriotic education, the flag-raising ceremonies in school, and the restructuring of humanities departments at universities³⁶. Rather, it is significant to grasp John Lee's reflection on it in his addresses: "We will enhance our education system, and nurture a new generation of youth with an affection for our country."³⁷ Sautman's article is particularly relevant on this point, and while it refers to the 1990s, it bears a striking resemblance to Hong Kong's status in 2024:

"Despite the crisis symbolized by the Tiananmen incident of June 1989, that orientation remains economic growth as the basis for the regime's political legitimacy. It is thus probable that the current repoliticization of higher education will be neither intensified nor generalized throughout the educational system. Instead, we predict a near-term reversion to depoliticization of Chinese education consonant with the fixation on economic modernization and a concomitant substitution of new ideopolitical elements for Marxism-

³³ "Speech by CE at reception in celebration of 26th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR", *HK Gov.*, July 1, [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202307/01/P2023070100227.htm>]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

³⁴ One example is Xi, 2012, "Achieving Rejuvenation Is the Dream of the Chinese People", from *The Governance of China*, [<https://www.neac.gov.cn/seac/c103372/202201/1156514.shtml>]. Accessed Sep 8, 2024.

³⁵ "Speech by CE at reception in celebration of 26th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR", *HK Gov.*, July 1, 2023, [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202307/01/P2023070100227.htm>]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

³⁶ Kenneth Lau. "Strengthening patriotic education", *HK Gov.*, Apr 10, 2024, [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202404/10/P2024041000349.htm>]. Accessed Aug 9, 2024.

³⁷ "CE's speech at Inaugural Ceremony of Sixth-term Government", *HK Gov.*, July 1, 2022, [<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202207/01/P2022070100398.htm>]. Accessed Aug 10, 2024.

Leninism. (...) The current attempt to repoliticize higher education thus is superficial; it is inconsistent with the requisites of economic change that China’s leaders must meet to overcome the crisis generated by the first decade of reform (1978-88). Because economic reform must continue, I forecast that the regime will do away with intensively politicized and ideologized education and *substitute educational policies that are economically pragmatic and limited to the inculcation of patriotism and an apolitical civic morality.*³⁸ (added emphasis)

Therefore, Sautman’s prediction becomes prophetic for Hong Kong in the sense that, just as after the Tiananmen Massacre and the 2019-2020 protests, there have been efforts to hyperpoliticize education, while, at the same time, transforming it into an “apolitical civic morality”. This is characteristic of John Lee’s speeches because they attempt to create a tabula rasa political conscience while prompting patriotic sentiments and supporting the CCP line of thought.

IV. Text analysis

After providing the five characteristics of John Lee’s discursive strategy as CE and illustrating how they indicate a process of selective depoliticization, the hypothesis can be supported via text analysis. Using an SEO tool and counting the 15,000 words, one can infer the most relevant point of discussion via the most commonly used words and phrases. Alternatively, or even more significant, omissions can also be seen: what terms are not mentioned, what or who is omitted, through what erasures, and for what purpose?

No.	Words/Phrases	Occurrences	Associations
1	Develop/Development	78	opportunity, "of our motherland"
2	Economy/economic	76	development, competitiveness
3	Finance/Financial	61	center, crisis
4	Government	59	vigilant, central gov.
5	China	55	motherland
6	ASEAN	47	partnership
7	Trade	45	agreements
8	Business	43	development
9	Belt & Road	35	HK- "value adder"
10	Nation/National	33	anthem, flag, mainland, security
11	One country	26	stability
12	Great Bay Area	18	interconnectedness
13	Growth	17	potential, economic
14	Innovation	17	technology
15	Policy	15	2022 policy address
16	Renminbi	15	transactions, deposits
17	Stability	12	prosperity, harmony
18	Chinese	11	history, culture, nation
19	Connectivity	10	Est & West

Table 1: Most common terms in John Lee’s Official Speeches

The table above illustrates the most common matters addressed by John Lee in his 2022-2024 speeches and their correlated notions. As it can be observed, the prevalent

³⁸ Sautman, *op.cit.*, pp. 670–71.

occurrence of terms such as “economic, financial, development, Belt and Road, and Great Bay Area” demonstrate the five characteristics. The overuse of economic terms to the detriment of political talk for the region’s leader points to its high degree of depoliticization. Furthermore, it can be noted that the push for development is seen as integrated into a broader framework within mainland China, rather than of the region itself. The correlations to terms such as “motherhood” or seeing Hong Kong as a “value-adder” to China’s development threaten the one country, two system framework, and erode the city’s degree of autonomy. Lastly, the terms relating to the administration are followed by notions such as “control, surveillance, and national security”, which in turn shows the direction of depoliticization after the mainland model.

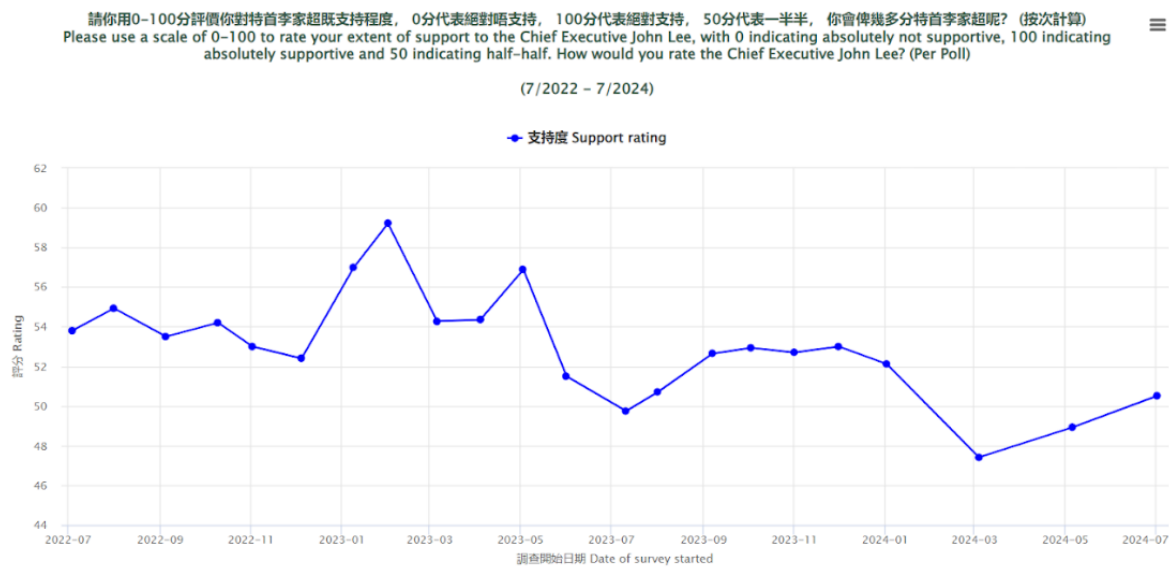
On the other end, some of the least used terms in Lee’s speeches belong to the political sphere. Terms such as “political, election/electoral, policymakers, autonomy” are seldom mentioned, while others such as “party, politician, democracy, debate, representation” are not mentioned at all, pointing to the shift from previous CEs. Moreover, even when mentioned, politically charged terms have negative connotations, as can be seen in the table below. “Social” is associated with “problems”, “political” with “tensions” and “legal” with “disputes”.

No.	Words/Phrases	Occurrences	Associations
1	political	7	geopolitical tensions
2	social	7	problems
3	local	5	industry, enterprise
4	freedoms	4	Basic Law, the courts
5	education	4	system
6	electoral	3	system
7	legal	3	disputes
8	globalisation	2	trade
9	election	1	John Lee’s manifesto
10	policymakers	1	international
11	autonomy	1	high degree of
12	democracy	0	
13	party	0	
14	politician	0	
15	debate	0	
16	activism	0	
17	nationalism	0	
18	activism	0	
19	representation	0	

Table 2: Least used terms in John Lee’s Official Speeches

Ultimately, his performance as CE gathered limited public support, as seen in the HKPORI rating below. During the time frame analysed in this paper (July 2022-January 2024), his rating has been consistent, from 53.8% to 52.1%. Given his January rating at his 19th month

of service, he received the third worst appraisal, followed by Carrie Lam and Leung Chun-ying³⁹.



Graph 1: John Lee's rating as CE⁴⁰

V. Conclusion

To conclude, the discourse analysis of the eleven official speeches of John Lee since his appointment as CE in 2022 until the spring of 2024 brings evidence to support the hypothesis of this article. Given the five main themes addressed in his discourse, namely the need for stability, economic development, integration into the mainland, and patriotic education, it can be argued that Lee emphasized a selectively apolitical approach, in which political pluralism is heavily restricted and where ideology does exist, but only to support the central government. Thus, the region is denied political agency, suffering from a high degree of depoliticization. The analysis of the most and least common terms employed in his addresses supports this hypothesis in the sense that Lee gives prevalence to economic discourse rather than political dialogue. When political terms do exist, they suffer from negative associations, such as bringing chaos, instability, and disputes.

Future research should focus on the rest of Lee's mandate until 2027, as his official speeches are evidence of the direction of Hong Kong's future development. Given the legislative changes since 2020, and most recently the passing of Article 23, it is urgent to witness the direction from the administration. As Hong Kong's 2047 deadline approaches and former policeman John Lee is the first civil servant, it can only be expected that the efforts of depoliticization will continue.

³⁹ "Comparison between Ratings of Chris Patten, Tung Chee-hwa, Donald Tsang Yam-kuen, Leung Chun-ying, Carrie Lam and John Lee", *HKPORI*, [https://www.pori.hk/pop-poll/chief-executive-en/a-rating-combined.html?lang=en], Accessed Apr 9, 2024.

⁴⁰ "Rating of Chief Executive John Lee", *HKPORI*, [https://www.pori.hk/pop-poll/chief-executive-en/a004-rating-perpoll.html?lang=en], Accessed Apr 9, 2024.

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STANCE-TAKING AND LEGITIMIZATION: A DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL APPROACH TO MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR WASTEWATER DISCHARGE (2021-2023)

Ying Wang

Introduction

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake triggered a tsunami that devastated the Fukushima nuclear plant, causing radioactive leakage and generating a large volume of contaminated water. A decade later, as storage capacity neared its limits, the Japanese government decided to discharge treated wastewater from the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). Following the official announcement, Japan sought approval from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and received support from its Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA), which deemed the discharge safe. The treated water was released into the Pacific Ocean on August 24, 2023. However, the government has not provided specific details about the radioactive elements or the decontamination process, leading to suspicion and criticism domestically and internationally.

Against the backdrop of crisis communication, media plays a crucial role in (re)shaping social realities and the perceptions of its target readers through utilizing discourses that emerge from various ideological perspectives¹. As such, this study uses a Discourse-historical Approach (DHA) to analyze the stances and (de)legitimizing strategies of two mainstream Japanese English-language media, *Asahi Shimbun* (AS) and *Yomiuri Shimbun* (YS), regarding the discharge. This research addresses three key questions: (1) What stances do AS and YS take on the Fukushima nuclear wastewater discharge? (2) How do these media linguistically actualize their stance(s) and (de)legitimize the discharge? (3) What social-historical-based media powers, national identities, and ideologies are concealed within their stance(s) and (de)legitimization strategies?

Discourse-historical Approach and its actualization

Defined as a “socio-diagnostic” critique that challenges the status quo (re)constructed through discursive and social practices to make opaque power relations and ideologies manifest², DHA is a prominent method of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)³, which unravels power abuse and all-pervading inequality in oral and written texts⁴. Originally employed to

¹ Catherine Happer, Greg Philo, “The role of the media in the construction of public belief and social change”, *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 1, 1, 2013, pp. 21-36.

² Martin Reisigl, Ruth Wodak, “The discourse-historical approach”, in Ruth Wodak, Michael Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, London: Sage, 2016, pp. 24-58.

³ Martin Reisigl, “The discourse-historical approach”, in John Flowerdew, John E. Richardson (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 44-59.

⁴ Teun A. van Dijk, “Critical discourse analysis”, in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton (eds.), *The Handbook of discourse analysis*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, pp. 352-371.

analyze anti-Semitism discourses in the 1986 Austrian presidential campaign⁵, DHA combines social context with historical embedding, facilitating the connection of past experience, present events, and future visions⁶. Compared to other methods of CDS, DHA upholds a holistic discourse analysis from diverse disciplines and explicitly links discourses with a macro-topic or with more than one perspective⁷.

As a problem-oriented analytic approach, DHA adopts a three-dimensional framework⁸, encompassing three fundamental aspects to implement its social-historical critique: (1) identifying the specific content or topic(s) of a given discourse; (2) investigating discursive strategies; and (3) examining linguistic means and realization in context. Furthermore, DHA also encourages the combination of other linguistic strategies to comprehensively unravel asymmetric relationships among social actors⁹. Observing that, this study incorporates both the *Argumentation* in DHA and the *Engagement* system proposed by Martin and his colleagues¹⁰. The former enables the investigation of media framing for (de)legitimization through logical chains¹¹. The latter contains two basic sub-categories: (1) "Contact" which restricts the scope of negotiation and can be further divided into "proclaim" to affirm the views and "disclaim" to refute opinions; and (2) "Expand" which invites more possibilities in discourse, including "entertain" to create dialogic space mainly through modality and "attribute" to invoke external voices, typically through directly and indirectly reported speech and thought¹². Since engagement analysis reveals how writers express their stance(s) toward propositions, it can facilitate stance-taking studies based on DHA.

Research design

Using keywords like "Fukushima water", "nuclear water", and "wastewater", the study collected 24 English news reports (12 from each), totaling 8,655 tokens. Data collection began with the Japanese government's formal decision to discharge wastewater on April 13, 2021, and continued until the effects following the official discharge on October 26, 2023. To holistically compare stance(s) adopted by AS and YS, this study employs KH Coder, a free text-mining software based on Stanford POS Tagger and R¹³, to categorize their hot-spot themes (topics) respectively through the co-occurrence network function. Following the macro-level stance(s), this research further investigates how media stance(s) can be represented via engagement analysis and how the discharge of wastewater can be (de)legitimized through argumentative analysis achieved by *topoi of threats*, *topoi of responsibilities* and *topoi of numbers*. All these linguistic-level features are annotated and calculated by the manual coding function of UAM Corpus Tool, a software application

⁵ Ruth Wodak, "Turning the tables: antisemitic discourse in post-war Austria", *Discourse & Society*, 2, 1, 1991, pp. 65-83.

⁶ Ruth Wodak, "Critical discourse analysis: history, agenda, theory, and methodology", in Ruth Wodak, Michael Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (2nd edition), London: Sage, 2009, pp. 1-33.

⁷ See Note 2, p. 27.

⁸ See Note 2, p. 32.

⁹ See Note 2, p. 31.

¹⁰ James R. Martin, Peter R.R. White, *The language of evaluation: appraisal in English*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 92-133.

¹¹ See Note 2, p. 33.

¹² See Note 10, pp. 92-127.

¹³ Koichi Higuchi, "A two-step approach to quantitative content analysis: KH Coder tutorial using Anne of Green Gables (Part I)", *Ritsumeikan Social Science Review*, 52, 3, 2016, pp. 77-91.

designed for linguistic analysis by a team of researchers at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) in Spain¹⁴.

Macro-level themes (topics) in AS and YS

The left section of Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of 7 distinct colors representing 7 key linguistic clusters (C) of hot-spot themes in AS. These clusters can be further condensed into 5 macro-level themes (MT), as outlined in Table 1, based on their specific contents. To be more exact, MT 1 emphasizes both the governmental decision (C2) and the official discharge (C4) are based on Japanese national wills. MT 2 highlights that TEPCO tries to meet safety standards and eliminate radioactive elements (C3). MT 3 concerns the damage of Fukushima nuclear plant (C5) and its limited capacity for wastewater storage (C7). MT 4 focuses on criticism given by both local fishermen and neighbouring countries (e.g., China) regarding the wastewater discharge (C1). Finally, MT 5 is related to a worker injury incident resulting from the splash of radioactive water (C6).

The right section of Figure 1 also shows 7 basic clusters based on the co-occurrence of tokens in YS, which can be further represented by 4 macro-level themes (see also Table 1). Similar to AS, MT 1 stresses that the decision of wastewater discharge made by Japanese government manifests national wills (C1), and MT 2 focuses on issues related to water monitoring conducted by internal (C3 & C4) and external institutions (C2) to ensure the safety. Meanwhile, MT 3 emphasizes efforts undertaken by Japanese government, including substantial investment aimed at ensuring water safety (C5) and repairing reputational damage (C6). Lastly, MT 4 reiterates the importance of TEPCCO throughout the whole process (C7).

To summarize, in contrast to YS, which presents a positive portrayal of all its MTs, AS concerns more about negative aspects related to the discharge, including criticisms and an incident during wastewater release. AS expresses skepticism towards this event, adopting a negative stance. However, both AS and YS emphasize Fukushima's wastewater discharge as a reflection of national will and the safety of treated water. AS highlights the urgent situation at the Fukushima plant, while YS underscores governmental efforts and TEPCCO's role. Ultimately, despite thematic-based differences, both media maintain an overall supportive stance for the discharge at a macro level.

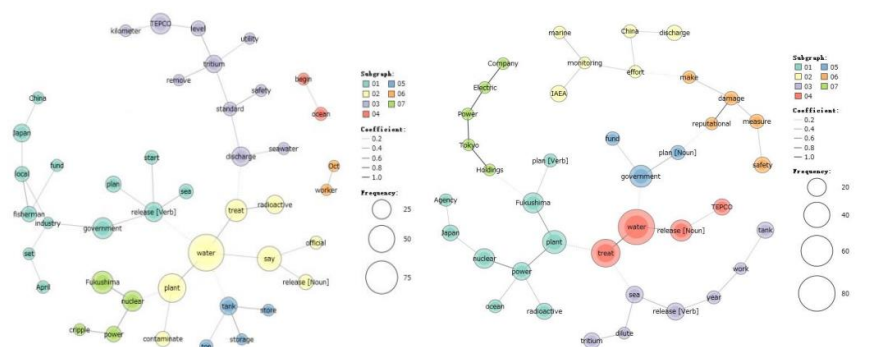


Fig 1. Co-occurrence network of the clusters of hot-spot themes in AS (left) and YS (right)

¹⁴ Martin O'Donnell, "Demonstration of the UAM CorpusTool for text and image annotation", in *Proceedings of the ACL-08:HLT Demo Session* (Companion Volume), Association for Computational Linguistics, 2008, pp. 13-16.

Table 1. Macro-level themes and corresponding clusters in AS and YS

AS		YS	
Macro-level Themes (MT)	Clusters (C)	Macro-level Themes (MT)	Clusters (C)
National wills	C2; C4	National wills	C1
Safety of treated water	C3	Safety of treated water	C2; C3;C4
Emergency of the situation	C5, C7	Governmental efforts	C5, C6
Domestic and international criticism	C1	Important role of TEPCO	C7
An unexpected incident	C6		

Engagement analyses in AS and YS

As mentioned above, due to the inclusiveness of DHA, the study employs engagement analysis to further scrutinize how these two media actualize their overall supportive stance through different linguistic representations.

(1) The engagement analysis in AS

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of engagement system in AS, revealing that the frequency of “*expand*” is significantly higher than that of “*contract*”. This suggests that AS tends to involve more external voices to negotiate with its readers. Given the notable frequency of both “*disclaim*” and “*attribute*”, the following analysis solely concentrate on these two types, so as to investigate which kind of stances are adopted by AS in this event.

Table 2. Distribution of engagement system in AS

Contract Total: 15		Expand Total: 47		Total
Disclaim	Proclaim	Entertain	Attribute	
13	2	2	45	62

As for “*disclaims*”, AS not only refutes the safety of wastewater release directly (ex.1 & ex.2), but also employs adversative conjunctions such as “*however*” and “*but*” to challenge the initial expectations regarding the discharge (ex.3 to ex.5), portraying this governmental action from a negative stance. Examples are as follows:

- (1) It’s **not yet** clear whether, or how, damaging the release will be. (AS, 2021/11/18)
- (2) Still, the equipment used to treat the water **cannot** eliminate tritium. (AS, 2023/10/12)
- (3) **However**, the utility has yet to win the consent of local residents about its plan to discharge tons of treated water offshore. (AS, 2023/09/11)
- (4) **But** opposition from fishermen pushed back the timing of a decision. (AS, 2022/04/14)
- (5) **Despite** the government’s assurances that the water to be released meets safety standards, fishermen and other local industries, as well as China, have expressed opposition to the discharge plan. (AS, 2023/06/24)

From the above instances, Examples 1 and 2 amplify uncertainties and insecurities of the release by restricting negotiable spaces, which contribute to positioning AS in opposition to the government. Additionally, Examples 3 to 5 counter original expectations regarding the effects brought about by the discharge, suggesting a lack of support from both local

stakeholders and its neighbouring country. This further strengthens negative stances taken by AS.

Table 3 shows the distribution of “attributes” in AS, as given by speakers with diverse identities, including authoritative stakeholders and vulnerable groups. It is evident that AS predominantly reflects perspectives from authoritative perspectives such as the decision maker (Japanese government) and direct implementer (TEPCO), rather than other stakeholders. This observation highlights AS’s continued alignment with the government. Examples are as follows:

(6) **Japan has argued** the release is necessary to press ahead with the complex decommissioning of the plant. (AS, 2021/11/28)

(7) Speaking at his first visit to the facility since taking office, **Fumio Kishida said** his government would work to reassure residents nearby the plant about the technical safety. (AS, 2022/08/04)

(8) “Without a healthy ocean, I cannot make a living.” **said Yukinaga Suzuki**, a 70-year-old innkeeper at Usuiso beach in Iwaki about 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the plant. (AS, 2023/09/11)

(9) **Local fishermen said** they intend to continue with their opposition, making it unclear whether their fears will be incorporated. (AS, 2022/04/14)

Example 6 and 7 report from authoritative institutions that reiterate the necessity of wastewater discharge by portraying obstacles faced at Fukushima nuclear plant (ex.6), and strengthening the feasibility of the discharge via highlighting governmental efforts (ex.7). The prevalence of invoking authoritative sources suggests a supportive stance from AS, aligning itself with Japanese authorities. Even though AS also includes opinions from local people to deliver their concerns (ex.8 & ex.9), their limited frequency does not overshadow the overall stance.

Table 3. Attribute in AS from different stakeholders

Sources	Attribute in AS	Freq.
Governmental & Authoritative Institutions	Japanese government (Japan, Prime Minister, officials, etc.)	18
	TEPCO and its staffs	16
	Some experts	2
	Vulnerable Groups	Local fishermen
	Residents of Fukushima	4
Neighbouring Countries	China	1
	Total	45

The engagement analysis in YS

The overall distribution of engagement in YS (see Table 4) exhibits a resemblance to that observed in AS, indicating that “expand” also occurs the most frequently, as a means to objectively present news reports. Similarly, the frequencies of “disclaim” and “entertain” are also noteworthy, and will be further analysed in this study.

Table 4. Distribution of engagement system in YS

Contract Total: 14		Expand Total: 32		Total
Disclaim	Proclaim	Entertain	Attribute	
10	4	6	26	46

In YS, the majority of “*disclaims*” manifest obvious supportive stance on the discharge of Fukushima wastewater by either directly dismissing alternative solutions to improve the situation, or refuting claims regarding tritium’s lack of safety, in order to assert its discharge (see ex.10 & ex. 11 below):

(10) There appears to be virtually **no** other option. (YS, 2023/06/04)

(11) **However**, tritium, a radioactive substance contained in the treated water, also exists in nature and its radiation is weak. (YS, 2023/10/16)

Example 10 employs negation to restrict the possibility of negotiation, emphasizing that successful resolution of Japan’s current obstacles can only be achieved through discharging wastewater into the ocean. This showcases a resolute and positive stance on the discharge issue. Simultaneously, YS focuses on the insignificance of tritium, countering opponents’ concerns regarding the safety of treated radioactive water (ex.11), aligning with readers who are firm supporters of the discharge.

For “*attribute*” in YS, Table 5 shows that all of the sources it invoked are from governmental or authoritative institutions (e.g., Japanese government, TEPCO, and IAEA), elite classes (e.g., chairman of fishery, and leader of supermarket association, etc.), and neighbouring countries. Examples are as follows:

(12) **Industry minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told** a press conference Tuesday that his ministry will work on establishing a new fund. (YS, 2022/08/31)

(13) **The Japanese officials said** that they will use advice from the IAEA team for the safety of the water release. (YS, 2023/09/26)

(14) “Through the end of that process, we will make company-wide efforts to operate facilities with safety as the top priority, conduct prompt monitoring, disseminate accurate and easy-to-understand information, ensure transparency...”, **the president of TEPCO said**. (YS, 2023/08/24)

(15) On Sept. 25, the first day of the conference, **China and South Korea criticized the water release, referring to** the treated water as “nuclear-contaminated water.” (YS, 2023/09/26)

Examples 12 to 14 portray the discharge of wastewater from a governmental perspective, by emphasizing the determined efforts of authoritative institutions, such as securing additional funding (ex.12) and implementing safety measures (ex.13 & ex.14). These instances effectively demonstrate YS’s unwavering support for the government. Although YS also acknowledges criticism from neighboring countries (ex.15), its primary objective is to juxtapose governmental efforts with unfounded criticism, thereby emphasizing Japan’s innocence and reinforcing its supportive stance while excluding dissenting voices.

Table 5. Attribute in YS from different stakeholders

Sources	YS	Freq.
Governmental & Authoritative Institutions	Japanese government (Japan, Prime Minister, officials, etc.)	6
	TEPCO and its staffs	10
	Representative of IAEA	1
Elite Classes	Chairman of fishery	2
Neighbouring Countries	Leader of Supermarket Association	2
	China and South Korea	5
	Total	26

Argumentation analyses in AS and YS

The preceding analysis demonstrates that both AS and YS reach a consensual supportive stance on governmental discharge, thus necessitating an exploration of the linguistic devices employed to achieve this organizational legitimacy, to satisfy the needs of Japan’s crisis communication strategy. In this regard, the utilization of argumentation in DHA proves more suitable than other approaches, as it enables a comprehensive justification through “content-related warrants”, primarily realized through topoi that connect arguments with the conclusion¹⁵.

(1) The topoi analysis in AS

Table 6 illustrates that *the topos of threat* exhibits the highest frequency in argumentative representations of AS, followed by *the topos of responsibility* and *the topos of numbers*. Given that *the topos of threat* can be further classified based on two opposing conditionals to (de)legitimize a political event, this study divides them into two contrasting groups: the first “*Should do*” category implies that if there are specific dangers at present, the discharge is necessary; whereas its counterpart “*Should not do*” emphasizes that if the discharge poses a threat, it should be discontinued.

Table 6. Different types of topoi used in AS

Topos of threat		Topos of responsibility	Topos of numbers		Total
Total: 33			Total: 21		
Should do	Should not do		Tank capacity	Others	
15	18	30	12	9	84

For these two categories, the latter slightly outnumbers the former, thereby (de)legitimizing the official discharge. Examples are as follows:

“Should do”:

(16) The Fukushima No. 1 plant **suffered a triple meltdown** in 2011 following a massive earthquake and tsunami. (AS, 2021/10/18)

(17) The company estimates the tanks **will be full** sometime around the summer or autumn of 2023. (AS, 2022/03/18)

(18) Contaminated cooling water has **continued to leak** from the damaged reactors since the disaster. (AS, 2022/08/04)

¹⁵ See Note 2, p. 35.

“Should not do”:

(19) But residents say they feel **“shikataganai” - meaning helpless.** (AS, 2023/10/12)

(20) The plan has been **fiercely opposed** by fishermen, residents and Japan’s neighbors, including China and South Korea. (AS, 2023/09/11)

(21) But at the April 12 news conference. Hagiuda suggested that there **will not be a second fund** in connection with the release of the water. (AS, 2022/04/14)

Examples 16 to 18 provide justification for the discharge of wastewater based on the “Should do” category of threats. This legitimization is actualized through the elaboration that the threat is devastating (ex.16), the threat is approaching (ex.17), and the threat is ongoing (ex.18). All these portrayals of threats support the logical chain that since there exist devastating threats that endanger the country, more actions should be taken to address them. In that case, governmental discharge becomes understandable and justifiable. On the contrary, Examples 19 to 21 undermine the legitimacy of discharging wastewater through the logical chain of “Should not do” category. To invalidate the release of wastewater, AS presents that this governmental action not only disappoints local residents (ex.19), but also elicits refusals both domestically and internationally (ex.20). Furthermore, even the official financial support provided by the government is insufficient to address the subsequent impacts (ex.21). All these representations stress that numerous threats are caused by the discharge, jeopardizing Japan’s interests at home and abroad. Therefore, the discharge of Fukushima wastewater should be ceased.

Besides *the topos of threat*, AS also highlights the government and TEPCO’s endeavors in managing both “Should do” and “Should not do” categories of threats mentioned above, through the utilization of *the topos of responsibility* (see ex.22-24 below):

(22) Fumio Kishida said his government would work to **reassure** residents nearby the plant about the technical **safety** of the wastewater disposal project. (AS, 2021/10/18)

(23) TEPCO will also **build new tanks** to store treated water and measure the levels of tritium before releasing the contents into the sea. (AS, 2021/12/28)

(24) TEPCO will **keep monitoring seawater daily** during the offshore construction work and suspend the activity if it finds any abnormalities in the monitoring data. (AS, 2022/08/04)

Based on examples above, AS asserts the legitimization of wastewater discharge through projecting optimistic expectations towards Japanese government and TEPCO. It emphasizes that despite the presence of various threats (ex.16-21), these challenges can be effectively solved as both the government and TEPCO are committed to fulfilling their responsibilities, which include ensuring residents’ safety (ex.22), daily dilution of radioactive water (ex.23), and an increase in water tank capacity (ex.24) etc. Given their substantial capabilities in managing this situation throughout the discharge process, it is justifiable to proceed with releasing the wastewater.

Finally, *the topos of numbers* in AS can also be classified into two fundamental categories. The first category describes tank capacity in Fukushima nuclear facilities. The second category encompasses a wide range of issues, including the precise amount of

governmental support allocated to address relevant crises and the content of tritium. Examples are as follows:

(25) The water, enough to fill about **500 Olympic-sized swimming pools**, is stored in huge tanks at an annual cost of about **100 billion yen (\$870 million)**, and space **is running out**. (AS, 2021/12/28)

(26) The government announced last year that it would establish a fund worth about **30 billion yen (\$239 million)** to support fishermen. (AS, 2023/06/24)

(27) The simulation showed a slight rise in tritium levels within **2-3 kilometers** from the plant. (AS, 2022/08/04)

(28) TEPCO officials said a morning measurement of tritium in the water showed levels under the standard of **1,500 becquerels per liter** that the utility had set for the water discharge. (AS, 2023/10/12)

Examples 25 to 28 show that AS is prone to employ numbers in order to emphasize the urgency faced with the tank capability, and the exorbitant costs associated with continued storage of wastewater in these tanks (ex.25). Meanwhile, AS also details governmental financial aid to local people (ex.26) and the safety standard met by TEPCO (ex.27). All of these number-based arguments not only echo threats (“*Should do*” type) and responsibilities portrayed in previous analysis (ex.22-24), but also further strengthen them through objective figures. Although some of the arguments mention the slight increasing level of tritium (ex.27), such infrequent claims do not undermine AS’s overall argument on legitimizing the release of wastewater.

(2) The topos analysis in YS

Table 7 shows the distribution of topoi utilized in YS, manifesting that *the topos of responsibility* occurs the most frequently, followed by *the topos of threat* in which the frequency of “*Should do*” type is nearly three times larger than its counterpart. Additionally, *the topos of numbers* is also mentioned as an argumentative strategy in YS.

Table 7. Different types of topoi used in YS

Topos of threat		Topos of responsibility		Topos of numbers	Total
Total: 22		Total: 44			
Should do	Should not do	Governmental actions	Media expectations	13	79
16	6	14	30		

The topos of responsibility, whose frequency is significantly larger than other types of topoi, can be further classified into two main categories: “*Governmental Actions*” that have already been implemented (ex.29 & ex.30), and “*Media Expectations*” from YS that advocates for additional actions by the government (ex.31 & ex.32). Examples of these two basic categories are as follows:

“*Governmental Actions*”:

(29) A government panel of experts **spent more than six years** from 2013 discussing a plan to release the water into the sea. (YS, 2021/04/13)

(30) The central government **is also focusing on** awareness-raising activities for industries and consumers. (YS, 2021/08/31)

“Media Expectations”:

(31) The government **must make it widely known** that the released water will not affect the environment, and **make efforts to** prevent reputational damage to marine products from the water release into the ocean. (YS, 2022/01/14)

(32) They oppose the release of the treated water into the sea, but the Japanese government **must persistently urge them** to change their positions. (YS, 2023/09/26)

Examples 29 and 30 legitimize the wastewater discharge through emphasizing its authority and reliability (ex.29). as well as governmental efforts to ensure positive effects brought by the discharge (ex.30). Furthermore, unlike other examples mentioned in these sections, which utilize evidence to justify the discharge, examples 31 and 32 directly presuppose the legitimization of Fukushima wastewater release and thus expect Japanese government to make more contributions on persuading stakeholders to believe its legitimacy.

For *the topos of threat*, while both categories of threats: “*Should do*” and “*Should not do*”, are portrayed in YS, the former occurs more than three times as frequently as the latter. Owing to this, the following examples (ex.18-20) primarily discuss the “*Should do*” type:

“Should do”:

(33) The storage capacity for the treated water **is approaching its limit**. (YS, 2021/08/31)

(34) **The capacity** of the tanks reportedly **will be reached** in autumn next year or later. (YS, 2022/10/18)

(35) **The only country** who **criticized** the ocean discharge of treated water from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant was China, while many countries **showed understanding and expressed support** for Japan’s efforts. (YS, 2023/09/26)

Similar to previous representations in AS, YS stresses the imminent and ongoing dangers faced by Japan, such as limited water tank capacity (ex.33 & ex.34), emphasizing the urgency of improving the current situation, and thus legitimizing the governmental discharge. Apart from that, YS goes beyond simply acknowledging the existing emergency in Fukushima, through depicting external threats posed by China - “the only country” (ex.35) that opposes Japan’s decision to release contaminated water, thereby legitimizing Japanese discharge as a widely supported measure within international communities.

Lastly, through offering objective figures, *the topos of numbers* also reinforces the legitimization achieved by other topoi in YS. Representative examples are provided below:

(36) The volume of treated water has been increasing at a rate of **140 tons per day**, and there are now more than **1,000 tanks**. (YS, 2021/04/14)

(37) The ministry has set up a **¥30 billion fund** to buy up marine products if rumors related to the discharge harm sales. (YS, 2023/10/01)

Example 36 provides detailed numbers so as to elaborate the approaching threat caused by limited tank capacity, echoing the “*Should do*” category (ex. 33-35) to justify the necessity of governmental actions. Additionally, example 37 complements *the topos of*

responsibility (ex. 29-32) represented by YS, incorporating precise figures to highlight government efforts aimed at legitimizing the dependability of wastewater discharge.

Media nature, powers, and news framing

Exerting a profound influence on (re)constructing social orders and values¹⁶, different media portrayals of Japanese wastewater discharge also reflect their distinct natures. As one of Japan's leading newspapers, positioning itself as a flagship with a center-left or liberal stance, AS tends to adopt a narrative approach rooted in liberalism, emphasizing individual rights, liberty, the consent of the governed, political equality, and the right to private property¹⁷. Consequently, it is inclined to embrace diverse voices from various social classes and express concerns for vulnerable groups in order to demonstrate progressive tendencies¹⁸. Additionally, targeting its readership as "well-educated intellectuals"¹⁹, AS integrates in-depth analysis and critical coverage with its reportage. Thus, besides reporting on governmental actions regarding the discharge, AS also focuses on the non-powerful stakeholders affected by this issue, elevating them as one of its hot-spot themes. Moreover, catering to its well-educated readership, AS offers an in-depth analysis of the entire event by presenting a wavering stance in its reporting via "*disclaims*" and by (de)legitimizing the discharge through *the topos of threat*. From a historical perspective, it maintains a consistent style of emphasizing individual rights in news reporting. Paradoxically, despite its attempts to address concerns about vulnerable groups, the majority of its linguistic choices still focus on aligning with the government and legitimizing the discharge, thus making its previous concerns appear somewhat hypocritical.

However, YS is widely regarded as the political counterpart of AS and a staunch supporter of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), embracing a centre-right or conservative stance that prioritizes Japan's national interests and global presence²⁰. Furthermore, with its largest circulation in Japan, YS effectively appeals to a broader demographic, particularly ordinary citizens. Hence, YS predominantly focuses on authoritative-related themes, consistently adopting a strongly positive stance and endeavouring to legitimize the discharge. For example, it presents this event entirely from authoritative perspectives and expresses heightened expectations toward the Japanese government to justify its actions. Historically, even before the formal decision made by the LDP on April 23, 2021, YS had already emphasized the importance of conforming to governmental decisions regarding the crisis at the Fukushima nuclear plant in its previous news reportage, showcasing its unconditionally supportive proclivity. Overall, despite employing different news framing styles, both AS and YS tend to portray this event as a Japanese "*internal affair*" rather than an international concern. Throughout their coverage, external voices are overshadowed by internal defenses and explanations provided by authoritative institutions. Generally, domestic viewpoints are

¹⁶ Clara Neary, Helen Ringrow, "Media, power and representation", in Phillip Seargeant, Anne Hewings, Stephen Pihlaja (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*, London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 249-309.

¹⁷ Iain McLean, Alistair McMillan, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 40.

¹⁸ Nini Pan, "'Net uyo' in Japan", *The Journal of International Studies*, 6, 2015, pp. 64-79.

¹⁹ Liangfu Yin, "The reader strategy of the *Asahi Shimbun's* intellectual class: Transitioning from a popular tabloid to a high-quality broadsheet", *Chinese Journalist*, 4, 2003, pp. 67-68.

²⁰ Zhen Long, "The branding strategy for success of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* in Japan", *Media*, 20, 2015, pp. 55-56.

depicted favorably, while external opinions are perceived as potential threats. These representations indicate that regardless of their media nature, both outlets aim to support the discharge and highlight its legitimacy.

Social-historical-based identities and ideologies

Through representations provided by AS and YS, Japan is depicted as an innocent victim of the discharge because it has already taken actions to treat radioactive water (e.g., ex.28), implement regular monitoring (e.g., ex.24), reassure its residents (e.g., ex.6), etc., but still criticized by some of its people (e.g., ex.9) and neighbouring countries (e.g., ex.15). Being the only country to have experienced both nuclear bombings in 1945 and a nuclear leak in 2011, Japan tends to identify itself as a victim on the global stage²¹. The past tragedy intertwines with the present crisis, emphasizing the urgency to prioritize Japan's own interests in effectively addressing this situation promptly. Additionally, the LDP government is positioned as an active problem solver, shouldering the responsibility of tackling the issue of Fukushima wastewater discharge. AS represents a "not-yet" but promising situation of governmental actions (e.g., ex.22-24), while YS portrays an "already" state of Japan's efforts (e.g., ex.29 & ex.30). This portrayal of LDP reflects that both AS and YS convey a sense of national identity within the historical context of Japan's rightward shift as a prevailing social trend.

Although media may exhibit distinct political stances and dissenting views from its counterparts, it does not permanently align itself with either end of the ideological spectrum. Actually, media with varying political orientations can still encapsulate the collective national will and interests²². Both AS and YS's Japan-centred news representations reflect an all-pervading *Nationalism* that prioritizes Japan's interests above others. Throughout their reportage, the internal stakeholders are frequently represented as a positive "Self", via reiterating the importance of wastewater discharge and highlighting efforts made by Japanese government and TEPCO. In contrast, the external voices from China and South Korea are depicted as negative "Others" who engage in baseless criticism and interfere with Japan's "national affairs"²³. Traditionally, the overstatement of internal interests is closely linked to Japan's national character imbued with a victim mentality, stemming from enduring sufferings caused by nuclear bombings and natural-disaster-related nuclear incidents, leading to an automatic validation of governmental actions.

Furthermore, media portrayals of the discharge also perpetuate a culture of *Opportunism* in Japanese society, driven by the need for economic recovery, suggesting that Japan is inclined to exploit opportunities without considering the consequences for others²⁴. Given the prolonged deflation caused by COVID-19 and the resulting economic pressure on the government, releasing radioactive wastewater emerges as a convenient solution. In seizing this opportunity, Japan seeks to legitimize its beggar-thy-neighbour policy at the

²¹ Jingbin Wang, "Media bias in Japan and its impact on China-Japan relations", *Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*, 2, 2018, pp. 126-155.

²² Mostafa Goodarzi, Ali Asghar Fahimifar, Elahe Shakeri Daryani, "New media and ideology: A critical perspective", *Journal of Cyberspace Studies*, 5, 2, 2021, pp. 137-162.

²³ Jiangyong Liu, "Japan's perspective on national interests in foreign strategy, and policy towards China", *Foreign Affairs Review*, 5, 2012, pp. 13-29.

²⁴ Qingli Tian, "Opportunism in Japanese diplomacy and Sino-Japanese relations", *Nankai Japan Studies*, 1, 2008, pp. 102-114.

expense of local communities and neighbouring countries' safety and livelihoods²⁵. The reason why both left-centred AS and right-centred YS agree with Japanese *Opportunism* and endeavour to legitimize it is because regardless of political orientation, these media are embedded in a capitalist context where maximizing benefits is viewed as their ultimate pursuit.

Summary and conclusion

Based on the DHA, this study not only reveals the stance adopted by AS and YS regarding Fukushima wastewater discharge through thematic-based text-mining and the engagement analysis, but also explores diverse linguistic strategies employed to legitimize the discharge through the argumentative (topos) analysis. The findings of this study show that both AS and YS take an overall supportive stance on the discharge, yet they legitimize this event differently. Apart from providing authority-oriented representations, AS also integrates the focus of vulnerable stakeholders and other subsequent crises into its reportage; while YS maintains its consistent supportive tendency towards Japanese government throughout its reportage. Moreover, the similarities in their overall stance and efforts to achieve legitimization, along with their differences in news framing, are influenced by distinct media nature, as well as the pervasive influence of *Nationalism* and *Opportunism* within Japanese society. All these factors are (re)shaped by socio-historical-related national will and interests, national character, economic background, and so forth. Furthermore, according to these analyses, both left-oriented media and their conservative counterparts exhibit a tendency to align themselves with the LDP and endorse its actions, which should arouse people's attention.

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²⁵ Yucheng Shen, "Japan's national health insurance and relief measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic", *The Parliamentary Quarterly*, 4, 2021, pp. 120-154.

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CLIMATE CRISIS AS A SECURITY CHALLENGE: RISK/CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Petru-Cristian Negrea and Nina Dobrojan

Introduction

The climate crisis presents a profound challenge to global security, with its impacts triggering competition over natural resources, mass displacement, and increased social tensions, particularly in fragile settings.¹ This paper explores the intersection of climate crisis communication and security challenges, focusing on risk communication strategies and the roles of various actors.

Literature Review

The increasing perception of climate change as a security issue is acknowledged by a diverse group of actors, including policymakers, scholars, and the media.² The notion of climate security is centred on discerning the threats climate change poses to national and individual security.³ National security is about a country's ability to handle climate-induced threats, while individual security covers a spectrum from economic, environmental, to health and safety concerns.⁴ The connection between climate change and security is intricate and multifaceted, with various methodologies, including empirical and constructivist, employed to comprehend it.⁵

In the realm of climate change, risk communication is pivotal. It involves the exchange and dissemination of information regarding climate risks among a wide range of stakeholders, such as researchers, policymakers, and the general public.⁶ Emphasising shared decision-making and moving away from top-down approaches, effective risk communication engages diverse groups, including scientists, government officials, and those directly affected, like agricultural workers and city dwellers.⁷

¹ Daniel Abrahams, "Conflict in Abundance and Peacebuilding in Scarcity: Challenges and Opportunities in Addressing Climate Change and Conflict", *World Development* 132 (2020): 104998.

² Alper Baba, Gokmen Tayfur, Osman Gündüz, Keith W. Howard, Michael J. Friedel and Armando Chambel (eds.), *Climate Change and Its Effects on Water Resources: Issues of National and Global Security*, Springer Science & Business Media, 2011.

³ Jon Barnett, "Security and Climate Change", *Global Environmental Change*, 13, no. 1 (2003), pp. 7–17.

⁴ Marwa Daoudy, *The Origins of the Syrian Conflict: Climate Change and Human Security*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.

⁵ Rita Floyd and Richard Matthew (eds.), *Environmental Security: Approaches and Issues*, Routledge, 2013.

⁶ Michael Fullan, "Coordinating Top-Down and Bottom-Up Strategies for Educational Reform", in *Systemic Reform: Perspectives on Personalizing Education*, 1994, pp. 7–24.

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Addressing climate security effectively, despite extensive research, presents challenges.⁸ Data and theoretical frameworks are essential⁹ for developing specific responses.¹⁰ The interplay between climate change and conflict is intricate¹¹ and not straightforward.¹² Development professionals use data and analytical methods to explore climate-conflict connections¹³ and devise suitable interventions.¹⁴ Prioritising resource allocation in critical areas, especially fragile states, is crucial¹⁵ for reducing climate security risks.¹⁶

Focusing on local responses is critical in managing climate-related security risks¹⁷, as conflicts often localise in specific regions¹⁸. Understanding the geographical distribution¹⁹ of climate-related conflicts is key.²⁰ Governance plays a significant role in mitigating these risks.²¹ Robust governance and political frameworks can disrupt the cycle of climate variability, leading to conflict.²² Nonetheless, many organisations working on climate change are not

⁸ Paul Gilding, *The Great Disruption: How the Climate Crisis Will Transform the Global Economy*, A&C Black, 2011.

⁹ David Held, "Reframing Global Governance: Apocalypse Soon or Reform!", *New Political Economy* 11, no. 2 (2006), pp. 157–76.

¹⁰ Md. Saidul Islam and Ern Kim Kieu, "Tackling Regional Climate Change Impacts and Food Security Issues: A Critical Analysis across ASEAN, PIF, and SAARC", *Sustainability* 12, no. 3 (2020), pp. 883.

¹¹ Christopher Jasperro, and Jonathan Taylor, "Climate Change and Regional Vulnerability to Transnational Security Threats in Southeast Asia", *Geopolitics* 13, no. 2 (2008), pp. 232–56.

¹² Paula Kivimaa, "Climate Security Connects Fragile and Strong States via Cascading Effects: A Review Article", *Political Science Quarterly* (2023): 35.

¹³ Taedong Lee, *Global Cities and Climate Change: The Translocal Relations of Environmental Governance*. Routledge, 2014.

¹⁴ Naho Mirumachi, Sawas Anna and Moritz Workman, "Unveiling the Security Concerns of Low Carbon Development: Climate Security Analysis of the Undesirable and Unintended Effects of Mitigation and Adaptation", *Climate and Development* 12, no. 2 (2020), pp. 97–109.

¹⁵ Angela Oels, "From 'Securitization' of Climate Change to 'Climatization' of the Security Field: Comparing Three Theoretical Perspectives", in *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict: Challenges for Societal Stability*, Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2012, pp. 185–205.

¹⁶ Jacob Poushter and Dorothy Manevich, "Globally, People Point to ISIS and Climate Change as Leading Security Threats", *Pew Research Center*, 2017.

¹⁷ Jürgen Scheffran, "Security Risks of Climate Change: Vulnerabilities, Threats, Conflicts and Strategies", in *Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security: Threats, Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks*, Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2011, pp. 735–56.

¹⁸ René M. Stulz, "Risk Management, Governance, Culture, and Risk Taking in Banks." *Economic Policy Review*, Issue Aug (2016), pp. 43–60.

¹⁹ Ashok Swain and Anders Jägerskog. *Emerging Security Threats in the Middle East: The Impact of Climate Change and Globalization*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

²⁰ Marcus Taylor, *The Political Ecology of Climate Change Adaptation: Livelihoods, Agrarian Change and the Conflicts of Development*, Routledge, 2014.

²¹ Maria Julia Trombetta, "Environmental Security and Climate Change: Analysing the Discourse", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21, no. 4 (2008), pp. 585–602.

²² Julia Vestby, "Climate, Development, and Conflict: Learning from the Past and Mapping Uncertainties of the Future".

adequately equipped to tackle political or governance issues²³, which are fundamental to the effectiveness of climate initiatives.²⁴

Objectives and Research Questions

This paper aims to assess connections between climate crisis communication and security challenges by focusing on climate risk communication strategies discussed in the sampled literature.

Naturally, the following research questions were devised:

1. *How many of the sampled papers discuss risk communication strategies to address climate?*
2. *What is the nature of these risk communication strategies?*

Methodology

To assess the connection between climate crisis communication and security challenges, the paper employs a quantitative research approach. The paper used Google Scholar to sample 10 case studies for the analysis section. The paper employed a keywords search “climate+crisis+communication+and+security+challenges” on Google Scholar, and the first 10 indexed papers that appeared were sampled for the data analysis section. The analysis focused on risk communication strategies, more specifically, whether the sampled papers discussed risk communication strategies to address climate change, or not.

The sampled papers are the following:

Table 1: sampled papers for analysis

Sample number in order of how they appeared when the keywords search was employed on Google Scholar	Source
1	Barnett, J. (2003). Security and climate change. <i>Global environmental change</i> , 13(1), 7-17.
2	Trombetta, M. J. (2008). Environmental security and climate change: analysing the discourse. <i>Cambridge review of international affairs</i> , 21(4), 585-602.
3	Swain, A., & Jägerskog, A. (2016). Emerging security threats in the Middle East: The impact of

²³ Gregory White, *Climate Change and Migration: Security and Borders in a Warming World*, OUP USA, 2011.

²⁴ Gina Ziervogel and Polly J. Ericksen, “Adapting to Climate Change to Sustain Food Security”, *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 1, no. 4 (2010), pp. 525–40.

	climate change and globalization. Rowman & Littlefield.
4	Islam, M. S., & Kieu, E. (2020). Tackling regional climate change impacts and food security issues: A critical analysis across ASEAN, PIF, and SAARC. <i>Sustainability</i> , 12(3), 883.
5	Scheffran, J. (2011). Security risks of climate change: vulnerabilities, threats, conflicts and strategies. In <i>Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security: Threats, Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks</i> (pp. 735-756). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
6	Ziervogel, G., & Ericksen, P. J. (2010). Adapting to climate change to sustain food security. <i>Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change</i> , 1(4), 525-540.
7	Baba, A., Tayfur, G., Gündüz, O., Howard, K. W., Friedel, M. J., & Chambel, A. (Eds.). (2011). <i>Climate change and its effects on water Resources: Issues of National and Global Security</i> . Springer Science & Business Media.
8	Jasparro, C., & Taylor, J. (2008). Climate change and regional vulnerability to transnational security threats in Southeast Asia. <i>Geopolitics</i> , 13(2), 232-256.
9	Poushter, J., & Manevich, D. (2017). Globally, people point to ISIS and climate change as leading security threats. <i>Pew Research Center</i> , 1.

10	Mirumachi, N., Sawas, A., & Workman, M. (2020). Unveiling the security concerns of low carbon development: Climate security analysis of the undesirable and unintended effects of mitigation and adaptation. <i>Climate and Development</i> , 12(2), 97-109.
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Findings

None of the reviewed papers explicitly mentions or discusses risk communication strategies to address climate change. However, some analogue themes have been identified. Analogue themes identified:

Table 2: Themes identified in the sampled papers

Themes identified	Source
“All thematic fields address a clear problem posed to society by climate change, and will generate results to guide the strategic development of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies at local, national and global scales.”	Barnett, J. (2003). Security and climate change. <i>Global environmental change</i> , 13(1), 7-17.
“...introducing mechanisms to prevent emergencies within a system that tends to rely on the one hand, on governing through emergencies and, on the other hand, on insurance and compensation.”	Trombetta, M. J. (2008). Environmental security and climate change: analysing the discourse. <i>Cambridge review of international affairs</i> , 21(4), 585-602.
-	Swain, A., & Jägerskog, A. (2016). Emerging security threats in the Middle East: The impact of climate change and globalization. Rowman & Littlefield.
“...policies based on the assembly of multiple climate models and focus on the possible implications in an attempt to mitigate the risks and advance scientific inquiry.”	Islam, M. S., & Kieu, E. (2020). Tackling regional climate change impacts and food security issues: A critical analysis across ASEAN, PIF, and SAARC. <i>Sustainability</i> , 12(3), 883.
“It is unclear yet how human beings and their societies will respond to the expected dramatic consequences of climate change and whether the social stress will lead to more security risks and conflicts or to more cooperation.”	Scheffran, J. (2011). Security risks of climate change: vulnerabilities, threats, conflicts and strategies. In <i>Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security: Threats,</i>

	Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks (pp. 735-756). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
“Climate change poses considerable challenges to food security.”	Ziervogel, G., & Ericksen, P. J. (2010). Adapting to climate change to sustain food security. <i>Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change</i> , 1(4), 525-540.
“This study also highlights the need for strategic groundwater management policy...”	Baba, A., Tayfur, G., Gündüz, O., Howard, K. W., Friedel, M. J., & Chambel, A. (Eds.). (2011). <i>Climate change and its effects on water Resources: Issues of National and Global Security</i> . Springer Science & Business Media.
“...climate change could increase potential vulnerability to various transnational security threats.”	Jasparro, C., & Taylor, J. (2008). Climate change and regional vulnerability to transnational security threats in Southeast Asia. <i>Geopolitics</i> , 13(2), 232-256.
“People around the globe identify ISIS and climate change as the leading threats to national security...”	Poushter, J., & Manevich, D. (2017). Globally, people point to ISIS and climate change as leading security threats. <i>Pew Research Center</i> , 1.
“The paper shows that climate (in)security manifests in variegated ways between different populations and spatial scales.”	Mirumachi, N., Sawas, A., & Workman, M. (2020). Unveiling the security concerns of low carbon development: Climate security analysis of the undesirable and unintended effects of mitigation and adaptation. <i>Climate and Development</i> , 12(2), 97-109.

Conclusions

None of the papers directly addressed risk communication strategies in the context of climate change. However, several analogous themes emerged, indicating a broader awareness of the challenges posed by climate change and the need for strategic responses. The research indicates a significant gap in the literature regarding explicit discussions on risk communication strategies for climate change. The findings suggest a broader awareness and acknowledgment of climate change as a multifaceted issue affecting various aspects of global security and policy, but a more focused approach to communication strategies is needed to effectively address these challenges. While none of the reviewed papers directly addresses

risk communication strategies specific to climate change, several studies highlight themes that underscore the broader challenges posed by climate change and emphasize the importance of strategic responses to these challenges. The literature frequently acknowledges the diverse impacts of climate change on global security, from exacerbating regional conflicts to straining resources. However, this general acknowledgment lacks specificity in terms of how targeted communication strategies can effectively mitigate these climate-related risks.

The research reviewed reveals a notable gap: despite extensive discussions on the security implications of climate change, few studies explicitly explore how communication could be leveraged to mitigate these risks. Risk communication, especially in the context of a global issue like climate change, plays a critical role in shaping public perception, encouraging preventive action, and informing policy decisions. In the context of climate-related security challenges, a robust communication strategy could help vulnerable communities better understand and prepare for climate impacts, build resilience, and foster more informed public discourse on policy interventions.

Therefore, the absence of targeted research on climate risk communication highlights an important area for future exploration. Effective climate crisis communication strategies are essential to bridge the gap between scientific insights on climate security risks and actionable responses at local, national, and global levels. A more focused research approach in this domain could contribute to crafting communication frameworks that improve public understanding, support timely policy interventions, and ultimately enhance global climate resilience.

In summary, while the existing literature reflects a comprehensive awareness of climate change, it lacks dedicated focus on communication strategies aimed at managing and mitigating these risks. Addressing this research gap could significantly strengthen our ability to confront the climate crisis more proactively and to engage the public and policymakers in a coordinated and informed response. Developing innovative communication methodologies could ensure that climate-related information is not only widely disseminated but also effectively understood and acted upon by diverse stakeholders. Additionally, there is an opportunity to explore interdisciplinary frameworks that integrate insights from social psychology, behavioural science, and risk analysis, which could enhance the precision and resonance of climate communication initiatives. Ultimately, filling this gap could play a pivotal role in fostering a society that is both better informed and more resilient in the face of climate challenges.

Recommendations

There is a pressing need for focused research on risk communication strategies, tailored specifically to the unique challenges posed by climate change. Future studies should investigate how these strategies can be effectively designed and implemented across various sectors, such as national security, food security, and environmental management. The objective would be to translate academic findings into concrete, actionable policy recommendations and practical tools that can empower risk communicators and policymakers to respond more effectively to climate-related risks.

For example, research should aim to produce detailed guidelines on integrating climate risk communication into national security frameworks. Such integration could involve developing specific messaging protocols for climate-related emergencies or designing educational programs for communities in vulnerable areas. Similarly, risk communication strategies could be embedded in emergency preparedness and response plans, helping to

ensure that governments and agencies at all levels are equipped to handle climate-driven crises.

Moreover, adapting best practices from other fields of risk communication, such as public health, could be valuable in the context of climate change and security. The public health sector, for instance, has well-established frameworks for crisis communication that could be modified for climate risk contexts, providing a basis for informing, preparing, and reassuring the public. Leveraging insights from these existing domains could enhance the effectiveness of climate communication strategies, making them more relatable and actionable for diverse audiences. This interdisciplinary approach would enrich the field, bringing proven methodologies from one domain to support innovation and effectiveness in another.

In summary, future research should aim to create a foundation of guidelines, tools, and strategies for climate risk communicators that can be readily adopted and adapted across various sectors. This would ultimately strengthen the global response to climate change, facilitating clearer communication, better-prepared communities, and more resilient national and international systems. Another recommendation is the creation of a *Climate Communication Effectiveness Index* (CCEI) to measure and improve the impact of climate risk communication strategies. This index could combine key factors such as public engagement, policy uptake, and information reach to provide a single score indicating how effective a communication strategy is at driving climate-related action and preparedness.

The CCEI might use a straightforward formula such as:

CCEI = (Engagement + Policy Impact + Reach) x Context Adjustment,

where *Engagement* reflects how well the public responds to the message, *Policy Impact* measures the influence on policy decisions, *Reach* captures the audience size, and *Context Adjustment* allows the score to be tailored to specific regional or socio-political factors.

By applying the CCEI across different strategies, researchers and policymakers could identify which communicative approaches yield the highest scores and are, thus, more effective. This index would provide a practical, data-driven tool to guide climate communication efforts, ensuring that the most impactful messages are prioritized and tailored to their target audience's needs.

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THE ONLINE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION OF THE RUSSIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT NASHI DURING THE BRONZE SOLDIER CRISIS

Ioana-Mădălina Miron

Introduction

The crisis scenario in Tallinn, Estonia, around the World War II monument, the Bronze Soldier statue, escalated into a cyberattack, which Western nations dubbed the first online assault between two countries. There has been no extensive discussion of the crisis in Estonia, and there is very little research available online about this dispute. The Tallinn police website published news on the situation several years ago, but the details and information are unclear. The Tallinn Police Department documents provide some information on the sequence of events as well as the Estonian authorities' reaction.

For this paper, I have chosen to provide a more in-depth examination of the young people who started the fight and were able to attract a large number of young people using the VKontakte and Telegram platforms. In the first section of this article, I will provide a theoretical framework centred on the Bronze Soldier problem, namely an explanation of the concept of memory policy and street politics in conjunction with the nationalist language of the Nashi youth movement. The second section of the article will concentrate on the broad presence of the Nashi youth movement, examining who they are and what their goals and values are. This section will be necessary in order to connect this political movement to the Bronze Soldier Crisis. In the third section of this paper, I choose to examine the dedication of the Nashi young political movement both on Russian soil and in the West. The image of this movement has expanded beyond the Russian Federation's borders to what they refer to as the Non-Russian World. The fourth section of this paper begins with the onset of the Bronze Soldier issue and discusses how the Nashi movement coordinated its members to launch such a cyber-attack on Tallinn. This article provides as much clarity as possible about attacks by analysing and tampering with data available online. It is worth noting that many crucial documents pertaining to this conflict are still not available to the public. In the final section of this post, I choose to investigate and analyse NATO and the Estonian government's responses to the Bronze Soldier issue and the cyber-attacks that accompanied it.

Over the years there have been small protests in front of this statue, but they were considered to be minor, the most eloquent example is that of the nationalist Juri Bohm wrapped in the flag of Estonia, pointing the finger at the statue of the Bronze Soldier and shouting that the statue of an individual who deported their people and occupied their country is exposed. A few months later, the Estonian flag was removed from the Bronze Soldiers' Monument and replaced with the Russian flag, which irritated the Estonian people. In order to avoid further protest acts, the authorities separated the Bronze Soldier statue, but this only enraged the Russian authorities.

To summarise, by 2007, the employment of hybrid elements was nearly non-existent. There were no records or other evidence supporting such an attack on another country. Until 2007, commemorative celebrations took place in Tallinn in front of the Bronze Soldier statue. Russian soldiers were present at these ceremonies, serving as the guard of honour. However,

without access to information, we cannot ascertain how many people from the presidential administration attended these commemorations.

Theoretical background

In this part of the paper, I have chosen to offer a theoretical approach to the concepts of memory of politics and street politics. These two concepts are most representative of the Nashi youth political movement. To better understand the concept of political memory and how it applies to the Bronze Soldier's crisis, I split in two the explanation of this term. First, the term memory is a polymorphic word, meaning it has several meanings, as the authors Natalie Davis and Randolph Starn state: "memory is polymorphic and thereby interpreted variously, depending on the context within which it used."¹ Author David Thelen said that: "memory can be envisioned as stretching along a spectrum of experience: from the personal, individual, and private to the collective, cultural, and public."² For Maurice Halbwachs memory is a social element, he stated that: "individual acts of recollection are dependent upon the social framework within which one is situated."³

Other researchers such as Michael Schudson claimed that: "these forms, including books, statues, and souvenirs are deliberately imbued with meanings that serve specific ends and fulfil particular rhetorical functions."⁴ For the Nashi movement, the researchers are referring to the image of cultural heritage, namely the Bronze Soldier statue. This statue is part of the USSR's (Russia's) collective memory, and the decision to relocate it from the park where it was originally located has prompted a strong reaction from Estonia's Russian immigrant community. Kendall Phillips suggested that: "understanding collective memory in this way, as a dynamic entity subject to reinterpretation in time and space invites inquiry into the ways in which meaning is made, how it functions and is ultimately contested, subverted and supplanted by other memories."⁵ Before the dissolution of the USSR, there were no notions of Russian and non-Russian worlds; historical monuments were shared by the same collectivity, the same collective memory; after the dissolution, when Estonia gained independence from Russia, the bubble of collective memory burst, resulting in violent protests and attacks on USSR history monuments.

Memory politics or politics of memory represent a combination of communal memory and political means and processes that govern how historical events are remembered by the collective and transmitted to others. For the young people of the Nashi movement, the events surrounding the Bronze Soldier statue represent Soviet achievement; the monument represents Tallinn's freedom from the burden of Nazi Germany. This memory politics imposes a specific narrative of historical events for propaganda reasons in order to erase unpleasant aspects of the past that emerge around the Bronze Soldier statue. Monuments and

¹ Natalie Davis and Randolph Starn, "Introduction (special issue: memory and counter-memory)", *Representations*, No. 26, 1989, pp.1-6.

² David Thelen, "Memory and American history", *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 4, 1989, p. 117.

³ Maurice Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952/1992, p. 5.

⁴ Michael Schudson, "Dynamics of distortion in collective memory", in D.L. Schacter (ed.), *Memory distortion: How minds, brains, and societies reconstruct the past*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 346-347.

⁵ Kendall Phillips, "Introduction", in *Framing public memory*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004, p. 2.

memorials relating to civil rights have similarly been identified as rhetorically powerful sites where arguments of consensus and reconciliation largely overshadow conflict and struggle.⁶

The idea of contentious politics refers to the employment of measures that disrupt society in order to raise awareness of a reason why a specific government policy should be changed, such as the Estonian government's decision to relocate the Bronze Soldier statue. When contentious action is sustained and organised, researchers qualify it as a social movement.⁷ In contrast to institutional politics, contentious action is practised by “ordinary people” who lack access to institutional channels or challenge authorities in fundamental ways.⁸ The involvement of governments is central to the definition of politics from the contentious politics perspective, when social movements do not involve governments, they are labelled apolitical, and contentious politics are interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties.”⁹ The Nashi youth movement is the most eloquent example of a movement that pursued such a policy.

The contentious politics is presented under the following actions:

1. Demonstration
2. Strike
3. Riot
4. Terrorism

This concept is not new; many researchers believe it has always existed; the techniques of this policy, however, varied. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, this notion experienced numerous alterations and variations. Three significant authors developed the concept of contentious politics: Sidney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, and Doug McAdam. The most important goal of these authors who developed this term was to advance the explanation of controversial phenomena and policies within a single research agenda.¹⁰ Controversial and disruptive political techniques may combine with social justice campaigns.¹¹ For example, political theorist Clarissa Rile Hyward argued that theories, particularly those of Iris Marion Young, that assign responsibility for correcting large-scale injustices, such as institutional racism, to groups that benefit from oppressive institutions ignore the fact that people rarely challenge institutions that benefit them.¹² According to the author Sewell William, the notion of contentious politics typically provides descriptive narratives of protest acts, and such stories frequently contain a description of the locations where the action takes place.¹³ These interpretations of the two concepts that evolved in the context of the formation of the Nashi

⁶ Marilyn Bordwell DeLaure, “Remembering the sit-ins: Performing public memory at Greensboro’s International Civil Rights Center and Museum”, *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2011, p. 2.

⁷ Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Contentious Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 7. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781608712434.n322>

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 37.

¹¹ Clarissa Rile Hyward, “Responsibility and Ignorance: On Dismantling Structural Injustice”, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 79, No. 2, pp. 396-408.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ William Sewell, “Space in Contentious Politics”, in Charles Tilly (ed.), *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 51.

movement in Russia called attention to the street politics they address, particularly the in the case of the Bronze Soldier statue.

Russia's youth movement *Nashi*

In late 2004, during the Orange Revolution, rumours of a new Kremlin-backed youth movement began to spread.¹⁴ The Political Youth Movement *Nashi* (Молодёжное демократическое антифашистское движение Наши/Youth Democratic Anti-Fascist Movement Ours!) in Russia, is characterised as a component of a long legacy of youth organisations financially supported by the state; it is analogous to the youth movement Amusement Army of Tsarist Russia, the Komsomol of Soviet Russia and Walking Together of contemporary Russia. It is an organisation established and funded by the Kremlin to help promote the state's objectives. The *Nashi* Movement had no power on policies and practices aiming at the purposes of the presidential administration; it was just an easily influenced tool for the state to attain its objectives. *Nashi* was a government-organized non-governmental organisation (GONGO) rather than an independent NGO.¹⁵

The *Nashi* movement began its political course as a patriotic movement that was clearly encouraging support for the Kremlin at a turbulent time: the severe political issues that arose shortly after the Orange Revolution, when many opposition movements arose. The Orange Revolution was a moment when most young people with opposing political views gathered, with the *Nashi* political movement attracting approximately 50,000 young people and Kremlin sympathisers. There are four reasons behind the creation of the youth movement *Nashi*: the fundamental reason is an aversion that the Orange Revolution may expand to Russian territory. This dread of overturning the Kremlin regime, that the opposition may not be able to win elections. The primary goal of establishing this youth movement was to implant in other young people a sense of anti-orange revolution to prevent the development of en masse mobilisation of the young population against the Kremlin. The other reason for the formation of the *Nashi* youth movement was to promote nepotism to ensure allegiance to the Kremlin. Consistent with this purpose, the *Nashi* movement was founded as a de facto recruitment agency with strong ties to the Kremlin regime. The last reason for the creation of the *Nashi* movement is strongly linked to Russian foreign policy. Aside from the main reasons for the formation of this movement, I think that the *Nashi* movement was intended to be a (private) organisation that mirrored the Russian state's foreign policy. Nevertheless, the *Nashi* movement's task was limited to ensuring the successful execution of foreign policy programmes intended for young people approved by the presidential administration.

The target audience for these recruitment processes, as well as those who mobilised to be a part of the *Nashi* movement, falls into two categories: high school and middle school students, mostly from rural areas of Russia, who wanted to invest their energy in civic projects that promised a bright future in important Russian institutions (professions including: leaders and active agents). In addition to all of these components of mobilisation, I have included other particular approaches in the mobilisation process, but the most important and relevant is: street technology/Mass mobilizational strategy - one of the main and essential mobilisation strategies distinctive of the youth movement *Nashi*; the most fitting instances are the *Nashi*

¹⁴ Jussi Lassila, "Making Sense of *Nashi*'s Political Style. The Bronze Soldier Crisis and the Counter-Orange Community", *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 257.

¹⁵ Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics – Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, Stanford: Cengage Learning, 2015, p. 244.

movement's frequent mass protests (the case of Estonia's Bronze Soldier). Putin supported the Nashi movement on every occasion from its inception until 2007, but his support dwindled after the Bronze Soldier issue in Estonia, when the Nashi movement's goal to be an autonomous movement free of government influence became clear.

The beginning of the Bronze Soldier Crisis cyberattacks

In January 2007, a dispute between Russia and Estonia occurred, when the Estonian President Thomas Hendrik Ilves signed a legislation authorising the transfer of a World War II Soviet memorial Bronze Soldier from Tallinn's city centre to a military cemetery.¹⁶ He relocation of the Soviet-era statue "The Bronze Soldier" from the central Tallinn district Tõnismägi to the Tallinn's military cemetery by Estonian authorities in late April 2007 offered, from Nashi's viewpoint, a brilliant platform to demonstrate the importance of, and its emotional commitment to this event.¹⁷ The author Mabel Berezin pointed out the fact that: "codifying, managing, mobilizing emotions transforms them into culturally accepted behaviours, situates them in time and space, and depending upon the context, adds a political dimension to the emotions."¹⁸

Protesters also fought the Bronze Soldier's removal, resulting in one death, 153 injuries, and 800 arrests on Bronze Night in Tallinn.¹⁹ The Nashi movement was the primary driver of this conflict, which included hacking and street protests. Members of the Nashi movement demonstrated again, disrupting a briefing by Estonian Ambassador to Russia Marina Kaljurand and yelling one of the organisation's slogans, "say no to fascism."²⁰ On May 1, 2007, the leader of the Nashi movement made a statement about the incident on the movement's website, declaring that he wanted the Estonian embassy in Moscow dismantled, with a date of demolition set for June 12, 2007. The Nashi movement also staged a protest on the Estonia-Russia highway, obstructing traffic and preventing freight trucks from reaching Estonia. They organised protests against the Estonian trucks in Ivanograd, a Russian town on the Estonia-Russia border, with the slogan "Don't let SS trucks pass," which drew clear parallels between Estonia and Hitler's rule.²¹ This demonstration did not have the anticipated impact because the trucks transporting the merchandise were on their way to Narva, an area on the Russia-Estonia border populated by Russian speakers. Finally, two Nashi commissioners, Konstantin Goloskokov and Sergei Markov, issued different statements regarding the event. On March 3, 2009, Markov indicated that his other colleague was planning cyber-attacks on important Estonian institutions' websites. Markov's position as a state Duma deputy from Putin's United Russia Party fuelled debate regarding the state's role in assault planning; however, the Estonian Defence Ministry downplayed Markov's assertion

¹⁶ Thomas Ambrosio, *Authoritarian Backlash: Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2009, p. 98.

¹⁷ Jussi Lassila, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

¹⁸ Mabel Berezin, "Secure states toward a political sociology of emotions", in Jack Barbalet (ed.), *Emotions and Sociology*, London: Basil Blackwell, 2002, p. 35.

¹⁹ BBC News, "Tallinn Tense after Deadly Riots", 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6602171.stm>, accessed in 10.11.2024.

²⁰ Marcel Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars – The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism*, Washington: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2015, p. 130.

²¹ Merve Yapici, "What Role did Nashi Play in Russian Internal Politics and Foreign Policy. A formulator or an Implementor?", *Review of International Law and Politics*, 2016, p. 124.

by emphasising the operations' highly coordinated character.²² Furthermore, on March 13, 2009, Konstantin Golodskokov told the *Moscow Times* that he led the squad of specialists who targeted Estonian websites in April 2007.²³

The report urging the young members of this movement to march to the streets to oppose the relocation of the Bronze Soldier Statue is a type of sarcasm directed at the movement, similar to the example of the Soviet period *styob*. *Styob* was a sociopolitical movement in which inhabitants of the Soviet Union were mocked. The Estonian authorities had announced a few days earlier obviously with official bureaucratic language that the statue would be demolished/removed from its original location and then the Nashi movement shows its own moral outrage by overidentifying the object.²⁴ The method of communication used on VKontakte platforms, Telegram, and official Russian ministry websites is this *styob*. I consider that the employment of this mode of communication is indicative of pro-Kremlin movements that promote nationalism. Given that in this case, a protest resulted in cyber-attacks. Members of the Nashi movement, as well as its leaders, have committed to preserving the collective memory of the Russian people, the history of the USSR, and means of communication and messages that have a strong influence on the masses. The Nashi Movement sought to establish itself on the international stage as a protector of the USSR's historical and national values. Throughout this time, the Internet has been the most potent tool in the fight to protect national interests. During the protests, the VKontakte platform and Telegram were the most popular, and members of the Nashi movement made comments on news station pages, particularly the Delphi page. On April 27, the Delphi news website disabled certain comments from members of the Nashi movement due to language, mirroring the problematic situation in France during the protests in Paris. This scenario was disclosed on two Russian social networks, as well as other Russian and Estonian forums. However, due to the ongoing conflict, I was unable to obtain more precise information regarding these exchanges of comments. After news of the Bronze Soldier's removal spread, rumours circulated that the statue had been cut into pieces; such allegations were illustrated with a doctored image showing only the soldier's boots remaining in front of the wall, and the image, which shocked Russian-speakers, was broadcast on Russian television.²⁵ In the groups created on VKontakte and Telegram for these protests and rallies, I observed slogans conveyed by the members of the Nashi movement. For example, "Russia, Russia, Russia", "Who, if not us?", "Shame, shame, shame". All of these slogans, as well as some of the message titles, were written in huge, thicker letters, indicating a call for the preservation of the Soviet Union's cultural heritage.

How did NATO and Estonia's government respond?

The President of Estonia, Toomas Ilves, reacted in this way to these rallies: "All this had nothing to do with the inviolability of graves or keeping alive the memory of men fallen

²² "Behind the Estonia Cyberattacks", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 2009, https://www.rferl.org/a/Behind_The_Estonia_Cyberattacks/1505613.html accessed in 10.11.2024.

²³ "Nashi Activists Says He Led Estonia Cyberattacks", *The Moscow Times*, 2009, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/archive/nashi-activist-says-he-led-estonia-cyberattacks>, accessed in 10.11.2024.

²⁴ Jussi Lassila, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-265.

²⁵ Ivo Juurve and Mariita Mattiisen, *The Bronze Soldier Crisis of 2007. Revisiting and Early Case of Hybrid Conflict*, International Centre for Defence and Security, Estonia, 2020, p. 21.

in World War II. The common denominator of last night's criminals was not their nationality, but their desire to riot and vandalize."²⁶ NATO's condemnation of Tallinn protests reinforces the fact that: "NATO is deeply concerned by threats to the physical safety of Estonian diplomatic staff, including the Ambassador, in Moscow, as well as intimidation at the Estonian Embassy. These actions are unacceptable and must be stopped immediately; tensions over the Soviet war memorial and graves in Estonia must be resolved diplomatically between the two countries. NATO urges the Russian authorities to implement their obligations under the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations."²⁷ Both the Estonian government and NATO have expressed concerns about these events and how they have escalated into something exceedingly violent, resulting in the death of hundreds of people. Although the Estonian and NATO organisations expressed concern over the protests, the Bronze Soldier incident was handled without a thorough examination of empirical data. This is the first case of cyber-attack between two countries. The Estonian government said it was Russia's first aggressive move on Estonia after the end of the Cold War. Also, the NATO recalled that this crisis was by far the mildest aggression compared to Russia's aggressive actions towards Georgia in 2008 or Ukraine's situation in 2014. The Estonian government emphasized that Russia's hostile tactics were already present in the Estonian space, but not as significant. The fundamental societal division to be deepened and abused was the difference in historical understanding between Estonians and the Russian-speaking community in Estonia.²⁸

The problem that erupted with the relocation of the Bronze Soldier statue demonstrated that Estonia was not adequately equipped to deal with Russia's cyber threats. The Estonian security establishment could foresee most of the things that happened with the exception of cyber-attacks, which had not taken place in such a manner before, the societies outside Russia should become more resilient to external manipulation, so that extremists cannot find space.²⁹ When President Dmitry Medvedev ran for president and won in 2008, his ascent in politics and closeness to the West left the Nashi movement without the backing it required to survive. As Marlene Laruelle pointed out, since 2008, the Russian administration, including Prime?? has grown increasingly concerned about Nashi's aggressive and autonomous acts, such as the violence against the Estonian embassy.³⁰

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²⁶ Jari Tanner, "Estonia Removes Soviet War Memorial", *The Associated Press*, 2007, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/27/AR2007042700165.html?hpid=sec-world> accessed in 11.11.2024.

²⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Press Releases, 2007, <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2007/p07-044e.html>, accessed in 11.11.2024.

²⁸ Ivo Juurve and Mariita Mattiisen, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

³⁰ Marlene Laruelle, "Negotiating History: Memory Wars in the Near Abroad and the Pro-Kremlin Youth Movements", Marlene Laruelle (Ed.), *Russian Nationalism, Foreign Policy and Identity Debates in Putin's Russia – New Ideological Patterns after the Orange Revolution*, Stuttgart: Verlag, 2014, p. 88.

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CORRECTNESS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE. A CASE STUDY ON ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ AND JACINDA ARDERN

Rebeca I. Rezuş

Introduction and research questions

In search of an answer to this relatively new question for the field of discourse analysis, I started to research the concept of correctness, for the purpose of analysing it in the context of political discourse. My interest in this concept that can be perceived as contradictory led me to question the reality of political correctness. In what way are arguments against it valid? And, to what extent do politicians adhere to the guidelines of political correctness in their speeches?

The approach of my paper is qualitative, which permits for an in-depth investigation of the selected subject, giving me the possibility to get a rich and valuable acknowledgment of the topic and research questions. The methodology used is a discourse analysis of the speeches delivered by the two female political figures, with the core focus on content analysis.

Theoretical framework

Understanding how political discourses are made and the techniques used in order to obtain the best results is crucial for anyone who is either planning to work in the field or interested in the technical part of a discourse. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word *political* as “of, relating to, involving, or involved in politics and especially party politics”³¹ and the word *discourse* as “formal and orderly and usually extended expression of thought on a subject”³². If we combine the two, political discourse is essentially defined by the expression of thoughts on government matters, in a formal and orderly way.

Discourse analysis scholar James Paul Gee views the use of language and grammar in politics as a way of creating perspectives:

“When we speak or write we always take a particular perspective on what the “world” is like. [...] There is nothing special, then, about politics. Politics is part and parcel of using language. Furthermore, far from exonerating us from looking at the empirical details of language and social action and allowing us simply to pontificate, an interest in politics demands that we engage in the empirical details of language and interaction.”³³

He emphasizes not only the importance of using the right words necessary to transmit the ideas to the public, but also the way you present yourself, from “one’s body, clothes, gestures, actions, interactions, ways with things, symbols, tools, technologies (be they guns or

³¹ “Political”, *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/political>, accessed on 25.11.2021.

³² “Discourse”, *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discourse>, accessed on 25.11.2021.

³³ James Paul Lee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method*, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 2.

graphs), and values, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions *right*, as well, and all at the *right* places and times³⁴. To put it simply, in order to get the best outcome of your discourse, the outside should be taken into consideration as much as the text itself.

Paul Chilton explains how attention to linguistics is part of the process of creating values and concepts and the way in which “challenging verbal formulation on such grounds is a part of doing political discourse, as is refusing to do so. Some political actors regard it as legitimate, others attempt to delegitimise it”³⁵. The two concepts are also crucial when talking about political discourse, and, as Chilton describes them, legitimisation refers to self (self-representation, self-apology, self-justification, self-identification as a source of authority) and is viewed as either being positive or negative depending on the position of the actor (an insider or outsider), while delegitimization involves a concrete negative view, when the actor is doing everything in his power to put the other individual or group down.³⁶

In order to better comprehend the intricacies of persuading someone, we will make use of the rhetorical triangle coined by the philosopher Aristotle, which still holds great relevance today. By the rhetorical triangle, we understand the following dimensions: *logos* (appeal to reason), *pathos* (appeal to emotions by using language or visual representations), and *ethos* (appeal to the credibility of the text and trustworthiness of the person)³⁷.

Another key aspect of political discourse is the concept introduced by Eric Eisenberg in his 1984 article *Ambiguity as strategy in organizational communication*, which was later published in his book “Strategic Ambiguities: Essays on Communication, Organization, and Identity”, under the name of *strategic ambiguity*. Eisenberg analysed the concept by looking at the philosophical context which is tied to the area of epistemology or the area responsible for understanding knowledge, defining it as a variety of labels from vagueness to unclarity, leaving no place for a defined message to be delivered to the audience³⁸.

Political correctness: terminology and background

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *politically correct* as “conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated”³⁹. A common way of referring to political correctness is through the use of *euphemisms* or indirect words applied to soften the real truth of the situation that can affect the person in question. Euphemisms are popular in the vocabulary of government employees and politicians, with examples such as *collateral damage* instead of *casualties*, *soft targets* instead of *troops*, and *expendable resources* instead of *soldiers*.⁴⁰ Euphemisms are also extremely important when talking about people, for example addressing someone using the terms *challenged* or *differently-abled*, instead of *disable*, or using *firefighter* and *businessperson*

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

³⁵ Paul Chilton, *Analyzing Political Discourse: Theory and practice*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 8.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

³⁷ Jaclyn Lutzke and Mary F. Henggeler, *The Rhetorical Triangle: Understanding and Using Logos, Ethos, and Pathos*, School Of Liberal Arts: University Writing Center, Indiana University, November 2009, https://www.lsu.edu/hss/english/files/university_writing_files/item35402.pdf.

³⁸ Eric M. Eisenberg, “Ambiguity as strategy in organizational communication”, *Strategic Ambiguities: Essays on Communication, Organization, and Identity*, SAGE, USA, 2016, pp. 5-6.

³⁹ “Politically Correct”, *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/political%20correctness> accessed on 26.11.2021.

⁴⁰ Gregory Bassham, William Irwin, Henry Nardone, James M. Wallace, *Critical Thinking: A Student Introduction*, Fourth Edition, McGraw-Hill, 2001, New York, pp. 115-116.

instead of *fireman* or *businessman*. Looking at these examples and what political correctness stands for, the true meaning of the words should not be changes when deciding to soften a certain part of the discourse.⁴¹

Supporting the concept in her critique of the opposition paper, Maryann Ayim points out the irony of the situation that the concept was mostly defined and presented by the opposition and that it is used not for its main purpose, but to dismiss someone's argument in order not to analyse and respond to that position⁴². Moreover, Michael Rosenblum, Juliana Schroeder, and Francesca Gino consider that, even though political correctness seems to be more closely connected to the left, "labels can be applied either to groups for whom conservatives may feel more sympathy (e.g., poor whites or white trash; religious people or Bible-thumpers) or to groups for whom liberals may feel more sympathy (e.g., undocumented immigrants or illegal immigrants)."⁴³

Political correctness vs. freedom of speech

David van Mill expresses in his entry from The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, that "every society places some limits on the exercise of speech because it always takes place within a context of competing values. In this sense, Stanley Fish is correct when he says that there is no such thing as free speech (in the sense of unlimited speech). Free speech is simply a useful term to focus our attention on a particular form of human interaction and the phrase is not meant to suggest that speech should never be limited."⁴⁴ Maryann Ayim also highlights how, by creating policies that regulators identify as helping in the process of eliminating sexism and racism from writings and discourses, the response of the opposition interferes with the freedom of expression⁴⁵.

The argument that is brought as a response to the claim that political correctness limits freedom of speech, aside from the perspective that generalizing reactions from minorities based on action is unfounded, is the following:

"The law punishes us for speaking in libelous or slanderous ways, so any notion that speech should be restriction-free is inconsistent with the values that have shaped our laws. From my perspective, if professors are now careful and feel constrained not to make derogatory remarks or jokes about women or people of Colour or homosexuals, so much the better. If this is censorship, then it seems to me to be positively desirable censorship".⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 116-117.

⁴² Maryann Ayim, "Just How Correct is Political Correctness? A Critique of the Opposition's Arguments", in Frans H. van Eemeren, Bart Garssen, Hans Hansen, Scott Jacobs (eds.), *Argumentation* 12, 1998, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands, p. 446, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007718113969>.

⁴³ Michael Rosenblum, Juliana Schroeder, and Francesca Gino, "Tell It Like It Is: When Politically Incorrect Language Promotes Authenticity", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2019, p. 2, DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000206>.

⁴⁴ David van Mill, "Freedom of Speech", in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/freedom-speech/>.

⁴⁵ Maryann Ayim, "Just How Correct is Political Correctness? A Critique of the Opposition's Arguments", in Frans H. van Eemeren, Bart Garssen, Hans Hansen, Scott Jacobs (eds.), *Argumentation* 12, 1998, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands, p. 454, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007718113969>.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 461.

While there are divergent views on the topic (“But to get a real sense of how socially toxic this whole thing can be, put together what has been said about the fragility of the *individual snowflake* with what we know about the way the snowflake fantasies play out in protectiveness”⁴⁷), political correctness has a special role when dealing with politics, and it should be respected in order to offer the equality and dignity that all deserve, despite race, gender, or belonging to various minority groups. Moreover, political correctness does not tackle only the language used but also the actions that could make a minority group feel marginalized, giving it more weight in the fight for acknowledging its relevance.

Social media as platform for political figures

Mirza Sarah Alam and Md Yousuf consider that social media facilitates a two-way communication for the users (statement-response), in comparison with other types of media such as television, radio or newspapers, helping in the decision-making process, and it has become an effective and popular choice for communication and even control of the political activities.⁴⁸ Moreover, the media also opened the possibilities for citizens to analyse, compare, and judge how politicians in their area behave compared to the rest of the world, especially with the knowledge that opinions and shared information between individuals can weigh more than speeches, promises, and sometimes actions made by the ones in charge.⁴⁹

The mission of politicians, to gain support from the citizens in their path to political success, can only be achieved if they master the usage of social platforms. However, the dangers associated to this means of communication should not be disregarded. Marc T. Kiviniemi, Heather Orom, Jennifer L. Hay and Erika A. Waters explain how misinformation was easily spread online by the Republicans, as the communicator was aligned with the recipient’s partisan position; Trump’s posts on Twitter have been highlighted, overlooking the aspect of accuracy, which gave Democrats the edge in terms of credibility.⁵⁰

Social media platforms have made it easier for many of us to access information about the candidates we already support or are considering voting for, thanks to the branding elements that we may not even realize are influencing us. To support this idea Ciara Torres-Spelliscy states that “Nowadays, political campaigns are one place where political branding attempts to define candidates, policies, even the state of the nation. Incumbents will try to brand the economy as outstanding and themselves as the cause of the nation’s success.

⁴⁷ Howard S. Schwartz, “The Children of Political Correctness”, in Carol Iannone and Seth Forman (eds.), *National Associations of Scholars*, 2019, pp. 383, DOI: 10.1007/s12129-019-09816-2.

⁴⁸ Mirza Sarah Alam & Md Yousuf, *Use of Social Media in Politics: A quantitative study of how political activities on social media affect People aged 20-39 in South East Asia*, Linnaeus University, Sweden, pp. 7-8, <https://lnu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1608836/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, accessed on 20.03.2022.

⁴⁹ M.A. Ahmed, S.A. Lodhi, and M.N. Shahzad, “Political Brand: trusting a candidate in the age of mistrust”, *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, January 2011, p. 10, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mirza-Ahmed/publication/303524132_Political_Brand_trusting_a_candidate_in_the_age_of_mistrust/links/5761297f08ae2b8d20ed3111/Political-Brand-trusting-a-candidate-in-the-age-of-mistrust.pdf, accessed on 20.03.2022.

⁵⁰ Marc T. Kiviniemi, Heather Orom, Jennifer L. Hay, and Erika A. Water, “Prevention is political: political party affiliation predicts perceived risk and prevention behaviours for COVID-19”, *BMC Public Health*, Vol. 22, article No. 298, 2022, DOI: 10.1186/s12889-022-12649-4.

Challengers will try to brand the country as being on the wrong track and brand themselves as the catalyst for needed change.”⁵¹

Political correctness in Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s discourses

After this introduction on the meaning of political correctness and on how essential social media is for politicians, I will continue with the analytical part of the paper, where I will look for indicators that can answer this question: To what extent do political figures follow the principles of political correctness?

Certain words, ways of addressing, and even topics that are chosen to be presented are considered components of a politically correct behaviours. The first political figure that will be the subject of my analysis is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, an American politician serving since 2019 as the U.S. representative for New York’s 14th congressional district, and one of the most popular online political figures⁵².

Her political journey was quite surprising for many that did not understand how someone that was visible mainly online could become such a strong voice for the younger generation. However, an interview with Anderson Cooper on *60 Minutes* sparked various reactions when she stated: “I think that there’s a lot of people more concerned about being precisely, factually, and semantically correct than about being morally right.”⁵³ Hence, we can interpret that she puts morality and the well-being of the people before the message itself. The desire to be morally correct may explain why political correctness is so prevalent among those in positions of power. In a country where citizens view moral values as questionable, as illustrated by a 2019 Gallup survey showing that “47% of Americans rate U.S. moral values as poor, 36% as only fair, and 17% as excellent or good”⁵⁴, it is no surprise that she chose to focus on the moral aspect, rather than the factual one.

Ocasio-Cortez, although she was never directly assigned the label of being politically correct, is a political figure that shaped her discourses and political presence overall with much care not to offend or discriminate against anyone. This aspect of her image was also visible her viral Met Gala gown choice, where she decided to wear a dress with the text “Tax the Rich”. When asked about the statement she was trying to make by wearing that dress, the politician used the technique of strategic ambiguity and answered that:

“It’s not ‘politically correct’ to be able to talk about these things, but they are so clearly having an obvious impact on not just our public discourse but the concentration of power. We have to talk about patriarchy, racism, capitalism, but you’re not going to have those conversations by

⁵¹ Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, “The Power of Branding in Politics” in *Brennan Center of Justice*, October 2019, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/power-branding-politics>, accessed on 21.03.2022.

⁵² Chris Cillizza, “The absolutely remarkable social media power of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez”, *CNN politics*, July 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/07/24/politics/aoc-ted-yoho-cspan/index.html>, accessed on 21.03.2022.

⁵³ Ian Schwartz, “Ocasio-Cortez: People More Concerned about Me Being ‘Factually Correct’ than ‘Morally Right’”, *Real Clear Politics*, January 2019, https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2019/01/06/ocasio-cortez_people_being_more_concerned_about_me_being_factually_correct_than_morally_right.html, accessed on 10.04.2022.

⁵⁴ Megan Brenan, “Americans Say U.S. Moral Values Not Good and getting worse”, *Gallup*, Section: Politics, May 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/257954/americans-say-moral-values-not-good-getting-worse.aspx>, accessed on 10.04.2022.

using those words. You have to have those conversations by really responding in uplifting moments. I don't really care if other people understand it. Sometimes what seems to some folks a moment that's gauche or something, I often do it with the intention of exposing cultural or psychological undercurrents that people don't want to talk about. Which, by the way, is why I think sometimes people read these moments as gauche or low-class or whatever they may be. And sometimes how I feel is, if I'm just going to be this, like, commodified avatar thing, then I'm going to play with it, like a toy."⁵⁵

Therefore, discussions on the topics she highlighted — despite not always using explicit terms to address the issues, a typical feature of strategic ambiguity — are essential, and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez is unafraid to engage in them. Although merely discussions on those topics cannot be considered as being politically correct, the decision to stand up for them can be seen as a politically correct way of acting when injustices occur. Before examining discourse examples, it is important to clarify that this paper focuses solely on the aspects defined within the concept of political correctness. Offensive language or actions that are not aimed at an individual or minority group but are presented as "politically correct" will be disregarded and treated as exaggerations.

One of Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's speeches can be used as a good example for calling out someone that was disrespectful towards her as a woman, using an inappropriate way of addressing that should not be accepted in the diplomatic environment. I consider this is the proper reaction when a minority is mistreated:

"These were the words that Representative Yoho levied against a congresswoman. The congresswoman that not only represents New York's 14th Congressional District, but every congresswoman and every woman in this country. Because all of us have had to deal with this in some form, some way, some shape, at some point in our lives. I want to be clear that Representative Yoho's comments were not deeply hurtful or piercing to me, because I have worked a working class job. [...] He was walking shoulder to shoulder with Representative Roger Williams, and that's when we start to see that this issue is not about one incident. It is cultural. It is a culture of lack of impunity, of accepting of violence and violent language against women, and an entire structure of power that supports that. Because not only have I been spoken to disrespectfully, particularly by members of the Republican Party and elected officials in the Republican Party, not just here, but the President of the United States last year told me to go home to another country, with the implication that I don't even belong in America. The governor of Florida, Governor DeSantis, before I even was sworn in, called me a whatever that is. Dehumanizing language is not new, and what we are seeing is that incidents like these are happening in a pattern. This is a pattern of an attitude towards women and dehumanization of others."⁵⁶

In a domain highly dominated by men, delivering a speech where you stand up against this type of behavior and the discrimination that women suffer from, is a form of demanding political correctness. As stated above, political correctness does not limit itself to

⁵⁵ David Remnick, "Is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez an Insider Now?", *The New Yorker*, February 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-interview/is-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-an-insider-now>, accessed on 10.04.2022.

⁵⁶ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, "Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) House Floor Speech Transcript on Yoho Remarks", *Rev*, July 2020, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/rep-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-floor-speech-about-yoho-remarks-july-23>, accessed on 15.04.2022.

language (the censored language used by Representative Yoho, which is avoided in this paper, is considered politically incorrect and vulgar), but it also extends to practices that address behaviours that disadvantages a group or minority. Furthermore, we can recognize her appeal to pathos in delivering the message, as she leverages her status as a woman to strengthen the speech, thereby crafting a more powerful idea that resonates with people as a step toward fairness. This can also be seen as an appeal to ethos, as she aims to convince the audience of her credibility and the authenticity of her story.

The endeavour of calling out an individual for being politically incorrect can contribute to a change in attitude regarding that specific issue. Unfortunately, people are often resistant to change unless they are confronted with their mistakes. By calling out such behaviours, the chances of others seeing it and learning from the situation increase significantly, rather than leaving things as they are.

Ocasio-Cortez also use politically correct terms during her multiple public appearances, such as “every single individual chooses to make between now and November, on election day and after”⁵⁷ or “the American people”⁵⁸ instead of classifying with every single man or woman that excludes other genders, “Our immigrant brothers and sisters will not be protected”⁵⁹ instead of other negative adjectives to describe them, “Native people”⁶⁰ and “LGBT people” instead of disrespectful names that used to be attributed to both, “Black communities, Latino communities, and a wide variety”⁶¹.

In the United States, the concept became ingrained in both political life and the broader culture, alongside another widely discussed concept seen as the remedy for politically incorrect behaviour: *cancel culture*⁶². The youth's shift towards inclusivity, politically correct language, and actions signals the emergence of a new type of politician who seeks to gain support, as these elements can carry more weight than a catchy slogan or an impressive campaign. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez appeared to recognize this, and although much of her campaign took place online, her message of political correctness and inclusivity resonated widely, propelling her to become the youngest Congresswoman.

Furthermore, for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, political correctness seems to have been a good strategy for her political campaign and public interactions, being the image of the young politician that does not discriminate, uses inappropriate words or is reckless in her actions in order to get voter attention and support, but being perceived as someone who promotes

⁵⁷ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, “AOC Speech Transcript on RBG Death & What Democrats Should Do Next”, *Rev*, September 2020, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/aoc-speech-transcript-on-rbg-death-what-democrats-should-do-next>, accessed on 15.04.2022.

⁵⁸ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, “Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) CNN Interview on Texas Abortion Bill Transcript”, *Rev*, September 2021, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/rep-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-aoc-cnn-interview-on-texas-abortion-bill-transcript>, accessed on 15.04.2022.

⁵⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁶¹ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) Compares Texas Voting Law to Jim Crow Transcript”, *Rev*, July 2021, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-aoc-compares-texas-voting-law-to-jim-crow-transcript>, accessed on 15.04.2022.

⁶² Emily A. Vogels, Monica Anderson, Margaret Porteus, Chris Baronavski, Sara Atske, Colleen McClain, Brooke Auxier, Andrew Perrin, and Meera Ramshankar, *Americans and ‘Cancel Culture’: Where Some See Calls for Accountability, Others See Censorship, Punishment*, Pew Research Center, Section: Politics Online, May 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/05/19/americans-and-cancel-culture-where-some-see-calls-for-accountability-others-see-censorship-punishment/>, accessed on 15.04.2022.

equality and stands up when injustices are committed against a minority community or individual.

Political correctness in Jacinda Ardern's discourses

Next, we will investigate Jacinda Ardern's political correctness, in several of her public appearances. Compared to Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who did not comment on the occasional acceptance of lack of political correctness, the New Zealand's prime minister did speak directly on the topic, expressing that: "I do think sometimes we need to take a breath."⁶³ Her statements came after some ideas have been vehiculated in this respect, such as that women can now also play the role of Santa Claus, to which the prime minister added that we shouldn't take the joy out of Christmas, or the onion-safety measures introduced at Bunnings after someone got injured because of them, to which her response was to point out the ridiculousness of the situation.⁶⁴ Although this seems as a stand against political correctness or at least sceptical of it, Jacinda Ardern is still respectful during her speeches, using words such as "making sure that people are able to feel safely" and "vulnerable communities" in order not to favour a certain gender or address a minority wrongly.

The two examples presented highlight the contrasting views on what political correctness means, which helps explain why its usage is still controversial. Even though Jacinda Ardern believes we need to reconsider the meaning of political correctness, she still applies its general principles.

To examine more of Jacinda Ardern's way of delivering political discourses, examples of inclusive language are multiple, such as "I greet you in Te Reo Maori, the language of the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand"⁶⁵ or "support our rural and indigenous communities"⁶⁶ where she addresses with the proper term the natives from New Zealand, and "we must turn to the most important thing of all, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata. It is people, people, people"⁶⁷ or "thank you to the many people who gave us their vote"⁶⁸ using *people* instead of *women* and *men*.

Prime Minister Ardern was also the first political figure from New Zealand to march with the people from the LGBTQ+ community during the Pride, delivering the message below, which can be analysed through the political correctness lenses:

"Ultimately this is a parade about diversity and inclusiveness. And I'm really proud of the work the team has done to make that real over the years and in our laws. [...] But we can't be complacent. As long as there are kids in New Zealand, if they are

⁶³ "Jacinda Ardern shares thoughts on political correctness", *NewstalkZB*, November 2018, <https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/the-country/audio/jacinda-ardern-lets-not-take-the-joy-out-of-christmas/>, accessed on 20.04.2022.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ Jacinda Ardern, "New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern UN General Assembly 2021 Speech Transcript", *Rev*, September 2021, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/new-zealand-pm-jacinda-ardern-un-general-assembly-2021-speech-transcript>, accessed on 20.04.2022.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ Jacinda Ardern, "New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern Victory Speech Transcript: Wins 2020 New Zealand Election", *Rev*, October 2020, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/new-zealand-pm-jacinda-ardern-victory-speech-transcript-wins-2020-new-zealand-election>, accessed on 20.04.2022.

LGBTQI, if they have high levels of mental health issues or self harm, that tells us that we still have work to do.”⁶⁹

In addition to the significance of her presence at the match, the choice of words she used — from the respectful way she addressed the community to her use of the term "mental health issues" instead of the often inappropriate "mental illness" — highlights her adherence to the principles of political correctness. Similarly to Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern put emphasis on ending discrimination, especially against transgender people. Another example in this respect is her defending of Laurel Hubbard, a transgender weightlifter, who was selected for Tokyo Olympics, stating: “The alternative is to have someone who followed the rules, but then is denied the ability to participate. [...] So, ultimately, I leave it to those bodies and that's the decision they have made and it's in keeping with the standard that has been set globally.”⁷⁰

To contextualize the concept within the social circumstances, we must consider how it is perceived by the people of New Zealand. Although there is no official data available showing the exact number of New Zealanders who support or oppose political correctness, (except for a few New Zealanders who tried to promote the concept⁷¹) or even what they understand by political correctness (except for sites displaying predominantly negative opinions⁷²), an analysis of the regional landscape can still be made.

Prime Minister Ardern also brought up in her speeches the injustices that still exist when discussing women and their careers, stating that: “It is the woman’s decision about when they choose to have children. It should not predetermine whether or not they are given a job or have job opportunities”⁷³, as well as “It is totally unacceptable in 2017 to say that women should have to answer that question in the workplace, it is unacceptable, it is unacceptable.”⁷⁴ For both politicians discussed in this case study, despite having differing views and perspectives on the topic at the national level, political correctness was not regarded as a negative trait, but rather as a standard approach to discourse in the 21st century. During this research we did not find discourses where the two politicians predominantly used improper language. On the contrary, we can perceive them as politicians that knew how to address the masses and that were also ready to act against discriminatory behaviour.

⁶⁹ Eleanor Ainge Roy, “Jacinda Ardern becomes first New Zealand PM to march in gay pride parade”, *The Guardian*, February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/19/jacinda-ardern-becomes-first-new-zealand-pm-to-take-part-in-gay-pride-parade>, accessed on 20.04.2022.

⁷⁰ Praveen Menon, “New Zealand PM backs transgender weightlifter's Olympic selection”, *Reuters*, Section: Sports, June 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/repeat-new-zealand-pm-ardern-backs-weightlifters-selection-olympics-2021-06-22/>, accessed on 20.04.2022.

⁷¹ Stephen Levine, “Political values - Values and political change”, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, June 2021, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/political-values/page-7>, accessed 22.04.2022.

⁷² Dr Muriel Newman, *Political Correctness Threatens Free Speech*, New Zealand Center for Political Research, March 2018, <https://www.nzcpr.com/political-correctness-threatens-free-speech/>, accessed on 22.04.2022.

⁷³ “Inspiring Thursday: Jacinda Ardern”, in *Women against Violence Europe*, January 2021, <https://wave-network.org/inspiring-thursday-jacinda-ardern/>, accessed on 22.04.2022.

⁷⁴ Eleanor Ainge Roy, “‘Unacceptable’: New Zealand's Labour leader asked about baby plans seven hours into job”, *The Guardian*, August 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/02/unacceptable-new-zealands-labour-leader-asked-about-baby-plans-six-hours-into-job>, accessed on 22.04.2022.

Conclusions

Upon analysing the impact of political correctness on the political discourses of these two female politicians, we can argue that it represents an asset rather than an inconvenience and that, nowadays, being politically correct is more profitable than being politically incorrect.

To what extent are arguments against political correctness and its limitation of free speech true? I will answer by using the words of Maryann Ayim: "If this is censorship, then it seems to me to be positively desirable censorship."⁷⁵ Political correctness is about the minorities and their right to be treated and addressed properly, not about cutting down from the concept of freedom.

The key question that started this paper and that combined the elements mentioned was the measure in which politicians follow the guidelines of political correctness in their discourses, to which I can partially answer. The case study was designed to respond to this question, to find words and actions that can point out if Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern use political correctness when delivering discourses. The main finding of my research was that political correctness was not an attribute that politicians directly admit to employing, compared to other attributes such as integrity and courage that may be found in their speeches. Although both political figures used words or acted in accordance with political correctness, it was interesting to see the response of Prime Minister Ardern on the matter (the mention of taking a breath from it), and even the one of Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, that changed the direction of the question and was ambiguous in her response when the concept was brought up. The absence of explicitly naming the concept remains uncertain but presents an intriguing subject for future research.

In conclusion, the concept has proven to be beneficial for any politician aiming to convey a progressive and inclusive message that embraces all minority groups, regardless of gender, race, or sexual orientation. Public reactions to instances where the two politicians used language or took actions deemed politically incorrect were largely negative, prompting the need for a proper response and, in some cases, an apology.

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⁷⁵ Maryann Ayim, "Just How Correct is Political Correctness? A Critique of the Opposition's Arguments", in Frans H. van Eemeren, Bart Garssen, Hans Hansen, Scott Jacobs (eds.), *Argumentation* 12, 1998, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands, p. 461, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007718113969>.

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THE RISE OF POPULISM IN SERBIA. AN ANALYSIS THROUGH LIBERAL THEORY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Ramona Neagoș

Theoretical framework

In Europe, the political phenomenon that we identify as right-wing populism found its most dramatic expression in the success of the BREXIT campaign in Britain. Nevertheless, the general upward trend has persisted since then. According to a Pew Research Center analysis¹ focusing on 11 countries in Europe that were surveyed in 2022 - Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Hungary, and Poland - across Europe, populists-especially those on the ideological right – have been winning larger shares of the vote in recent legislative elections. However, populist support has not risen uniformly across Europe. In Germany and Greece, the popularity of populist parties has been falling slightly in recent years.

However, although the rise of populism has acquired different local/regional flavours, based on the consensus among IR scholars complemented by our contribution to this scholarly conversation, we argue that the following main causes are conducive to the rise of populism: the breakdown in the social contract, the cultural backlash (or cultural disruption), the multilateral overreach, and the disregard for the influence of emotion in political thinking and behaviour (in the case of normalization of relations process between Serbia and Kosovo, the lack of preoccupation with the critical role of emotion in human behaviour, particularly in negotiation²).

A breakdown in the social contract

In an article published in 2017 titled “The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither”, one of the central figures in the neoliberal school, Robert Keohane, together with Jeff D. Colgan, Director of Security Studies at Brown University, argued that:

“Since the early 1980s, the effects of a neoliberal economic agenda have eroded the social contract that has previously ensured crucial political support for the order. Many middle and working-class voters in the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere have come to believe with a good deal of justification that the system is rigged. (...) We did not pay enough attention as capitalism hijacked globalization. Economic elites designed international institutions to serve their own interests and to create firmer links between themselves and governments. Ordinary people were left out. (...) The Brexit and Trump phenomena reflect a breakdown in the social contract at the core of liberal democracy: those who do well in a market-based society promise to make sure that those

¹ Laura Silver, “Populists in Europe - especially those on the right - have increased their vote shares in recent elections”, *Pew Research Centre*, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/06/populists-in-europe-especially-those-on-the-right-have-increased-their-vote-shares-in-recent-elections/>, last accessed on 30.08.2024.

² Robert S. Adler, Benson Rosen and Elliot M. Silverstein, “Emotions in Negotiation: How to Manage Fear and Anger”, *Negotiation Journal*, No.14, April 1998, p. 161.

disadvantaged by market forces do not fall too far behind. But fall behind they have. As political scientists (...) have documented, such trends have led to different sets of Americans living in separate worlds. The well-off do not live near the poor or interact with them in public institutions as much as they used to. This self-segregation has sapped a sense of solidarity from American civic life: even as communications technology has connected people as never before, different social classes have drifted further apart, becoming almost alien to one another. And since cosmopolitan elites were doing so well, many came to the conclusion - often without realizing it- that solidarity just wasn't that important for a well-functioning democracy. Elites have taken advantage of the global liberal order - sometimes inadvertently, sometimes intentionally - to capture most of the income and wealth gains in recent decades, and they have not shared much with the middle and lower classes. (...) The bill for that broken social contract came due in 2016 on both sides of the Atlantic."³

Within the European Union, the most visible embodiment of this breakdown in the social contract is the increasing gaps between the economic performances of EU member states where the weaker countries are being left behind, especially after The Great Recession. "The impact was very unequal across countries and income groups. Countries in the European periphery have been more affected than those in the core. [...] Individuals at the bottom quintile of the income distribution have generally been more affected than their higher-income counterparts, resulting in growing income inequalities among many European countries and, what s more, a shrinking middle class after years of expansion."⁴

To specify "the breakdown in the social contract" as one of the causes of the populist revolt is not uncommon in IR theories. There are a myriad of available answers to this question. For example, the essential message of Wendy Brown's theoretical contribution, from both a Feminist Theory and a Frankfurt School critical theory perspective to the study of neoliberalism, is that "democracy is being replaced by plutocracy." Her argument is not merely that markets and money corrupt democracy or that political institutions are increasingly dominated by corporate capital. Rather, the author reveals how the influence of neoliberal thinking, which is ubiquitous in government, the workplace, the legal system, education, culture, and many other quotidian activities today, is transforming the unique political character, meaning, and operation of democracy elements into economic ones. "The institutions and principles aimed at securing democracy, the cultures required to nourish it, the energies needed to animate it, and the citizens practicing, caring for or desiring it - all of these are challenged by neoliberalism s economisation of political life and of other heretofore noneconomic spheres and activities."⁵

In the 1920s, almost 100 years ago, other theoretical contributions such as distributism, the economic theory formulated by Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton also anticipated the criticism of neoliberalism put forward by Wendy Brown and what Jeff D. Colgan and Robert

³ Jeff D. Colgan, Robert O. Keohane, "The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 3, 2017, pp. 37-44.

⁴ Carlos Vacas-Soriano, Enrique Fernández-Macías, "Europe s shrinking middle class", *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*, 23 June 2017, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/blog/europes-shrinking-middle-class>, last accessed on 30.08.2024.

⁵ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism s Stealth Revolution*, New York, Zone Books, 2015, pp. 17-18.

O. Keohane referred to as the “breakdown in the social contract,” i.e., different social classes drifting further apart with the elites capturing most of the income and wealth gains.

The fact that this message also comes from one of the most important creators and influential representatives of modern neoliberal international theory, Robert O. Keohane is an indicator of the complicated nature of the causes of the populist revolt. Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane admitted that: “those of us who have not only analyzed globalization and the liberal order but also celebrated them share some responsibility for the rise of populism. (...) The time has come to acknowledge this reality and push for policies that can save the liberal order before it is too late.”⁶

G. K. Chesterton was writing in a time prior to the Great Depression, after World War I, at a time when England was having serious economic problems leading up to what culminated in the depression:

“They (the advocates of capitalism) were quite sure that their economic rules were rigid, that their political theory was right, that their commerce was beneficent, that their parliaments were popular, that their press was enlightened, that their science was humane. In this confidence they committed their people to certain new and enormous experiments; to making their own independent nation an eternal debtor to a few rich men; to piling up private property in heaps on the faith of financiers; (...), to letting the rich grow richer and fewer and the poor poorer and more numerous; to letting the whole world be cloven in two with a war of mere masters and mere servants.”⁷

The book of the renowned political philosopher Francis Fukuyama „The End of History and the Last Man” serves as an excellent reminder of the history of liberalism, and the benefits that come with it and of its successes and strengths, concluding that despite democracy’s challenges, it remains far superior to the alternatives.

In his more recent work, *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, Fukuyama vigorously defends liberal democracy and observes that while liberalism allowed diverse communities to coexist and thrive, neoliberalism wiped out smaller communities and tended to favor the wealthy. Without some social-oriented entity to step in and defend smaller communities, these displaced individuals lose faith in liberalism altogether and turn to alternative illiberal or authoritarian movements.

Thus, Fukuyama gives three reasons for advocating liberalism. In his view, a significant issue is the considerable critique of liberalism from both conservative (the right) and progressive (the left) perspectives in recent years. According to the author, we now have a group of so-called post-liberal conservatives who blame liberalism for the problems of contemporary society; meanwhile, many progressives, particularly those from Generation Z, think that liberalism is outdated, something that their parents, baby boomers, or grandparents believed in but it is not relevant to the present. Fukuyama thinks it still is for the following three reasons:

The first reason is a practical one: liberalism is fundamentally a means of governing diverse societies. European Union was set up as a liberal international structure to manage the peaceful relations of these different nations. And we can see this in a country like India as well. Nehru and Gandhi founded India in the late 1940s on liberal principles, and it’s almost impossible to imagine how that country could be governed other than that. India is

⁶ Colgan and Keohane, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁷ G. K. Chesterton, *The Outline of Sanity*, Hawthorne: Aeterna Press, 2015, p. 392, Kindle Edition.

characterized by religious, caste, regional, and linguistic diversity, with numerous languages spoken nationwide. Without a liberal framework to manage these differences, communal violence would likely be a constant issue. Instead, the liberal order in India has preserved the nation up to the present. According to Fukuyama, a significant problem in India today is that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are attempting to shift the country's national identity away from a liberal one to one based on Hindu nationalism. This shift is eroding individual rights, particularly for Muslims, undermining the independent status of Kashmir and causing other changes that are likely to result in violence.

The second argument is a moral one - liberalism safeguards human autonomy. The author argues that a key aspect of the Judeo-Christian tradition is the belief that human dignity stems from the ability to make moral choices. This capacity for moral decision-making gives people essential equality because everybody has that capacity for moral choice. Liberalism is designed to protect this autonomy, allowing individuals to choose their life path, decide where to live, whom to marry, what beliefs to uphold, etc.

The third benefit of a liberal society is economic. Liberal societies safeguard rights such as owning private property, engaging in commercial transactions, and buying and selling goods. Because of this, liberal societies have historically been linked with economic modernization and growth from the very start.

In the book above-cited, Fukuyama argues that part of the reason for dissatisfaction and discontent with liberalism stems less from its fundamental principles and more from distortions (certain deformations) of liberalism that have occurred, both on the right (through right-wing populists) and on the left (through left-wing progressives).

Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane highlighted the same two deformations: "populism comes in a range of ideological flavours. Left-wing populists want to 'soak the rich' in the name of equality; right-wing populists want to remove constraints on wealth in the name of growth."⁸

Fukuyama notes that the term 'neoliberalism' is often used interchangeably with 'capitalism', but he does not use it in that sense. He views neoliberalism as an extension of fundamental free-market principles that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s under leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, who championed free markets. This movement was intellectually driven by the Chicago School and economists like Milton Friedman, many of whom were Nobel Prize winners.

In Fukuyama's view, they started with a correct insight - that private property and markets are essential for economic growth - but they carried that to an extreme where the state is denigrated, and neoliberals attempt to cut back the state in terms of social protections, regulations and the like and this leads to markets creating huge inequalities. Inequalities, especially in the most liberal societies in the most neoliberal countries, Britain and the United States, have grown enormously since the 1960s.

The deregulation, particularly of the financial sector, directly led to a series of financial crises in the 1990s, culminating in the 2008 subprime crisis in the United States. This crisis severely affected many ordinary people who lost their homes due to underwater mortgages, while the elites - such as bankers and hedge fund managers - experienced only temporary disruption and ultimately remained largely unaffected. Fukuyama argues that this disparity fuels much of the populism seen on both the left and the right, as ordinary people suffer under

⁸ Colgan and Keohane, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

neoliberal policies that appear to harm rather than benefit them. In the book *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* Fukuyama argues that:

“this liberal world order did not however benefit everyone. In many countries around the world, and particularly in developed democracies, inequality increased dramatically, such that many of the benefits of growth flowed primarily to an elite defined primarily by education.(...) Huge middle classes aroused in countries such as China and India, but the work they did replaced the work that had been done by older middle classes in the developed world. Manufacturing moved steadily from Europe and the United States to East Asia and other low-labor-cost regions. At the same time, women were displacing men at an increasingly service dominated new economy and low skilled workers were being replaced by smart machines. Beginning in the mid 2000 the momentum toward an increasingly open liberal world order began to falter, then went into reverse. This shift coincided with two financial crisis. The first originating in the US subprime market in 2008, that led to the subsequent Great Depression and the second emerging to the threat to the euro and the European Union posed by Greece’s insolvency. In both cases elite policies produces huge recessions, high levels of unemployment, and falling incomes for millions of ordinary workers around the world. Since the United States and the European Union were the leading exemplars these crisis damaged the reputation of liberal democracy as a whole.”⁹

While populism in the West may have emerged partly because of a breakdown in the social contract (i.e., elites taking advantage of the global liberal order, a shrinking middle class, democracy being replaced by plutocracy, and immigration), in places like Serbia, populism was manufactured by politicians for decades.

Today, the “drives” mentioned above are further fuelling populism in Serbia through (1) contagion effect, i.e., through the sensitivity of interdependence, for example, the effects of changes in one European state like United Kingdom or Hungary on other states, such as Serbia - as we will explain next, (2) by reducing EU’s soft power capacity¹⁰ and by (3) powering populist forces and government officials in Serbia to frame EU political culture as contradictory to the Serbian political culture. The latter aspect in particular is being intensely used by anti-EU/pro-Russian political rhetoric spread via government-controlled media and politicians. In the new political order of the late 1980s, Yugoslav politicians sought to gain public support by playing the “ethnic card,” and it continues till this very day. The most notorious example is populist leader Slobodan Milošević, a symbol of Serbian nationalism. Serbian radical, right-wing populism, with an ultranationalist content has not significantly changed to this day.

In the study “The continuity of populism in Serbia: from the 19th to the 21st century”, the authors argue that:

“On the domestic front, Vučić’s populist politics is characterized, apart from the element of populism, by a pronounced resistance to the Europeanisation and modernisation of

⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *Identitate: Nevoia de demnitate și politica resentimentului*, București: Humanitas, 2022, p. 20.

¹⁰ See Laura M. Herța and Ramona A. Neagoș, “The soft power of European values. Impact on the Western Balkan countries”, in Adrian G. Corpădean (ed.), *A Model of Transference of the EU Integration Experience: From East-Central to the Western Balkans*, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2023, pp. 11-44.

Serbia, regardless of its occasional pro-European rhetoric. Populism is but one of the manifestations of Serbian nationalism — which survives as the only ideology — and Aleksandar Vučić is the bearer of that policy. (...) Although Vučić continues the deep and solid vertical of Serbian populism — reaching as far back as the 19th century —, the foundations of his authoritarian power, consisting of: nationalist homogenisation, xenophobia, authoritarianism, control of the media, destruction of institutions, clientelism, corruption, destruction of the opposition, etc. are not particularly original. (...) In that respect, the historical constants of Serbian populism have remained essentially unchanged over two centuries of modern history — nationalism and striving to form a great, ethnically homogeneous state; an anti-Western attitude and anti-liberalism; dependence on Russia; a monopolistic party representing a unified “people”; and an authoritarian leader — remain well into the 21st century, the models of social constitution and the dominant state ideological matrix. The ruling value paradigm, whose foundations contain two central pillars of Serbian populism — nationalism and anti-pluralism — have remained unshaken to the present day.”¹¹

For all that, many Serbs expressed their preference for liberal democracies by foot voting. According to the regional study entitled “Migration dynamics from human capital perspective in the Western Balkans” conducted by the European Training Foundation (ETF), together with the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, The European Union (EU) and, to some extent, other OECD countries remain the main destination for Serbian migrants.¹² Since the 1990s, Serbia’s population has been gradually declining. At 9.88 million in 1995, the current population of Serbia is 7.14 million based on projections of the latest United Nations data in 2023.

And the number of those who leave the country keeps growing. Serbia is one of the top ten countries around the globe whose population is declining at a record speed. The World Bank estimates that, if the current trends continue, by 2050 the population of Serbia will go down to 5.79 million: “In Serbia, outer migration is a particularly big problem. Not because of the sheer number of people who leave, but because of the skills of those migrants, because the better educated and the more dynamic people are the ones leaving the country. This is the process that you must stop,” explains Wolfgang Lutz for UNDP.”¹³

The leaders who have turned toward antidemocratic forms of governance in the East primarily followed right-wing-centred strategies. The definition employed here for right-wing extremist proponents in Europe is that they share certain ideological elements, such as “intolerance towards minorities, racism, and xenophobia (observed in the overwhelming majority of parties and groups on the radical nationalism to right-wing extremist spectrum) and often target Muslims, refugees and migrants, but also the LGBTQ+ community. In

¹¹ Milivoj Bešlin and Petar Žarković, “The continuity of populism in Serbia: from the 19th to the 21st century”, in Haris Dajč, Isidora Jarić, Ljiljana Dobrović (eds.), *Contemporary Populism and its Political Consequences. Discourses and Practices in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, Zagreb: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, 2022, pp. 77-90.

¹² Mihail Arandarenko, “How migration, Human Capital and The labour Market Interact in Serbia”, *The European Training Foundation*, January 2021, https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-07/migration_serbia.pdf, last accessed on 30.08.2024.

¹³ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Why population in Serbia keeps declining?”, *The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*, 6 February 2020, <https://www.undp.org/serbia/stories/why-population-serbia-keeps-declining>, last accessed on 30.08.2024.

particular, in Central and Eastern European countries, another critical target is the Roma community, which is often associated with and blamed for certain types of crime.”¹⁴

The populist leaders in the East branded themselves primarily as the defenders of national culture and identity:

“The political phenomenon that we identify as right-wing populism seems to line up with almost astounding precision with the research on how authoritarianism is both caused and expressed. Across Europe as a whole, populism aggressively exploits the cultural and economic disaffection of the times. Its advocates are loud and extreme, opposed to the system and established elites, opposed to trade, opposed technology, opposed to the European Union, opposed to cosmopolitanism, and other post-material values, and above all else, opposed to immigration. They support the welfare state and its social safety net but only for their own people, not for immigrants. They insist on a brand of nationalism that uses state power to protect the national culture and identity from outside influences and to protect local jobs and local manufacturing from outside competition. And they favour forms of democracy, direct votes of the people, strong-man actions by populist leaders.”¹⁵

In Serbia, the situation between those holding socially liberal and socially conservative values is explosive. Secular changes in Serbian society and the evolution of cultural values translate into votes, with the potential to produce a backlash among the dominant, socially conservative group.

In the following sections, we will explore how structural theories of cultural change can account for the support for populist authoritarian forces.

Cultural Backlash / Cultural disruption

While some scholars attribute the current surge of populism to the “hyper-globalization” or “to the breakdown in the social contract”, Joseph S. Nye warns against such limited approach. “We should be wary of attributing populism solely to economic distress. Polish voters elected a populist government despite benefiting from one of Europe’s highest rates of economic growth, while Canada seems to have been immune in 2016 to the anti-establishment mood roiling its large neighbour.”¹⁶ Antipathy toward elites can be caused by both economic and cultural resentments, Nye concludes, referring to the study of the political scientists Ronald Inglehart of the University of Michigan and Pippa Norris of Harvard who found that “economic insecurity in the face of workforce changes in post-industrial societies explained less than cultural backlash. In other words, support for populism is a reaction by once predominant sectors of the population to changes in values that threaten their status.”¹⁷

In the book titled “Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian-Populism,” Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart set out a general theory explaining polarization over the

¹⁴ *Right-wing extremism in the EU*, PE 700.953 - May 2022, Brussels: The European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, p. 12, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/700953/IPOL_STU\(2021\)700953_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/700953/IPOL_STU(2021)700953_EN.pdf), last accessed on 30.08.2024.

¹⁵ William G. Howell and Terry M. Moe, *Presidents, Populism, and the Crisis of Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020, Audible Edition.

¹⁶ Joseph S. Nye, “Explaining the Populist Revolt”, *Social Europe (SE)*, 12 October 2016, [<https://www.socialeurope.eu/explainingthe-populist-revolt>], last accessed on 30. 08.2024.

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*

cultural cleavage dividing social liberals and social conservatives in the electorates and how these values translate into support for Authoritarian-Populist parties and leaders in the U.S. and Europe.

Using the term cultural disruption, Howell and Moe also argue that “populist leaders have clearly made immigration, which is partly economic but mainly cultural, their number 1 political issue. They have depicted immigrants as the other and a threat to their nation’s way of life.”¹⁸ Economic insecurity matters, but culture is the more explosive factor, the authors claim, arguing that “populism holds special appeal for people with authoritarian values which overlap heavily with social conservatism. These people by virtue of the distinctive voice they think about social order, change and diversity, along with their fear of social threats which triggers their political activism are inclined to embrace strong-man type of leadership, as well the bigotry, nativism and xenophobia that often accompany populism.”¹⁹

The first premise of Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart’s theory concerns the silent revolution in cultural values that took place in the latter half of the twentieth century, reshaping the cultures of post-industrial societies. “More than 40 years ago, *The Silent Revolution* argued that the postwar era’s unprecedentedly high levels of existential security led to an intergenerational value shift among Western publics. This shift eroded materialist values emphasizing economic and physical security above all, bringing a gradual rise of postmaterialist values prioritizing individual free choice and self-expression. The rise of post-materialist values is the earliest-studied and most thoroughly documented example of changing human values and motivations.”²⁰

The authors demonstrated, using survey data from 1970 to the present, that “an intergenerational shift from materialist to postmaterialist values in relatively secure high-income societies, but not in less developed ones.”²¹ According to this study, the post-materialist values are part of a wider cultural transformation characterized by an increased focus on environmental protection, peace initiatives, sexual freedom, democracy, human rights, gender equality, cosmopolitanism, and the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, people with disabilities, and ethnic and racial minorities. This shift is also linked to a decline in traditional political engagement among younger generations who are instead turning to protests, demonstrations and digital activism, and a decline in the population endorsing traditional moral beliefs: “this long-term evolution has transformed the balance of public opinion in post-industrial societies. Traditional moral beliefs, social norms, and behaviours that were conventional and mainstream during the mid-twentieth century, reflecting fixed social identities founded on faith, family, and nation-state, are currently endorsed by a still substantial but shrinking minority of the population. The balance of public opinion has tipped, however, as growing numbers of citizens in Western nations have moved towards post-materialist and socially liberal values.”²²

Referring to the rise of postmaterialist values prioritizing individual free choice and self-expression, Francis Fukuyama (in the work “*Liberalism and Its Discontents*”) uses the

¹⁸ Howell and Moe, *op cit*.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian-Populism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 32.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 34.

term “woke liberalism” as a kind of shorthand for understanding the concept of “left-wing progressives.”

However, it is important to note that while postmaterialist values and the concept of being ‘woke’ share some similarities, particularly in their focus on identity, awareness of social issues, inequality, and injustice, personal growth, and societal change etc., we do not use these terms interchangeably.

Fukuyama claims that what is being referred to as “woke liberalism” starts with a correct premise, which is that liberalism protects individual autonomy but in Fukuyama’s view, they carry that autonomy to an extreme where it is seen as good in itself and not embedded in an existing or pre-existing moral framework. That people exist simply to manifest choices regardless of what those choices are which makes society impossible, because what makes a society is the fact that there are commonly shared rules and people have norms that embed them in the communities and that what a lot of people want out of life.

Is that an ability to work together with other people? If people have the power not only to follow or ignore the rules but to create their own, the structure of society becomes unstable. This is evident in what is known as “identity politics”. According to Fukuyama, there are two forms of identity politics: one he supports, which is the liberal version, and another that is less liberal. The liberal version recognizes the existence of marginalized groups - immigrants, women, LGBTQ individuals etc. - whose rights are not fully respected and who are not fully integrated in mainstream society but should be. This idea reflects the message of Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement. Fukuyama views this as a liberal idea and believes that a liberal state should pursue this version of identity politics. In this case, identity politics serves to mobilize people channel their anger over marginalization and use the democratic system to drive change.

Fukuyama identifies however a different form of identity politics that he considers less liberal. This version targets individualism, arguing that our primary identity lies in the groups we belong to rather than as individuals. It suggests that group characteristics should take precedence over individual achievements when evaluating people for jobs, promotions, and employment. While Fukuyama acknowledges that group memberships do influence our sense of identity and are significant to us, he is concerned that an overemphasis on these group identities undermines the fundamental principle of equal individuals, which is crucial to the liberal approach to politics.

The extensions of these liberal ideas to what Fukuyama regards as “more extreme forms, go a long way explaining the current polarisation in the United States but other societies as well because on the right there is an intense dislike of this liberal form of identity politics and on the left there is a big reaction to the economic and social inequality that has been produced by neoliberal economics. Fukuyama concludes that the threat to liberalism coming from the contemporary right is the biggest threat to democracy today.”²³ While Fukuyama’s analysis highlights how the extreme forms of liberal identity politics contribute to polarization in high-income societies and pose a significant threat to democracy, it is important to consider how different historical and social contexts, such as those in Serbia and Kosovo, have shaped cultural values differently. Moreover, the authors of the cultural backlash theory claim that “the historical heritage of past cultural values leaves an enduring imprint upon contemporary

²³ Francis Fukuyama, *Liberalism and Its Discontents*. Narrated by Christopher Ragland, Macmillan Audio, 2022. Audiobook.

societies, as has the legacy of Protestantism or Catholicism, or living for decades under democratic governments or under Communist rule, even when these experiences gradually fade in importance. Consequently, although the silent revolution has swept over many high-income societies, the pace of change varies considerably."²⁴

Therefore, structural theories of cultural change offer some insights into the support for populist authoritarian forces in Serbia that other approaches cannot. One major factor is an authoritarian reaction among social conservatives who perceive that some of their most cherished core values are being eroded. Social conservatives who endorse social conformity, order, and stability are especially likely to feel threatened by the growing diversity of Western societies. The conservatism among the more traditional segments of the Serbian population sees the influences of the European Union as threats to their cherished national culture.

Multilateral overreach

Much liberal institutionalist scholarship supports the idea that the path to peace and prosperity is for independent states to pool their resources and give up much of their sovereignty and autonomy over important political domains to create integrated communities and institutionalized cooperation between states that promote economic growth and respond to regional problems. When it comes to alliances, NATO and the EU are the best examples in favour of this argument.

A strong thesis of liberal institutionalism is related to the argument that the work of institutions can help create a more peaceful international system by diminishing war as a solution because it simply becomes unprofitable: „This necessity for institutions does not mean that they are always valuable, much less that they operate without respect to power and interests, constitute a panacea for violent conflict, or always reduce the likelihood of war. Claiming too much for international institutions would indeed be a “false promise.” But in a world politics constrained by state power and divergent interests, and unlikely to experience effective hierarchical governance, international institutions operating on the basis of reciprocity will be components of any lasting peace.”²⁵

Decades later, the same scholar observes that the liberal institutionalist order has stood the test of time in many ways, achieved many accomplishments, stimulated multilateral cooperation on matters such as security, trade, and climate change, helped preserve peace, discouraged countries from acquiring nuclear weapons, helped billions of people rising out of crippling poverty and so on, but that it had also distanced itself from ordinary people, “leaving the millions of mankind dependent on indirect and distant discipline and indirect and distant sustenance” as Chesterton envisioned it will.²⁶ Because „ for all of the order's success, its institutions have become disconnected from publics in the very countries that created them.”²⁷

This happened as a consequence of what Jeff D. Colgan and Robert O. Keohane called the multilateral overreach:

²⁴ Norris and Inglehart, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

²⁵ Keohane O. Robert and Lisa L. Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory” in *International Security*, No. 1, Vol. 20, Summer, 1995, p. 50.

²⁶ Chesterton, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

²⁷ Colgan and Keohane, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

“Interdependence requires countries to curb their autonomy so that institutions such as the UN and the World Bank can facilitate cooperation and solve mutual problems. But the natural tendency of institutions, their leaders, and the bureaucracies that carry out their work is to expand their authority. Every time they do so, they can point to some seemingly valid rationale. The cumulative effect of such expansions of international authority, however, is to excessively limit sovereignty and give people the sense that foreign forces are controlling their lives. Since these multilateral institutions are distant and undemocratic-despite their inclusive rhetoric-the result is public alienation. (...) That effect is compounded whenever multilateral institutions reflect the interests of cosmopolitan elites at the expense of others, as they often have.”²⁸

Institutional neoliberalism has always acknowledged the existence of a certain probability of conflict – being much more aware of the costly effects of interdependence than other variants of liberalism, and also recognized that centre-periphery, Marxist or neo-realist theories were correct when they indicated that interdependence could produce, but also prevent conflict.

In their endeavour to determine the drivers of the current populist revolt, neoliberal institutionalists do not exclude these theories from their explanation of this phenomenon.

The institutionalist research of the last decades connected these arguments to the need to manage the phenomenon of international interdependence, representing the neoliberals' central mission.

In 1977, Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye published *Power and Interdependence*, a book exploring the variety of ways asymmetrical interdependence can be manipulated as a source of power. The authors explained that "interdependence" has two connotations. In the case of a group of countries where the conditions in one country have costly contagion effects on those in another country, it generally refers to *sensitivity*, and in the case of a group of countries for which the interruption of relations or the renunciation of relations between them would be too expensive, refers to *vulnerability*. So, if the first meaning mainly involves “contagion effects (the effects of changes in one state on other states), the second one involves the need to maintain relationships that would be too costly to give up (the opportunity costs of breaking up a relationship).”²⁹ Borrowing assumptions of neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism rejects the normative inclination from traditional conceptualizations of interdependence and its definition only from the perspective of ‘equally balanced’ mutual dependence situations. They argue that in some cases, an interdependent relationship can have such negative consequences that both parties would be perfectly happy to completely end all contact with the other party, forgoing any benefits that such contact might bring them.”³⁰

The authors cite the spread of the whim of ‘barefoot running’ from American society to the European one in 1974 or the development of the radical student movements at the end of the 60s, - as examples of *sensitive interdependence* and the relations in the oil field, more precisely the relations between advanced industrial countries that rely heavily on oil imports (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) - as an example of *vulnerability*. Sensitive

²⁸ Colgan and Keohane, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

²⁹ Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Putere și Interdependență*, Iași: Polirom, 2009, p. 56.

³⁰ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, “International Interdependence and Integration” in Paul R. Viotti, Mark V. Kauppi (eds.), *International Relations Theory. Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990, p. 305.

interdependence can be social or political/military as well as economic, and *vulnerability* also applies to both socio-political and political-economic relations.

Thus, *sensitivity* “involves degrees of responsiveness within a policy framework—how quickly do changes in one country bring costly changes in another, and how great are the costly effects?”³¹; and the *vulnerability* “dimension of interdependence rests on the relative availability and costliness of the alternatives that various actors face.”³²

The claim of neoliberal institutionalists is that, in the circumstances of a world of complex interdependencies, asymmetries can be a source of power (we understand power in the field of international relations as the ability to get others to do things that they would not normally do or to behave in ways they would prefer to avoid) – and that, being less dependent can be a source of power. If two parties are interdependent, but one is less dependent than the other, the less dependent party has a source of power as long as both regard the interdependent relationship as very important.”³³

Conclusion

The European Union's responses to the challenges of populism in Serbia will require attention to global and regional trends. To that end, the European Union should be guided by three goals:

The need to repair the broken social contract

Manipulating the asymmetries of interdependence is an important dimension of power relationships. Nonetheless, perfect symmetry is rare, so most cases of economic interdependence also involve a potential power relationship. Being less dependent can be a source of power. If, for example, Serbia and Russia are interdependent, but Russia is less so than Serbia, then Russia (the less dependent party) has a source of power as long as both value the interdependent relationship. Serbia is the biggest beneficiary of the EU's pre-accession assistance in the Western Balkans, while the EU is the principal donor of financial assistance to Serbia. The EU is also Serbia's biggest trading partner. However, Serbia is also connected with Russia and China by market forces, is “dependent on its single gas supplier, Gazprom, and continues to have Russian majority control of its gas infrastructure and oil industry”³⁴, although an “EU-funded EU-supported gas interconnector between Serbia and Bulgaria started in January 2022”³⁵ to reduce Serbia's dependency on Russian energy sources. Also, in 2021, Serbia agreed on an “alleged EUR 3.2 billion sewage and wastewater program with China's Road and Bridge Corporation without tender and started implementing it in several municipalities; little information and no official documents are publicly available. Large long-

³¹ Keohane and Nye, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 11.

³³ Joseph S. Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts. An Introduction to Theory and History*, New York: Harvard University, Pearson Longman, sixth Edition, 2007, p. 210.

³⁴ *Serbia 2022 Report. Accompanying the document. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2022 Communication on EU Enlargement policy*, SWD(2022), 12 October, 2022, Brussels: The European Commission, p. 76, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022SC0338>, last accessed on 01.09.2024.

³⁵ *Loc. cit.*

term (industrial) investment projects must comply with the highest EU environmental standards.”³⁶

However, in the context of global or regional interdependence, ‘sensitivity’ – although it usually does not produce as much power in relationships as ‘vulnerability’ – incurs costs from altering the situation. Sensitivity refers to the amount and pace of the effects of mutual dependence; that is, “how quickly does change in one part of the system bring about change in another part?”³⁷ For example, the effects of changes in one European state like the United Kingdom emboldened Eurosceptic movements in other European countries, and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s model for repressing independent media in Hungary was soon copied by Poland and Serbia. In 2022, the European Parliament expressed alarm that Hungary and Serbia are helping China and Russia achieve their geopolitical objectives and recommended convening dialogues with Western Balkan civil society and the private sector to coordinate anti-disinformation efforts in the region. In response to this situation, the EP “calls on the Commission to build up the infrastructure required to produce evidence-based responses to both short-term and long-term disinformation threats in the Western Balkans; calls on the EEAS to pivot to a more proactive stance, focusing on building the EU’s credibility in the region, rather than defending it, in expanding StratCom monitoring to focus on cross-border disinformation threats emanating from Western Balkan countries and their neighbours.”³⁸

Simultaneously, the European Union also needs to respond to populist threats that are targeting the world’s oldest democracies.

Reconnecting to the public

As discussed above, the effect of such expansions of international authority is to excessively limit sovereignty and give people the sense that foreign forces control their lives.

As the Brexit vote approached, the *New Criterion* editor Roger Kimball, writing an article titled “A Brexit Chronicle,” argued that the EU was “set to crack down on toasters, hair dryers, and electric tea kettles because some nameless bureaucrat in Brussels had decided they are not sufficiently ‘green.’”³⁹ In a satirical way, he stated: “Really, you cannot make it up.”⁴⁰ Referring to Brussels officials as Eurocrats, Kimball also noted that a decade ago, the EU was telling people “what sort of bananas they may eat, how to manage their national borders, or whom they may deport.”⁴¹ In a word, Kimball said, “Brexit was really about British sovereignty. Whatever arrangements the Brits finally decide to make about immigration, bananas, tea kettles, or other items that affect their lives, the Brexit vote was a reaffirmation that the decision should be taken by the British people through their duly elected representatives in Parliament, not unelected and unaccountable officials from Brussels.”⁴² Despite the liberal order’s success, its institutions seem disconnected from the public in the

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

³⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, New York: Public Affairs, 2011, p. 54.

³⁸ *Foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union. European Parliament resolution of 9 March 2022*, p. 91.

³⁹ Roger Kimball, “A Brexit Chronicle”, *RealClearWorld (RCW)*, 13 July, 2016, https://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2016/07/13/a_brexit_chronicle_111948.amp.html, last accessed on 01.09.2024.

⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*

⁴¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁴² *Loc. cit.*

very countries that created them. In the eyes of many Serbs, these institutions also seem distant and undemocratic, as the above-mentioned surveys demonstrate. So, connecting the liberal institutions with the Serbian public will require attention to the material but also to the ideational. As shown above, neoliberalism explains much of state behaviour through factors such as ideas, norms, and institutions, where interests generate state behaviour. However, we think there is more to theorizing the formation of state interest than the neoliberal perspective provides. Neoliberalism focuses mostly on the causal effects of interests, but social constructivism, focusing on the constituent elements of the formation of state interests, can bring a lot more insight to the table.⁴³

The need to manage cultural disruptions globally and regionally

We should start this point by revisiting the cultural backlash theory regarding the rise of postmaterialist values and the rise of the concept of being ‘woke’, which should not be used interchangeably. The intense dislike of this liberal form of identity politics manifests itself in Serbia, as well as among the more socially conservative groups in other countries. This is not something specific to Serbia, but it is part of the current anti-democratic wave.

This polarization over postmaterialist values, i.e. the cultural divide between social liberals and social conservatives or the more extreme forms of identity politics, goes a long way in explaining the current polarisation in both long-established democracies and newer ones. Therefore, if social conservative Serbs are mostly identified in religious groups, the Western social conservatives are often identified in the groups of the so-called ‘losers of modernity’: white, male, blue collar, less educated, older, rural, middle-class, and religious. At its session held on March 9, 2022, the European Parliament resolution “Foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2020/2268(INI))” expressed its concern about the “attempts by the Orthodox Church in countries such as Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in its entity Republika Srpska, to promote Russia as a protector of traditional family values.”⁴⁴

The European Union disregards theories such as cultural backlash and extreme forms of identity politics and continues to explain polarization over postmaterialist values solely by “foreign interference” and by a mere “promotion of an anti-EU agenda” while initiating an aggressive form of dialogue with the Serbian Church. Therefore, Serbian social conservatism should also be analysed in the broader context of the global “drivers” of populism.

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⁴³ See Laura M. Herța, Ramona A. Neagoș, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ Official Journal of the European Union, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

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FAITH-BASED DIPLOMACY AND NEO-OTTOMANISM

Irina Cosma

The External European Context: the XIXth Century in Europe – Formation of Nation States Influenced the Turkish Nationalist Thinking

The European body was in an alterity state: the European constant of imperial powers being interrupted by the formation of nation states, through liberation and unification battles.¹ “The nation state is at the same time a form of social organisation and a factor of international non-integration.”²

These were exactly the premises of the transfiguration of the Ottoman state, facing an impasse, both internally and internationally, in the international context after the First World War: it was not modernised compared to other European states, did not have logistics, was facing an economic crisis, but most importantly, the main problem which triggered nationalism in the Turkish consciousness was the fact that the path of the Ottoman Empire was gradually transforming not into a linear one, but rather into a decadent one, shattering the tri-continental sense of power: Ottomans were not a force among the European states anymore.³

Therefore, the change of the international aesthetics created the necessity of changing the internal status-quo. Atatürk will monopolise, therefore, the power of change by strengthening state institutions as a binder for fixing secularism, which was associated with the Western world.

It would be an understatement to say that all these developments were forced and amounted to unnatural modernisation. The historical and political context, together with the will of the Great Powers to divide the Ottoman territories was, in fact, the aspect that forced the political leaders starting with Atatürk – to create a cultural-political access to Europe, towards which the Ottoman Empire was increasingly becoming an exclusion zone and pressed the Ottoman Empire towards Türkiye. It is to be mentioned that the inevitable necessity of this aspect was well understood by the elites, but less so by the regular people; most of them felt the confiscation of the old identity without understanding that the alterity was, in fact, the same old identity under a new form.

Kemalism

The ideology of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was called *Kemalism* and there are six pillars at its core, also known as “the six arrows of Kemalism”: *revolutionism* or *reformism*,

¹ Aurelia Melania Juverdeanu, “Stat și națiune în a doua jumătate a sec al XIX-lea”, *Academia*, https://www.academia.edu/38119992/Stat_%C5%9Fi_na%C5%A3iune_%C3%AEn_a_doua_jum%C4%83tate_a_sec_al_XIX_lea ; accessed in 24.02.2023.

² Stanley Hoffmann, “Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe”, *JSTOR*, p. 862, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20027004?seq=2> , accessed in 24.02.2023.

³ Alexandru-Nicolae Cucu, “Războiul de independență al Turciei și efectele sale”, *Sfera Politicii*, No, 180 181, <https://revistasferapoliticii.ro/sfera/180-181/art19-Cucu.php>, accessed in 24.02.2023.

republicanism, secularism, statism, nationalism and populism.⁴ These components are interconnected. In other words, the representation in the shape of arrows translates to the exact and concrete *target* of the political leader: state's revitalisation into a secular state, an Occidental state with a strong national culture.

Through this ideology, the social-political-administrative practices which Atatürk implemented, together with the radical reforms, led to one of the most contrasting changes in history. This is due to the way in which, starting from revolutionism, the policies were meant to almost completely delete the Ottoman inheritance.⁵

Abolition of the Empire and the Rearrangement into the Form of the Republic

Türkiye undergoes a surge of nationalist tendencies accumulated in the subconscious of the mental mind; more precisely, the centuries of glory and evolution have caused the *superiority vanity* among Turks. Along with each stage of the universal history, Turks reorganised themselves and managed to prosper. At that moment, they were on the decline, which did not correspond with the precepts embedded in the collective mind. Therefore, this is not a constitutive process of a new state, but rather a *re-constitutive* process of the Turkish state into a new construction in order to respond to the evolutive necessity.

Abjuration of the imperial canons was set in motion by the whirl of nationalism and thence the internal efforts to align Türkiye to the rigors of modernity appeared.

The new form which Turks take is the one of the republic: the Republic of Türkiye takes the place of the empire, replaces the empire, and ends the period of the sultanate in 1923, after the Independence War, through which Turks had not accepted the distribution of the Ottoman territories to the victorious powers of the First World War.⁶

The Turkish consciousness had developed aversion to its own inferiority position among the international community, hence the necessity to be not a conquered, but a conqueror state again was strongly felt. In order to reach this, only a charismatic leader like Atatürk could set Türkiye back on its path to prosperity and progress.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – the Main Character of Change

The social environment influences the course and path of a person and arguments, explains and translates their actions due to the sets of ideas internalised by them. Both the micro-environment – *family* – and the macro-environment – *society* – are important elements in analysing the profile of the first president of the modern Turkish state. This comes as a consequence of the fact that the *life course*, starting from family as its determinant and incipient factor, sets the route of the future principles and actions of the individual.

Mustafa was the son of Ali Rıza Efendi and Zübeyda Hanım and was born in Thessaloniki, at the end of the XIXth century.⁷ Mustafa Kemal grew up oscillating between two distinct ideological dimensions: on one hand, the conservative ideas coming from his mother,

⁴ *** "Kemalism", *All About Turkey, History*, <https://www.allaboutturkey.com/ataturk-principles.html>, accessed in 30.04.2023.

⁵ Gabor Agoston and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009 p. 56.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *** "Biography of Atatürk", *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism*, <https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-103908/biography-of-ataturk.html>; accessed in 09.04.2023.

very religious and adherent to Islamic traditional practices and on the other hand, the progressive ideas which his father supported, ideologically oriented towards the Occident.⁸ Mustafa's father, Ali Rıza, is the one that determined the military route, but also the route of modern, secular education of his son: "at Mustafa's birth, Ali Rıza hung his sword over his son's cradle, dedicating him to military service", and in the following years, he "saw to it that his son's earliest education was carried out in a modern secular school, rather than in the religious school Zübeyde Hanım would have preferred."⁹

In what concerns the *societal environment of provenance*, Thessaloniki was part of the Ottoman Empire and a multinational and multicultural spot, an environment where Greeks, Turks, Jews and other ethnicities lived together. "The city celebrated three different holy days each the week: Sunday for Christians, Saturday for Jews, and Friday for Muslims." Moreover, it was a modernised and Westernised city, subject to the reforms from the Tanzimat period in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰

Therefore, Mustafa Kemal's environment of provenance was an internationalised one, with multiple cultural influences, which explains his future openness towards the Occident and towards modernisation.

More than the immediate and extended social environment – family and society – the first president's name is also significant for his vocation: *Mustafa* is the *chosen one*, to whom the name Kemal is added by his mathematics teacher in school¹¹, signifying *perfect, with no flaw*. The name *Atatürk* is translated as *father of Turks* – the founder of the republic and the father of Turks is, thence, *the chosen one* – unlike sultans, in whose case the *male-line-hereditary principle* applied – and *with no flaw*, who entrusts Turks with the state and all the modernisation measures he establishes.

Nevertheless, the majority of the Kemalist reforms were implemented in cities. The majority of the population, the rural population, remained traditionalist.¹² This is explained through the *elitist construction* of the revolution – the peaks of the society are the ones that did not make the new politics accessible for the entire population, creating a discrepancy of the social environments – the urban environment – modernised and the rural environment – partisan of traditionalism.

Secularisation through State Institutions

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is responsible for introducing the secular Occidental discourse in the Turkish-Islamic sphere.

In the Constitution from 1924, at Title 1, Article 2 the religion, language and capital city were stipulated: "The religion of the Turkish state is Islam; the official language is Turkish;

⁸ Juliann Merryman, "Kemalism: A Revolutionary Ideology and its Islamist Opposition", *Syracuse University*, 5th January, 2013, p. 25, https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/49/, accessed in 30.04.2023.

⁹ Norman Itzkowitz, "Kemal Atatürk", *Britannica*, Presidents & Heads of States, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kemal-Ataturk>, accessed in 09.04.2023.

¹⁰ Efthymios-Spyridon Georgiou, "Thessaloniki at the Edge of the 19th And 20th Centuries: A Look Back at the History of a Multinational City", *The Metropole*, <https://themetropole.blog/2020/03/26/thessaloniki-at-the-edge-of-the-19th-and-20th-centuries-a-look-back-at-the-history-of-a-multinational-city/>, accessed in 09.04.2023.

¹¹ *** "Biography of Atatürk", *Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism*, <https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-103908/biography-of-ataturk.html>, accessed in 10.04.2023.

¹² Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, Santa Monica: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2008, p. 33.

the capital is the city of Ankara".¹³ Then, it was modified in 1928, the religion reference being eliminated: "The official language of the Turkish state is Turkish; the capital is the city of Ankara".¹⁴ After the last modification, from 1937, Article 2 provides directly that the Turkish state is a secular state.¹⁵

Moreover, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the *caliphate*, imposing the model of the *Turkish secularism* – the control of religion by the state institutions and not the separation between state and religion.

The institution which regulates the religious affairs is *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, institution which succeeds Sheikhul Islam from the Ottoman Empire, but whose activity comes in supporting the Islamic religious practice of the Turkish citizens from Türkiye, but also of the diaspora. The fact that Diyanet regulates only the Sunni Islamic cult indicates a slight contradiction between secularisation, on one hand and positive discrimination of the Sunni cult on the other hand.¹⁶

The Kemalist ideology permitted the action of prohibition of Islamic parties – as a secularisation measure as well.¹⁷ In addition, "he closed the *sharia courts* i.e. the Islamic religious tribunals, unified the system of public justice, and shut down the mosque colleges, the medreses, unifying the system of public education". In this way, he eliminated any possibility of creating an Islamic state based on sharia, which would have been the only threat to the legitimacy of the republican regime.¹⁸

The Linguistic Reform – Purifying the Language

Among the reforms initiated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, an important place is occupied by the linguistic reform, given that it has an important ideological meaning. After *Islamisation*, the Turks abandoned the old alphabet and adopted the Arab alphabet, becoming, in this way, a part of the Arab world also from the linguistic point of view.

In the period of the depleting of the Ottoman Empire, Ottomans followed the examples of Occidental states, by sending envoys that generated reform proposals regarding the Latin alphabet, the Arab alphabet being described as an impediment standing in the way of modernisation. Even so, these proposals were initially rejected.¹⁹

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk introduced the linguistic reform with the objective to *Turkify* and purify the language by eliminating the foreign borrowings, especially the Arab and Persian ones. Even so, their place was taken by very many French borrowings, from the desire to simplify the Turkish language – they were understood as "neologisms", showing the closeness to the Occident, perceived as model of modernisation, through alphabet and language. But more than the desire to adopt the Occidental pattern was the desire to purify the Turkish identity from the Arab traditionalist factor, language being a vital element of this

¹³ *** "1924 Anayasası", *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasa Mahkemesi*, <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/onceki-anayasalar/1924-anayasasi/>, accessed in 16.06.2023.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *op. cit*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

¹⁸ Douglas A. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, Second Edition, Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2016, p. 96.

¹⁹ Hasan Eren, "Atatürk ve Türk Dili", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mustafa-kemal-ataturk#2-ataturk-ve-turk-dili>, accessed in 19.03.2023.

identity. This aspect is represented also at the level of the collective mind, through *proverbs* – for instance, *dilimiz kimliğimizdir*: “our language is our identity card”, proverbs storing the collective experiences and social representations about everyday life.²⁰

This proverb is also used as a slogan of the institution *Dil Kurumu*, The Institute of Language, “established in 1932, the goal of the institute was to promote <<pure>> Turkish in place of the Arabic or Persian words found within Ottoman Turkish. The result was a radical reordering of the language, at the expense of much that had existed before in literature and poetry”²¹ and created a generational cleavage: “young Turkish citizens not only could not read their parents’ letters or books, they could not understand the many words of Persian or Arabic origin”²² – the young generation’s access to the Ottoman cultural heritage was hampered – Ottoman literature being alienated.

The New Turkish Identity and the Order

“For Atatürk, the Turkish identity was a question of location rather than ethnicity: Turks were those living within Türkiye who called themselves Turks”.²³ This enlarged acceptance of the geographic space is completed by the individual self-perception of identification with the modern Turkish identity.

Therefore, if the Ottoman Empire had the *preach of diversity* in what regards the multiple and distinct cultural identities, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ended it by sealing the country against any foreign influences that could “stain” the Turkish element. He imposes a new order through the authoritative use of state institutions inherited from the Ottoman Empire. “Mustafa Kemal Atatürk consciously chose Ankara to be the capital. As the seat of the Ottoman rulers, Istanbul was too closely linked with the sultanate and backward-mindedness.”²⁴

Alienation of Orientalism, of the old Ottoman traditions and the radical change of Türkiye’s positioning towards the previously generally assumed value system represented a “revolution from above”, that is a revolution coming from a minority of the elites towards the entire Turkish community.²⁵ The Turkish ideological space is not incompatible with modernisation, but the problem that arises with all these reforms is the hasty depersonalisation of the collective mind, since we talk about a rapid social change. The *new lingua franca* was the Occidental lay model, a language that ordinary Turks were not speaking.

The *common sense* was formed in the direction of Ottomanism – a pan-Islamic communion of the traditional wear, of the military-Islamic state; all the ideas deriving from this community established by the Ottoman Empire were assumed by the individuals as *natural*, without questioning them. So, the change was not imminent, but rather forced, which raised the necessity of a new ideological consensus for which the *field* had not been prepared.

²⁰ Zoltan Salanki, “Realități sociale oglindite în proverbe”, *Humanistica*, <http://humanistica.ro/anuare/2012/Continut/8.Salanki.pdf>, accessed in 25.03.2023.

²¹ Gabor Agoston and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopaedia of the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009, pp. 59-60.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*, Santa Monica: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2008, p. 10.

²⁴ Canan Topçu, “Armed forces. Self-appointed guardians of secularism”, *Development and Cooperation*, 18th September, 2008, <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/turkeys-military-self-appointed-guardians-secularism>, accessed in 12.06.2023.

²⁵ Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

The new Türkiye presented itself under the form of an alterity, a new consciousness that its bearers had to get used to. The shift in consciousness was produced through the imposition of modernisation reforms, secularisation and Westernisation of the “new” state.

At the societal level, this aspect is visible through major changes, starting from renouncing the Islamic veil in the case of women, the fez and şalvar in the case of men, to the Family-name Reform and the political emancipation of women by giving them seats in the Parliament.²⁶ In regard to the *material culture*, Atatürk himself was a model for Turks: he wore Occidental suits and his wife, Latife Uşaki, was also educated in the Occident.²⁷ Mustafa Kemal confessed that he did not like to wear traditional Oriental clothes, preferring the Occidental uniforms.²⁸

When it comes to the roles of women in the history of Türkiye, these are concentrated in three distinct periods of time: the pre-Islamic period, the period post-Islamisation and the period of Occidental influences; these women’s social and political emancipation measures correspond to the third period, and women, especially the ones living in cities, start to borrow Western conducts and social roles, distancing themselves from the immediate social environment of the household.²⁹

Neo-Ottomanism

The sudden social change created by Kemalism leads, in time, to nostalgia of the old lifestyle, ideologically translated through *Neo-Ottomanism*. In contemporaneity, there is a jump to the pre-Kemalist period: if in the Ottoman Empire’s erosion period, the Ottomanist policies and the Tanzimat reforms were meant to modernise the state in order to maintain it in the stage of modern Occidental states – the Ottoman identity prevailing the ethnic or religious identity – Neo-Ottomanism is a doctrine that appears in the second half of the XXth century as a revitalisation of the Ottoman legacy, having three main characteristics: “the image of the Ottoman Empire as the cradle or apex of civilisation is an Islamic and multicultural empire. Türkiye, as heir to the Empire, is positioned as the guardian and proprietor of its cultural legacy, a legacy it is responsible for cultivating within the region, and sharing with the world.”³⁰

As a consequence, secularisation through the authoritarianism of the state institutions led to the occurrence of a type of Turkish-Islamic fundamentalism. In the collective consciousness, the formation of Turkish identity had already been finalised till the moment of the Occidental model’s “intrusion”. The Occident is, therefore, an *intruder*, thence the accepted discourse is the discourse of invalidation of the identity-alterity: nowadays-Turks fit themselves rather in the Turkish-Islamic imperialist model which they consider veritable and not in the model altered by the lay, Western intrusion.

²⁶ Norman Itzkowitz, „Kemal Atatürk”, *Britannica*, 29th March, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kemal-Ataturk/The-Turkish-republic>, accessed in 29.04.2023

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Juliann Merryman, “Kemalism: A Revolutionary Ideology and its Islamist Opposition”, *Syracuse University*, 5th January, 2013, p. 25, https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/49/, accessed in 30.04.2023

²⁹ Mahmut Tezcan, *Türk Ailesi Antropolojisi*, Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2000, pp. 231-232.

³⁰ Edward Wastnidge, “Imperial Grandeur and Selective Memory: Re-assessing Neo-Ottomanism in Turkish Foreign and Domestic Politics”, *Open Research Online*, 2019, p. 4, <http://oro.open.ac.uk/58908/2/58908.pdf>, accessed in 10.04.2023.

Therefore, the discourse disseminated is not *us versus them*, but rather *us versus us*, and hence the comeback to the originary Turkish identity is seen as necessary. This nostalgia of the Ottoman past materialised through Neo-Ottomanism can also be framed into the “politics of emotions”, where we witness contagion of politics with feeling/emotion, so that politics becomes the hermeneutics of the national feeling.

From the diachronic analysis of the identity-ideological route of the Turkish people it turns out that Neo-Ottomanism is nothing else than the attempt to solve and end an identity crisis.

Faith-based Diplomacy

If we accept that broadly, politics is the representation of the social life, of people’s needs and culture within a community and promotion of those abroad (foreign policy), then we can accept that it is an *adaptive response*.

The same term might be attributed to religion – an *adaptive response* – providing teachings regarding the way in which people ought to live together, act and behave so that it is morally accepted and acceptable. Therefore, the mixture between politics and religion is not caducous, but rather the two of them represent knots of the cloth of a community’s life and define its *texture* or fabric.

Definition and Origins

The mixture of politics and religion can be met in various forms, both internally and externally. In the case of foreign policy and diplomacy, one of the most important aspects to be mentioned is *faith-based diplomacy*, part of *multi-track diplomacy*; faith-based diplomacy is framed into “track-two: diplomacy practised by non-state actors, being rooted in religions with emphasis on the active role of the divine in human affairs”.³¹

Faith-based diplomacy has at its basis the *super-human origin* of the world and the moral principles that derive from this. More precisely, the way in which humans have to live together following the divine teachings. These ethical principles guide the way in which people should be led, their rights and obligations, the means of intervention in case of conflicts and how to deal with them, but also the application of sanctions. In other words, religious rules become political instruments. Among these practices there are: reconciliation of hostile parties, solidarity and empathy towards the poor, fasting and praying. Moreover, faith-based diplomacy admits that human being can be tainted, recognising “the evil in the human soul” and intervention must be divine, not human or armed.³²

As the name suggests, *faith-based diplomacy* is a *universal* and *inclusive* concept, formed around those who have *faith*, but not mentioning clearly what nature of faith it refers to. Being a *universal* concept, faith-based diplomacy is present in the case of many states, and appears

³¹ Brian Cox and Daniel Philpott, *Faith-based Diplomacy: an Ancient Idea Newly Emerged*, Taylor & Francis Online, 27th April, 2010, pp. 31-32, <https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=711119082125004113095094083092073030054021093008061013104026076125117023103071085064058001029022012102023083085102097126092114103029074046010082007092125119002097020038046089127082115120101119089127011113088076098028081064088123087114114085094095090&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>, accessed in 29.04.2023

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 32-34

in different forms, varying from West to East: “Muslims speak the language of *integration*” while Westerns “speak the language of *separation* – of church and state”³³.

Etymologically, the term comes from the Latin “*fides*”, firstly used with the meaning of *reliability* or *good-faith*. In the Roman period, it had political implications: “a sense of trust between two parties if a relationship between them was to exist. *Fides* was always reciprocal and mutual, and implied both *privileges* and *responsibilities* on both sides”.³⁴ This kind of tie was present in both *private* and *public* life and its “violation was considered a serious matter”.³⁵

When it comes to the *private* life, *fides* was present from the very immediate social environment, which is the familial environment: *pater* (father) was mutually related to the *familia* (household), *pater* was also mutually related to *filius* (son); then it extended to the peer group: *amicus* (friend) was mutually related to *amicus* (friend). Moreover, this was unbent to the *public* life, as it follows: *dominus* (master) was mutually related to *servus* (slave), *patronus* (patron) was mutually related to *libertus* (freedman), *patronus* was mutually related to *cliens* (client); and reached the very top of the society: *Respublica* (the Roman state) was mutually related to *socius* (partner, an ally of Rome).³⁶ *Fides* was among the most important virtues (virtus) considered divinity at that time.³⁷

Turkish Faith-based Diplomacy

What we can deduct from these is that in essence, *fides* (reliability, good-faith) started rather from the micro-environment and then extended to the macro-environment, being the opposite line of direction in comparison to the Kemalist revolution, which started from the *top*.

If Atatürk introduced a new lay identity to the republic, in present, religion represents not only a lifestyle, but also a strong diplomatic instrument. Therefore, Türkiye resorts to diplomatic conciliatory *usances*, which translate the religious principles from the basis of the Turkish foreign policy and diplomacy.

The principle that lays at the basis of these practices among Muslims is found in the Holy Book, the Quran, namely Surah Al-Hujurat (The Chambers), providing teachings about reconciliation, living together as Muslims and norms: “Oh, people! We created you from a man and a woman and made you peoples and tribes so that you know each other. The fairest among you is the most pious in the sight of Allah”.³⁸ In the field of faith-based diplomacy, the principle is translated as “reconciliation and a divinely grounded vision of the political

³³ Douglas M. Johnston, *Faith-based diplomacy: Bridging the Religious Divide*, Baker Institute, October, 2009, <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/sites/default/files/2013-08/import/REL-pub-JohnstonFaithBasedDiplomacy-2009.pdf>, accessed in 29.04.2023, p.3

³⁴ John Paul Adams, “The Roman Concept of *Fides*”, *University Northridge*, 24th March, 2009, <https://www.csun.edu/~hcfll004/fides.html>, accessed in 29.04.2023.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *** *Coranul și traducerea explicativă*, Ankara: Departamentul pentru servicii confesionale, 2015.

order”³⁹ so that faith-based diplomacy comes in solving some “political problems by encouraging the establishment of a dialogue between religions”⁴⁰.

If the Kemalist ideology meant the limitation of political intervention of religious institutions like *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, Presidency of Religious Affairs, the Neo-Ottomanist practices support the re-positioning of this institution as one not only religious, but also political, regionally becoming the most powerful Muslim institution. This is also supported by the sector of *public diplomacy* along with non-governmental organisations, by delivering humanitarian aid, offering religion-themed courses and building mosques.⁴¹ These transnational religious actions and services are part of the *Turkish soft-power*.

Following the model of *Turkification*, as in the case of Turkish secularism, Turkish nationalism etc. there is also the case of *Turkish faith-based diplomacy*. If generally faith-based diplomacy is track-two diplomacy – involving non-state actors – in the case of Turkish faith-based diplomacy, there is “cooperation between non-official channels and state institutions”.⁴² The Turkish state is perceived and understood as the binder between policymakers and the people, therefore its involvement may legitimise these practices in foreign policy.

Many of these faith-based policies are supported by the Turks abroad living in *diaspora*, who completely keep their Turkish identity, even if they live in foreign societies, considering very important to keep *Turkishness*, religion and Turkish traditions and share them inter-generationally⁴³. Moreover, some of them, especially older generations, want their children to have access to *Islamic education* in the countries of residence.⁴⁴

Neo-Ottomanism and Faith-based Diplomacy

Faith-based diplomacy represents the doctrinal placement of Neo-Ottomanism in the Turkish foreign policy and offers a clinical overview, motivating and legitimating these practices – we understand not only the fact that Türkiye implements faith-based diplomatic usances, but we also understand why: religion has been for a long time an ideologically central element for the Turkish state – it welded Turks, it unified them, it helped them organise as a

³⁹ Brian Cox and Daniel Philpott, “Faith-based Diplomacy: an Ancient Idea Newly Emerged”, *Taylor & Francis Online*, 27th April, 2010, p. 36,

<https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=711119082125004113095094083092073030054021093008061013104026076125117023103071085064058001029022012102023083085102097126092114103029074046010082007092125119002097020038046089127082115120101119089127011113088076098028081064088123087114114085094095090&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>, accessed in 29.04.2023.

⁴⁰ Mehmet Baydemir, “Türkiye’nin Sahraaltı Afrika’ya yönelik İnanç Diplomasisi”, *Sosyal Bilimleri Dergisi*, Vol. VI, No. 1, 2022, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2190779>, accessed in 29.04.2023.

⁴¹ Jahja Muhasilovic, “Turkey’s Faith-based Diplomacy in the Balkans”, in Ali Murat Kurşun, Hakan Mehmetcik, Ferit Belder and Gökhan Katıtaş (eds.), *Public Diplomacy of Rising and Regional Powers*, Istanbul, 2018, pp. 63-64.

⁴² Bedirhan Kır, “Türkiye'nin İnanç Temelli Diplomasisi: Afrika'da Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı”, *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü*, <https://ata.bogazici.edu.tr/tr/ma-theses/bedirhan-kir>, accessed in 29.04.2023.

⁴³ Max Hoffman, Alan Makovsky, and Michael Werz, “The Turkish Diaspora in Europe”, *Foundation for European Progressive Studies*, pp. 1-4 <https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/turkish-diaspora-report-final.pdf>, accessed in 29.04.2023.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

state – from the adoption of monotheistic faith and culminating with the Ottoman period. Therefore, we can return to the idea that in doctrinal terms, Türkiye is its own alterity.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the modernization of Türkiye was seen as a profound transformation, affecting not only the political landscape but also social and psychological aspects. The changes were perceived as sudden and abrupt by the average, common population, most of them traditional and Muslim, who did not understand the identity-alterity as a new form of the old identity, but rather as a completely different identity that did not resonate with the Turkish traditions, religion and culture. The top-down revolution was meant to *seal* the country from any foreign influence, from the desire to cultivate and strengthen Turkish nationalism.

Due to the fact that the Kemalist ideology appeared fast, and the social changes were sudden, the Neo-Ottomanist doctrine is perceived as a jump to the pre-Kemalist period, through a revitalisation of the Ottoman inheritance, from a nostalgia of identification rather with the model considered authentic, than with the one which was Occidental-ideologically permeated.

Even if Türkiye is a secular state, its diplomatic approach is grounded in certain principles of faith-based diplomacy, including reconciliation, external intervention for humanitarian aid, the construction of mosques, and the provision of religious courses through religious institutions.

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