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THE MIGRATION IN THE LONGUE DUREE AND CURRENT PARTICULARITIES IN THE EU WITH AN EMPHASIS ON ITS MEDITERRANEAN MEMBER STATES

Abstract:	<i>In the context of this study, we shall attempt to understand migration by examining its theoretical aspect and the totality of its actions by means of the longue durée (long duration) theory of the Annales school of thought. We shall focus on the timelessness of the phenomenon and the current situation in the EU, with special reference to its southern member states. For the purposes of credibility of this approach and to comprehend what is really happening in the EU nowadays and how the latter handles politically the phenomenon of migration, we need to examine as many aspects of it as possible using an interdisciplinary approach of the specific historical, social and economic parameters, and their various collateral political connections.</i> <i>The holistic longue durée approach of the connection between migration and nation-state building process is a useful method of understanding modern European realities. In this context, we will examine the extent to which the structure of societies may fundamentally change, in relation to the inseparable concepts of nation and state. Human experience shows that migration had a significant impact on the rise of nations and that it was crucial in creating new identities. The above interconnections will be examined with special reference to the Mediterranean countries of Europe (being today the southern member-states of the EU), and their current views and positions.</i>
Keywords:	Migration; EU; Mediterranean member states; nation-states; holistic <i>longue durée</i> approach
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Introduction. The Theoretical Framework. The *Longue Durée* Analysis as a Tool to Explain Current Migrations

In the context of this paper, we make use of the theoretical framework of the *longue durée* (long duration) of the Annales school of thought. We focus on the theoretical background and timelessness of the phenomenon, as a tool to understand the current situation in the EU with special reference to its southern member states; also, to draw useful conclusions based on the interpretive scheme of long duration¹. This necessity becomes even more evident if we consider that the theory of the long duration has emerged in the European continent (though not just in it) as an alternative approach to interpreting and understanding the various parameters of socio-economic phenomena². With

¹ Fernand Braudel, *La longue durée*, "Annales", 1958, Vol. 4, pp. 725-753; Michel Vovelle, *L'histoire et la longue durée*, in Le Goff J. (Ed.), *La Nouvelle Histoire*, Complexe, Paris, 2006, pp. 77-108

² Ziza Joy Delgado, *The Longue Durée of Ethnic Studies: Race, Education and the Struggle for Self-Determination*, University of California, Berkeley, 2016; Anibal Arcondo, *Ruggiero Romano y la historia económica colonial de América Latina*, "Cuicuilco Revista de Ciencias Antropológicas", Vol. 10, No. 29, 2003, pp. 6-16

the present study we aim to partly fill the gap that exists in research by means of the principle of long-term development and continuity.

In our effort to understand migration we need to examine its theoretical aspect with a clear scientific perspective and through the totality of its actions. For the sake of the credibility of the approach and to understand what is really happening in the EU today and how the latter handles migration in political terms, we need to examine as many aspects of it as possible using an interdisciplinary approach of the specific historical, social and economic parameters, with their various collateral political connections. Therefore, it should be researched and evaluated comparatively in a historical context, while its socio-economic variables – e.g. birth rate, mortality – should be interpreted in the context of the social development of every individual country.

In the context of modern European reality, we will try to clarify where the formation of national minorities could lead and, thus, to what extent the political and socioeconomic structure of states could fundamentally change. Therefore, the *longue durée* analysis could help us understand to what extent the growth of supranational societies within the EU has created new challenges in the sphere of decision-making. The interconnection and co-examination of immigration-identity, national consciousness, repatriation, urbanization, naturalization, multiculturalism, education, demographic issues, labor force needs, with special reference to the Mediterranean European states may be examined through the long *durée* method.

Understanding the holistic approach to migration is essential. To understand the current phase and predicting how things may develop soon, we will examine the long *durée* of the phenomenon. Migration is a timeless and historical reality, but its form and content are transformed by the era and phase of economic development of either societies or socio-economic systems, as well as by the needs of the ruling class it serves. The movements of populations in Antiquity, in the form of either settlement in other places or their conquest, and the effort to cooperate and co-exist with the natives like in Sicily, *Magna Grecia* and elsewhere, could be utilized as a great example for this approach. During the Greek antiquity, settlements and migration from city-states were linked to the daily needs of a people for the purposes of their survival¹.

In the modern era, from the 18th century onwards and for a period of approximately two centuries, migration has been accelerated by the mixing of world populations which have thus been extensively redistributed. The movements of people on the planet have created and fostered new social relationships. Moreover, in these developments we also observe the forms of movements of people. One may confirm in both an indirect and direct way that human society is in constant movement to meet its needs from the beginning of its existence. In Antiquity, this role was played by colonization. At the same time, through interactions with the natives, we have come to know the forms of culture that have led us to the present day. This begs the question of the importance of assimilation for a host society, in relation to the inseparable concepts of nation and state, and to answer it we will make use of experience, for example that of the USA².

Migration and the European Nation-States Building Process. A Holistic *Longue Durée* Approach

Nation-building is a process in which people are challenged to accept a common identity. However, it also entails the exclusion of foreign forces and foreign national groups. It is believed that what has happened along the way has been the creation of societies based on populations with a common and homogeneous origin. A particular feature of the emergence of the nation-state in the 19th century was the entrenchment of nations behind borders and ‘walls’ that nations themselves built. War, conquest, nation building and economic challenges contributed to populations movements in interconnection to the development of the European nation-states and the colonialism in various parts of the world. Ennio Triggiani expresses the opinion that migration and increase in human activity are

¹ Jean-Luc Lamboley, *Migration and Greek Civilization*, in Isaacs A. K. (Ed.), *Immigration and emigration in historical perspective*, Pisa University Press, 2007, pp. 55-65; Mario Denti, *Greek Migrations from the Aegean to the Ionian coast of southern Italy, in the 7th century BC: shared Goods, rituals, heroic memories, in an aristocratic perspective*, “Ocnus”, Vol. 30, 2022, Doi: 10.12876/OCNUS3011, pp. 173-182

² Ager Philipp, Markus Brückner, *Cultural Diversity and Economic Growth: Evidence from the US during the Age of Mass Migration*, “European Economic Review”, 2013, Vol. 64, pp. 76-97; Ulysses J. Balderas, Michael J. Greenwood, *From Europe to the Americas: a Comparative Panel-Data Analysis of Migration to Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, 1870-1910*, “Journal of Population Economics”, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2010, pp. 1301-18

gradually changing, making the definitions of belonging and citizenship obsolete and the correspondence between nationality and citizenship inconsistent¹.

Migrations contributed significantly to changes that occurred during the 19th and 20th centuries. European colonialism highlighted various forms of immigration. One of these was the gradual but extensive settlement of Europeans in every other continent. Europeans from various social strata immigrated, either permanently or temporarily, for various purposes. The changes that had occurred were demographic, political and cultural. The distribution of the world's population and the political map of the planet had already changed significantly, as many powers took control over extensive territories².

Here lies the link between state and nation and the interconnection with migration. Early in the 19th century, a nation was defined as a group of people who shared the same language and culture. Migration was usually left out of debates about nations. However, it played a significant role in the rise of nations. It is also characteristic that migration was central in creating new identities. Europeans who settled in America eventually created identities and focused on the lands they colonized. The crystallization of the American nation was associated with public debate and controversy. Characteristically, in the late 19th century the United States had imposed restrictions on immigration. Rhetorical questions, such as whether the country should be inhabited by Britons, Germans, Scandinavians, or, on the contrary, by Asian peoples, became the topic of speeches and discussions. Thus, there appeared the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act which was constantly renewed, with the prospect of ever-present obstacles to the entry of Chinese workers. At the same time there was also a census of the population which had recorded significant changes in the composition of the country. This led to the creation of groups that called for more selective controls on immigration³.

We have already mentioned that the main migration stream took place between Europe and America; more specifically in the United States, which absorbed approximately two-thirds of the total migration. However, as early as the 19th century freedom of immigration had been restricted. There were specific reasons for this. To begin with, it was linked to a respective prohibition by the nation-states of Europe due to the original belief that if it was not enforced, they themselves would become weaker both economically and militarily⁴. Economic conditions, the reality of the capitalist system, create favorable circumstances for the settlement of people in other countries, such as the USA. In the process, however, American authorities reacted, and the countries of Europe were forced to change their tactics and provide the corresponding facilities to those who really wished to immigrate. In this sense, this assistance provided a solution for the acute social and economic problems that plagued capitalist societies. Consequently, immigration took on a special term: the regime of subsidized immigration. Germany, Belgium, and England around 1850 provided substantial grants to facilitate immigrants⁵.

At that time the United States of America was officially implementing a policy of attracting immigrants to settle large tracts of land. However, public opinion was worried by the immigration stream which was constantly growing with populations coming from Southern and Southeastern Europe, such as Italians, Slavs and others, that were completely different from the Anglo-Saxon populations, who at the same time shared different cultural traditions. By the early 1890s the Germans who arrived in the United States no longer formed one tenth, nor the Scandinavians one fifth of the immigrants of the previous century from those countries. New immigrants consisted mostly of Italians who were 100 times more than their counterparts in the previous century, while the Slavs were 1,000 times more than their counterparts in the previous century⁶.

¹ Ennio Triggiani, *La Cittadinanza Europea per La 'utopia' Sovranazionale*, "Studi sull'integrazione Europea", Vol.1, No. 3, 2006, pp. 435-78

² Oriana Bandiera, Imran Rasul, Martina Viarengo, *The Making of Modern America: Migratory Flows in the Age of Mass Migration*, "Journal of Development Economics", Vol. 102, No. 3, 2013, pp. 23-47

³ Erica Lee, *The 'Yellow Peril' and Asian Exclusion in the Americas*, "Pacific Historical Review", 2007, Vol. 76, No. 4, Doi:10.1525/phr.2007.76.4.537, pp. 537-562

⁴ Marios Th. Rafael [Μάριος Θ. Ραφαήλ], *Η Μετανάστευσις: Μελέτη των ευρωπαϊκών και ελληνικών δεδομένων*, [Migration: Study of European and Greek Data], Athens, 1954, p. 12

⁵ Ioannis Tournakis [Ιωάννης Τουρνάκης], *Διεθνής μεταναστευτική κίνησις και μεταναστευτική πολιτική*, [International Migration Movement and Migration Policy], Athens, 1931, p. 293

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 299

At the same time, there was also an immigration flow between European countries. The main host countries were France and Germany. Immigrants originated mainly from Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Spain. However, this specific migration did not have the features of a settlement. Instead, it was limited to the movement of labor force covering specific needs of the economy of these countries¹. In Europe, external and intra-European migration occurred simultaneously. In the case of Italy, where 15 million people emigrated during the period 1876-1920, almost half of them (estimated at 6.8 million), settled especially in France, Switzerland Germany².

In the period after the First World War nationalist ideology became dominant, influencing European politics of this period. This was the era of the creation and growth of the nation-state, and the collapse of empires, with the new nation-states making their appearance in a spectacular way. From then onwards one must deal with new political entities creating new ethnic minorities, some of which were denied recognition or were even oppressed by the states to which they belonged. At the same time, nation-states had acquired the exclusive power to regulate all matters related to immigration, including freedom of travel, passports, visas, border controls, etc. Border controls and compulsory passports for travelers were the main means used to control it. At the same time political conflict and economic crisis were also important factors that significantly affected this phenomenon.

Because of the First World War, immigration within Europe had reached a new scale, with millions of people migrating in masse. Obviously, the collapse of empires, especially the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman ones, contributed to this phenomenon, leading to many changes and mainly to the redrawing of many borders. In this sense the national states that succeeded empires used national unity as a means of consolidating their position. Therefore, in this period we are dealing with two factors which lead to ethnic or forced migration. After the war the demographic situation of most European countries was extremely alarming. This was since a large part of the working age population had been killed, creating a short supply of labor force. This was particularly serious aspect, at a time when reconstruction and economic development were priorities, and industry was in desperate need of manpower. The result was that various countries signed agreements to encourage economic migration. A typical example was France, which in the 1920^s brought in immigrants from Italy, Poland and Czechoslovakia³.

At this point we will dwell on an interesting issue. In the case of modern migration, migrants travel much longer distances than in the past, not just physically but also socially and culturally. This feature is further enhanced by the fact that technological progress has decisively contributed to movement in space. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, or generally during the 20th century, modern immigrants had moved between regions with different economic structures; regions that were at different levels of economic and social development. In other words, from less developed areas to more developed ones, with characteristic transitions from the village to the city and from agricultural to industrial production. Furthermore, the composition of modern migration flows is characterized by economically active individuals and economically inactive ones, for example, children, spouse, or parents, accompanying an economic migrant. One should note here that in the modern industrial era of the 19th and 20th centuries, the prevalence of nation-states enhanced the concept of the refugees because of the appearance, or even the existence, of fixed and closed borders as early as the end of the 19th century, and the subsequent division of the world in several countries. Until the 1950^s the right to asylum was linked to authority, or 'sovereignty', exercised by the sites of asylum. The subsequent signing of the European Convention of Human Rights (1950) and the Geneva Convention on Refugees (1951) signifies the development of the asylum as an institution necessary to protect individual human rights⁴.

South European Countries and Migration: From Outflow to Inflow

From the 1970^s onwards there have been important developments that have affected migration trends in Europe. Firstly, in the wake of the oil crisis of 1973-1974, the industrialized countries of Western Europe decided to

¹ Marios Th. Rafael, *Op. cit.*, p. 18

² Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas, Mark. J. Miller, *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 6th Edition, The Guilford Press, 2020, pp. 57-59

³ Marios Th. Rafael, *Op. cit.*, p. 16; Pierre George, *L'immigration italienne en France de 1920 à 1939: aspects démographiques et sociaux*, in Milza P. (Ed.), *Les Italiens en France de 1914 à 1940*, École Française de Rome, Rome, 1986, pp. 45-67

⁴ Cherubini Francesco, *Asylum Law in the European Union: From the Geneva Convention to the Law of the EU*, Routledge, 2014, p. 23

stop hiring foreign labor. This decision came at a time when the economic gap between the rich industrialized countries of the North and the poor or developing countries of the South had widened significantly, causing extensive migration to the countries of Western Europe. Subsequently, from the 1980^s onwards, Europe became the preferred destination for refugees from the South. In addition to economic and political reasons, ecological and natural disasters, particularly in the poorest countries of the South, also played a role in bringing migrants and refugees to Western Europe. Finally, we should add here the effects of the disappearance of the Berlin Wall in 1989 because of the reunification of Germany, as well as the fall of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, which greatly modified the geopolitical outlook in Europe.

The fundamental restructuring of the world economy that occurred in the 1970^s resulted in the decline of the employment of menial workers from Western Europe¹. During the era of globalization, the increasing capital export from the more developed countries resulted in the establishment of manufacturing industries in underdeveloped regions. Because of this process, part-time jobs have largely replaced permanent employment.

After 1973, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, countries whose citizens would migrate in the past to other continents in search of better jobs and standards of living, began to experience an increasing inflow of immigration². Eventually, this type of irregular migration was linked with a reduced capacity of national governments to regulate it. In Italy, between 1981 and 2010, foreigners with residence permits amounted to 7.6% of the population³. This sharp increase was due to a series of regulations on irregular residential populations between 1986 and 2009. Romanians constituted the largest group of immigrants in the country (960,000 in 2010), forming approximately a quarter of foreigners with a residence permit. Most of the non-residents of the EU were Albanians (483,000) and Moroccans (452,000)⁴.

The Current Situation in the EU With Special Reference to its Southern Member States

The European Union as a whole, and its member states individually, have made intensive efforts in recent years to establish an effective common EU immigration policy⁵. The European Council determines the strategic priorities and makes special efforts within both the context of the European Union and the latter's relations with third countries in view of immigration pressures⁶. In fact, as far as asylum seekers are concerned, efforts are being made for them to be treated in the same way by all member states. Regarding refugees and migrants after their arrival, the European Union has established various rules on how legal migration flows will be managed and how asylum applications will be processed⁷.

Migration and asylum are two spheres of the political field in which the EU has paid great attention and placed high importance. On 10 of April 2024, the European Parliament, after years of consultation, adopted the final texts of the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration. On 14 of May 2024, the European Council officially adopted the texts of the EU Pact on migration system, even though there was disagreement between the member states as well as between the Council and the Parliament. The new EU Migration Pact concerned negotiations between the European Commission, representatives of the EU member states and the European Parliament, and was expected to be approved by the EU elections in June 2024. It was officially presented in September 2020 by the President of the

¹ St. Castles, et al., *Op. cit.*, pp.111-112

² Emilio Reyneri, *Migrants' Involvement in Irregular Employment in the Mediterranean Countries of the European Union*, "International Migration Papers (IMP)", No. 41, International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2001, www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/download/imp/imp41.pdf. (21.04.2025)

³ Salvatore Strozza, Alessandra Venturini, *Italy is no longer a country of emigration. Foreigners in Italy: how many, where do they come from*, in Ralf Rotte and Peter Stein, (Eds.), *Migration Policy and the Economy: International Experiences*, Hans Seidel Stiftung, Munich, 2002, p. 265

⁴ OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2012*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2012. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2012-en, (21.04.2025), p. 242

⁵ Patrizia Nanz, *Mobility, Migrants, and Solidarity: Towards an Emerging European Citizenship Regime*, in Benhabib S., Judith Resnik J., (Eds.), *Migrations and Mobilities- Citizenship, Borders and Gender*, New York University Press, 2009, pp. 410-38

⁶ Trauner Florian, *Migration policy: an ambiguous EU role in specifying and spreading international refugee protection norms*, in Falkner G., Muller P. (Eds), *EU Policies in a Global Perspective. Shaping or taking international regimes?*, Routledge, London, 2014, pp. 149-166

⁷ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/el/policies/eu-migration-policy/> (21.04.2025)

European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen in the form of a legislative proposal and recommendations for the member states on how to deal with migration. One could certainly say that the provisions of this Pact do not represent complete novelty in terms of European migration policies; rather they can be seen and evaluated in the same political line and process that the Union has been following on migration issues for a long time now. The regulations of the Pact came into force in June 2024, but there will be a two-year transition period, and the Pact will only be applied by all EU member states in 2026.

The adoption of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum may be seen as the result of a long and difficult process shaped in the context of the EU over a period of 20 years. Long negotiations demonstrated the various tendencies on migration and asylum policy of member states¹. Greece, Italy and Spain were looking forward to activating the solidarity mechanism. The group of the EU Mediterranean states (Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta) has expressed strong concerns in relation to migration flows. During the negotiations, differences persisted within the EU regarding stances on migration, particularly between the countries bordering the Mediterranean, which take in the majority of those arriving in Europe, and the central European member states which have long refused to take in additional cohorts of migrants, and which often have comparatively weaker economies than richer Western European and Scandinavian states. The Visegrád Group - Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic- has taken a restrictive migration stance, which has influenced EU policy negotiations². The V4 disagree with the logic of compulsory percentages on the relocation of asylum seekers³ from the Mediterranean member states, such as Italy and Greece, in the belief that this method will not solve the problem of incoming flows. The Visegrád Group favor the shifting of the focus towards the external dimension, that is, the adoption of a joint foreign policy and the safeguarding of the EU's external borders. The V4 views on strengthening the external dimension is also expressed by the fact that jointly they represent the third largest donor under the EU Emergency Trust for Africa, whereas individually they only rank fifth to eight⁴.

On the other hand, the members of the M5 group, such as Italy and Greece, seek to relieve pressure receiving considerable influxes of migrants, by relocating arrivals to other EU states. Migration routes to Europe from the Middle East and Africa via the Mediterranean have been used continuously since the beginning of the 2010s. As far as the three main Mediterranean routes are concerned (via the Western, Central and Eastern sections of that Sea), the IOM gives the following data: in 2024 migration to Europe dropped by nearly a third, from 292,985 in 2023 to 208,679 persons. However, the Eastern Mediterranean route is the main route (77,854, 37% of the total)⁵. There is a significant change in the migration flow via the Central Mediterranean route, which was less than half (42%) compared to that of 2023. However, there was an increase (27%) of flows via the Eastern Mediterranean route⁶.

In terms of absolute numbers, the following data are available for the EU's southern member states: Arrivals in Italy: 66,617 in 2024, arriving by sea, this is 58% less than in 2023 (157,652), marking a significant drop: 34,154 in 2020, 67,477 in 2021, 105,131 in 2022, 157,652 in 2023, 66,617 in 2024. Arrivals in Greece in 2024 have been the highest recorded in the country since 2019: 14,785 in 2020, 9,026 in 2021, 18,775 in 2022,

¹ Jean-Pierre Cassarino, *La dimension extérieure dans le nouveau pacte sur la migration et l'asile: l'Union européenne rattrapée par la géopolitique*, "Revue internationale et stratégique", Vol. 2, No. 122, 2021, pp. 115-124

² Petr Kaniok, Vít Hloušek, *Visegrad four as an institution in times of EU crises*, "European Politics and Society", 10 April 2025, DOI: 10.1080/23745118.2025.2488815, p. 14

³ Thomas Goumenos [Θωμάς Γούμενος], *Νέο Σύμφωνο για τη Μετανάστευση και το Άσυλο: κανονικοποίηση των hotspots και καχεκτική αλληλεγγύη*, [New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Normalization of Hotspots and Feeble Solidarity], "Δελτίο Ευρωπαϊκών Εξελίξεων", [European Developments Bulletin ENA], Ινστιτούτο Εναλλακτικών Πολιτικών [ENA Institute for Alternative Politics], Vol. 34, 2020, pp.10-12

⁴ Karin Vaagland, Natascha Zaun, *Strategizing solidarity: an examination of the Visegrád group's role and motivations in EU migration policies*, "Journal of European Integration", 2024, p. 1; p. 9; Matúš Mišík, Monika Brusenbauch Meislová, *20th anniversary of the EU Eastern enlargement: Stocktaking of the membership experience, challenges, and opportunities*, "Journal of Contemporary European Studies", Abingdon, Routledge Journals, Taylor&Francis, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2025.2491407>, 2025, pp.1-11

⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Mixed Migration Flows to Europe. Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM Europe) (January - December 2024)*, "Yearly Regional Report", 2025, IOM, Vienna, pp. 4-5

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cyprus/quarterly-mixed-migration-update-europe-quarter-4-2024> (21.02.2025)

47,930 in 2023, 62,043 in 2024. Arrivals in Spain: 63,970 in 2024, amounting to a 37% increase compared to 56,852 registered in 2023. In 2020 there were 41,861, in 2021 50,945, in 2022 31,194¹.

According to Frontex data, asylum applications in the EU were reduced by 11% in 2024. However, they still exceed 1,000,000. Overall, last year there were submitted 1,014,420 applications for international protection, compared to the 1,143,437 registered in 2023. More specifically, the same report demonstrates that 48% of the 1,000,000 applications were submitted by people with a historically small chance of achieving a successful decision. Cyprus has had the biggest number of asylum requests per inhabitant: one for every 138 inhabitants². According to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), in 2024, Spain received 164,000 number of applications, while Cyprus and Greece (6,520 and 69,000 applications respectively) had the highest number relative to their population size³. For comparative purposes between 2023 and 2024 Eurostat provides the following statistics of asylum applicants concerning the three bigger EU mediterranean member states: for Italy: 151.120 (2023) and 130.565 (2024), for Spain: 160.460 (2023) and 164.010 (2024), for Greece: 57.895 (2023) and 68.995 (2024)⁴.

According to some views, the actual implementation of the Pact will require a significant amount of time (months, or years) before it bears results⁵. Its adoption has not exhausted the debate on European asylum and immigration policies⁶. The issue of migration has many aspects and parameters for which there is no easy answer in the immediate future. There can be no one sided solution, and no country can deal with it on its own without deliberating with others; in other words, this is not a unilateral but a multilateral issue, with various economic, political and social aspects.

The challenge of the new Pact is to ensure the best possible balance between “responsibility and solidarity”. The importance of solidarity among EU states has been emphasized. The southern EU member states are expecting the activation of the solidarity mechanism. The Med5 - the group of countries of initial arrival for most migrants comprising Italy, Spain, Greece, Malta, and Cyprus - are demanding “effective and sustainable” solutions. At this point it can be argued that certainly varying approaches among the 27 EU member states are not due to the purpose of the migration policy of the EU speaking about a fair system, but to the geographical factor.

Human Security and Migration in the EU

The EU’s migration policy demonstrates its determination and inventiveness to deal with complex issues, such as the multifaceted one concerning the security dimensions of migration and human safety in general. The philosophy of the new migration policy, as stated in the new Pact for Migration and Asylum, has three facets: an external one that concerns the EU’s relations with the main countries of origin of migrants/refugees, including partnerships; another concerning the security of its external borders; and a third, concerning solidarity between the EU’s member states⁷. Academics have already noted that the pact essentially follows the EU migration continuum

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Mixed Migration Flows to Europe*, pp. 9-11

² Jorge Liboreiro, *EU asylum requests down by 11% in 2024, but still exceed one million*, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/03/03/eu-asylum-requests-down-by-11-in-2024-but-still-exceed-one-million> (03.03.2025)

³ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Mixed Migration Flows to Europe*, p. 5

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyappctza/default/table. Asylum applicants by type, citizenship, age and sex-annual aggregated data (03.03.2025)

⁵ Alberto-Horst Neidhardt, *Navigating the New Pact on Migration and Asylum in the Shadow of Non-Europe*, “Discussion Paper European Migration and Diversity Programme”, European Policy Center, 26 January 2024, p. 8; Angeliki Dimitriadi [Αγγελική Δημητριάδη], 2025: Ένας κόσμος σε μετακίνηση αλλά με περιορισμούς, [A World on the Move But With Restrictions], “Οι προβλέψεις του ELIAMEP για το 2025”, [“The forecasts of ELIAMEP Policy Paper for 2025”], No.176, 2024, pp. 24-25

⁶ Matthieu Tardis, *The European Pact on Asylum and Migration: An Existential Challenge? Migration Crisis in the Mediterranean*, “IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook”, 2024, pp.86-90

⁷ Carmine Conte, Başak Yavcan, *Reflection Paper on the New EU Pact on Migration & Asylum*, Migration a Policy Group, <https://www.migpolgroup.com/index.php/2024/04/23/reflection-paper-on-the-new-eu-pact-on-migration-and-asylum/> (03.03.2025)

and deals with security issues relevant to migration¹. The Union attempts to establish security measures among its member states and European citizens by avoiding racist overtones. Frontex follows the logic and practice of these measures, contributing to their implementation on the field. In this framework, Frontex understandably operates with the aim of saving lives, as well as identifying, containing and returning irregular immigrants². Obviously, the strengthening of Frontex at external European borders, and the signing of agreements with developing countries concerning the repatriation of individuals that have unjustifiably left their homelands, subsequently entering EU territory, are features that contribute to the consolidation of a feeling of security.

The issue of security is directly associated with solidarity among the EU's member states, in the sense that the EU needs to function as a block, in terms of human security, by applying the motto responsibility-solidarity-security. Apparently, the association of migration with security indicates a development of the former from an internal issue into an issue of foreign policy³. Consequently, both member states and the EU as a group need to develop forms of diplomacy focusing on migration.

For the time being and as far as the Pact is concerned, we should wait and see whether it demonstrates sufficiently a capacity to deal with security as well as an ability to select in a just manner individuals eligible for asylum and incorporation; in other words, to demonstrate the degree to which receiving societies are ready to overcome stereotypes⁴. The main issue that arises is the extent to which European societies are prepared to face developing circumstances closely associated with respect for the rights of citizens of Europe's nation's states, as well as their readiness to make room for foreign ethnic groups without feeling threatened. In this context, socio-economic issues concerning European societies, such as unemployment, should also be taken into consideration.

Also associated with migration is an issue of meritocracy. The middle and lower classes of the receiving countries are at a disadvantage, feeling that their educational system is not so fair for all. How and when could employees of the present day who alternate between employers gain sufficient experience to become competitive? Those that originate from the upper social strata have more means and opportunities. Projecting this realization in the context of migration from third countries, one may assume that talented and qualified migrant workers holding a degree would be discriminated against due to their lack or limited understanding of the language and culture of their country of reception. Such features would make them less competitive, with an uncertain future in employment. Thus, they would be bound to follow the lot of the local working class that produces wealth but enjoys it less than expected. The millions of unemployed or semi-employed citizens of the member states need work, not "employment" without social security, and this situation is also true for migrants. One needs to look beyond the concept that migration means a cheap labor force and a lower production cost that promote competitiveness. This model of cheap labor needs to become obsolete.

Consequently, the EU will need to provide the proper circumstances for both natives and migrants to be able to find work that safeguards quality livelihood. It will need to take into consideration the needs of the labor market; the existing unemployment among youths of its member states; and the proper use of the qualities of those in need of refugee status. Highly qualified migrants contribute directly to innovation, while those with low qualifications play a significant part in areas of the primary sector⁵.

Taking into consideration the struggle of European leaders and technocrats to find a happy medium and, secondly, the relevant challenges and doubts, the answer lies in a continuous dialogue that could contribute to the solution of practical problems: an internal European dialogue and a dialogue between the EU and third countries. The former needs to involve not just technocrats and governments, but plain citizens as well, since the multifaceted

¹ Maciej Stępką, *The New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Another Step in the EU Migration-Security Continuum or Preservation of the Status Quo?*, "Białystok Legal Studies", Vol. 28, No.1, 2023, p. 30

² Maciej Stępką, *Op.cit.*, p. 28, p. 32-33

³ Cf. Diego Caballero Vélez and Ekaterina Krapivnitskaya, *The EU migration policy securitization process: From a domestic to a foreign dimension*, "Studia z Polityki Publicznej / Public Policy Studies", Vol. 7, No. 4, 2020, p.116. Also: Paula Garcia Andrade, *Tackling migration externally through the EU common foreign and security policy: A question of legal basis*, "European Papers", Vol.8, No 2, 2023, pp. 959-984

⁴ Alberto-Horst Neidhardt, *Op.cit.*, p.8; Cf. Angeliki Dimitriadi [Αγγελική Δημητριάδη], *Op.cit.*, pp. 24-25

Eugenia Vella, [Ευγενία Βέλλα], *Η ευρωπαϊκή πολιτική για τη μετανάστευση: πρόσφατες εξελίξεις και μελλοντικές προοπτικές* [European Migration Policy: Recent Developments and Prospects], "Policy Briefs Ευρωπαϊκής Οικονομίας", ELIAMEP, No. 3, 2024, p. 1

issue of migration flows to the EU may in fact be solved by investing in the migrants' countries of origin. As far as the local European societies are concerned, the solution lies in the strengthening of a spirit of security and social justice.

Conclusions

In this paper we have used the concept of long duration (*longue durée*) to understand the current particularities in the EU with a special reference to the southern member states of the Union. The theoretical scheme of the Annales' *longue durée* allows us to study the subject holistically. We have applied the interdisciplinary perspective to understand the impact of migration on nation states. The concept of long duration can be used as an interpretative and guiding tool for an analysis of present-day data and predictions for the future, so that by longitudinal approaches we may reach synchronic conclusions to retain the necessary elements of the past on which to build the most appropriate policies.

In conclusion, this is undoubtedly a complex issue. We have noted that migration and asylum are two major chapters in which the EU's member states maintain views depending on their geographical parameters and proximity to third countries. This concept also includes the specificity of EU Member States in the Mediterranean.

The European Union should view the issue of immigration holistically, seeking the best possible perspective. Beyond the need to develop forms of diplomacy focusing on migration, there lies the strengthening of a spirit of human security and social justice. In view of the current situation, and to evaluate it in a long-term future perspective, policy makers and academics will probably need to discuss the nation-state model, which Europe has adopted over the last two centuries.

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THE EXPANSION OF THE SECURITY CONCEPT AND THE NEW CONFIGURATIONS OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

Abstract:	<i>This article examines how the idea of security has continued to grow in response to the intricate realities of a world that is changing quickly and becoming more interconnected. Security, which has historically been defined in terms of state sovereignty and military defense, has expanded to include more aspects such as social cohesion, environmental balance, human well-being, and access to vital resources. To move from reactive, protectionist approaches to integrated and preventive strategies, the paper looks at how public institutions and global civil society have adjusted to this conceptual shift.</i> <i>The analysis, which draws from theoretical frameworks like the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School, emphasizes how threats are evolving and are no longer just interstate conflict but also institutional collapse, economic crises, health emergencies, climate change, and disinformation. Furthermore, the need for multi-sectoral policies and transnational cooperation is highlighted by the blurring of the boundaries between domestic and international security. This study highlights the function of public institutions in promoting social discourse, civic duty, and resilience in addition to upholding order. The paper concludes by advocating for a rethinking of the security paradigm that considers the various demands of modern global societies and harmonizes institutional reforms with democratic ideals.</i>
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Introduction

It is a well-established fact that the realities of the world are rapidly changing, and interdependencies between societies are increasing. As a result, the key concepts through which we understand the world must also be rethought. A re-evaluation of old paradigms is therefore necessary, with security - once a term almost exclusively associated with armed conflicts - now at the center of extensive and nuanced debates. This paper explores how the perception of security has evolved, highlighting that the perspective reflecting the current world is different. In the past, the dominant vision of security was shaped almost exclusively from the standpoint of state interests, largely ignoring the needs of individuals. The focus was on defending borders and military response capabilities, while aspects related to the everyday life of citizens were treated as secondary or irrelevant to overall security. This perspective changed radically after the end of the ideological confrontation between East and West, which opened the path to the reinterpretation of threats and the redefinition of the involved entities. Nowadays, internal instability, institutional failure, lack of access to essential resources, or ecosystem degradation are the main ways that threats appear rather than international conflicts. These days, a society's capacity to give its members a stable, just, and

sustainable living environment is directly related to its level of security. This entails maintaining a clean environment, a tolerant atmosphere, a good educational system, and operational infrastructure.

While traditional national security emphasizes the protection of state sovereignty and territorial integrity against external threats, human security shifts the focus to safeguarding the vital freedoms and dignity of individuals. As outlined in the UNDP Human Development Report 1994, human security encompasses freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity, addressing risks such as poverty, disease, and environmental degradation that transcend national borders¹.

The concept of human security refers to ensuring an overall state of protection for individuals against major threats affecting their life and well-being. Among the most frequent risks are lack of access to food, health problems, and armed conflicts. This form of security also aims to defend the person against various undesirable situations in daily life, such as medical conditions, workplace accidents, or incidents in public spaces. Human security represents a phenomenon made up of multiple dimensions: economic security, food security, health protection, ecological balance, personal integrity, public order, and political stability². The theoretical model advanced by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, influential theorists in the field of international relations, known primarily for their contributions to the development of security theory from an extended and constructivist perspective, has made a major contribution to broadening the concept of security. In this same vein, according to them, not only armed forces or external conflicts define risk, but any element perceived as a serious threat to an entity, whether it is a state, a community, or a collective identity. When a problem is viewed as threatening to the existence or regular operation of a system in public and political discourse, it acquires security dimensions. In this logic, threats can arise from a variety of sources: economic collapse, political chaos, climate crises, loss of social cohesion, or widespread disinformation³.

However, the expansion of the security concept has not been without critique. Scholars such as Roland Paris (2001) and Stephen Walt (1991) have argued that a too-broad definition of security risks dilutes the analytical clarity and strategic focus necessary for effective policymaking⁴. The integration of development goals, environmental protection, and human rights under the security umbrella could, paradoxically, weaken state institutions' ability to prioritize imminent threats⁵.

Another important trend is the dissolution of the rigid boundaries between what was once labeled as "internal security" and "international security." Contemporary realities - such as global communication networks, cross-border mobility, trade flows, or mass migration - have made it impossible to maintain strict compartmentalization. A political disturbance in an unstable region can trigger chain reactions that affect entire continents, influencing social and economic communities outside the original space. Thus, the security of a nation can no longer be analyzed in isolation but only about global dynamics.

Additionally, at the heart of the new security paradigm is the idea that protecting the individual is closely linked to general integrated adaptability. Environmental issues, unequal access to resources, systemic discrimination, or frequent violations of fundamental freedoms generate tensions that, without adequate management mechanisms, transform into crises with regional or global impact. Human security, in this sense, is a concept that targets both personal well-being and the general conditions of coexistence in society. Furthermore, maintaining peace in the modern world requires not only the absence of armed conflict but also investments in development, equal opportunity, intercultural communication, and open governance. Lack of these elements exacerbates instability and impairs communities' ability to react to crises, from food shortages and pandemics to cyberattacks or the collapse of financial markets.

Therefore, security must be understood as a network of interdependent factors that influence the collective ability to maintain a stable climate. This includes protecting the state from aggression and protecting people from

¹ Gerd Oberleitner, *Human Security: A Challenge to International Law?*, "Global Governance", Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005, pp. 185-203

² Dan Victor Cavaropol, *Human Security – Modern Concepts and Approaches*, "Journal of the Academy of National Security Sciences", No. 1, 2016, p. 137

³ Ionel Stoica, *The Temptation of Migration: Necessity and Opportunity in a Globalized World*, Military Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011, pp. 126-127

⁴ Stephen M. Walt, *The Renaissance of Security Studies*, "International Studies Quarterly", Vol. 35, No. 2, 1991, pp. 211-239

⁵ Roland Paris, *Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?*, "International Security", Vol. 26, No. 2, 2001, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3092123>, pp. 87-102

poverty, marginalization, abuse, or resource exploitation. A contemporary vision of security requires an integrated approach, where solutions are built through transnational cooperation, non-discriminatory policies, and a profound understanding of the transformations shaping the current world¹.

Civic Participation and Social Reorganization in Contemporary Democracies

The initial analysis of social movements from the perspective of Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action does not explicitly identify a direct link between them and the affirmative dimension of modern civil society. Habermas focuses more on defensive reactions against the dysfunctions and forms of alienation produced by the institutions of advanced modernity. The omission of the central concept of "voluntary association" in the theoretical structure of civil society leads to a fragmented representation of social movements, treating them merely as responses to normative decline and the cultural fragmentation brought about by modernization processes.

In the absence of a contemporary conceptualization of association as an intermediary form between the individual and institutional systems, the perspective on how emerging solidarities, both intra and intergroup, contribute to the formation of new identity configurations and the revitalization of public life is lost. This absence dilutes the utopian potential of civil society, reducing it to an abstract ideal, lacking concrete applicability in current democratic processes. It is only in his political writings from the 1980s that Habermas reconsiders this vision, assigning social movements a proactive role in shaping an extended public sphere. He recognizes their capacity to challenge forms of institutional domination and to contribute to the democratic reconstruction of the public space at all social levels. In this logic, movements become agents of generating new forms of shared life, where dialogue, participation, and cooperation replace the functional logic of systems based on money and power. The COVID-19 pandemic vividly illustrates the multidimensional nature of contemporary security². Beyond the immediate health crisis, it triggered economic downturns, social polarization, and governance challenges globally, highlighting the necessity for integrated responses that combine healthcare, economic stabilization, and public trust-building. Similarly, the mass displacement caused by the war in Ukraine emphasized the role of civil society networks in providing humanitarian aid and advocating for refugee rights, embodying the practical application of a human security framework³.

Habermas subsequently proposes a vision of self-reflexive democracy, in which the plurality of civil associations can modulate the decision-making processes of the state and economy, without undermining the autonomy of these subsystems. However, the fundamental challenge lies in identifying the influence of these associations on the functionally differentiated subsystems, without them being absorbed or subordinated to the logic of bureaucracy or market imperatives.

The ability of the state to further its own objectives and affect the balance of power, both locally and globally, is referred to as its power. The traditional conceptualization of the structure of power relations is still typified by Cardinal Richelieu's vision, which is based on the importance of national interest (*raison d'État*). Like this, political theory has frequently linked the concept of security to conflict as well as social development dynamics, occasionally incorporating it into the framework of contractual relationships between the state and its citizens in the form of an agreement intended to maintain law and order and collective defense⁴. However, this vision opens the way for a theoretical-practical reconstruction of civil society, which involves surpassing the simplistic opposition between the system and the lifeworld. A complete identification between "civil society" and the "lifeworld" is not necessary to understand the dual political role of an analytical democracy: on the one hand, the ability to exert pressure on state institutions and the market, and on the other hand, the institutionalization of collective gains obtained through civic involvement.

In this framework, three major areas of tension emerge: between the radical rejection of the system and the strategies of transformation based on critical autonomy and democratic responsibility; between informal civic networks and organized structures that can influence power only through bureaucratic mechanisms; and, last but not

¹ Mihai Marcel Neag, *Ensuring Human Security, Volume I – The Role of Security Institutions and Civil Society*, Sitech, Craiova, 2010, p. 384

² WHO, *COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan*, 2021, <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-strategic-preparedness-and-response-plan-operational-planning-guideline> (22.04.2025)

³ UNHCR, *Ukraine Situation Flash Update (2022–2023)*, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine> (22.04.2025)

⁴ Mihaela Istrate, *Security – A Multidimensional Concept*, "Human Rights Journal", No. 2, 2013, p. 31

least, between the social and the political dimensions, i.e., between community organization and the decision-making apparatus of the state. Our political position seeks to formulate a coherent response to these antinomies. We have argued that a civil society with a high degree of self-reflexivity, anchored in the dialogue between theory and collective experience, can generate sustainable strategies for a self-limiting participatory democracy. In relation to Habermas's abstract theory, this approach requires the introduction of bridge concepts that correlate institutional analysis with emerging social realities. The issues become more acute when considering the classic dilemma formulated by Robert Michels: how can social movements avoid oligarchic drift once they enter the institutional logic of the state or economy? Indeed, they risk reproducing exactly those power structures they contest, becoming captured by the imperatives of efficiency and control. However, a reconfiguration of the concept of "victory" for movements - not as the final achievement of goals, but as the sustainable democratization of norms, values, and institutions - offers a more realistic and adaptable perspective. In this framework, rights become the institutional foundation of an active and resilient civil society. It is not the disappearance of social movements that is problematic, but the absence of a legal and cultural configuration that supports the emergence of new forms of civic organization. The rights won in the past - from those of workers to civil and cultural rights - have served as starting points for new claims. However, the current context demands a new set of rights that reflect the complexity of the interaction between citizens, the state, and the economy in globalized societies.

These new privileges should not only contribute to limiting the uncontrolled expansion of system logic in the civil space, but also to articulating "detection mechanisms" capable of indirectly influencing communication structures. The third tension mentioned earlier, between society and politics, thus becomes the most difficult to overcome. Radical self-limitation is sometimes confused with the abandonment of any attempt to democratize the state or economy. In this regard, post-Marxist positions that promote complete separation from the system prove limiting.

Without the extension of democracy into the spheres of governance and production, even the most participatory civil associations remain vulnerable to the dominant logic of the two subsystems. Therefore, projects for radical differentiation must be reevaluated. Habermas himself has been criticized for granting the state and economy too much autonomy without formulating concrete means by which democratic will can influence these closed subsystems. Our proposal aims to overcome this theoretical impasse. The differences between the system and the lifeworld are preserved at the analytical level, but they must be supplemented by an understanding of the interdependence between the different types of social action: instrumental, strategic, communicative, and normative. There is no insurmountable theoretical obstacle that forbids the infiltration of communicative logic into state institutions or the economy. On the contrary, practices already reflect this trend: co-determination, collective bargaining, local participatory democracy, or participatory budgeting initiatives.

Therefore, the democratization of economic and political institutions does not contradict the need for functional performance; on the contrary, they can coexist through the configuration of hybrid spaces, where decision-making mechanisms are responsive to civic initiatives. The market economy is not purely functional, and universities or other educational institutions, for example, can become either instruments of the market or bastions of civil society, depending on how they are organized and governed. The central issue becomes that of inserting the public sphere into the decision-making structures of the state and economy, without eliminating systemic logic but articulating it with networks of communication, deliberation, and civic association. The debate on the desired forms of democratization must remain sensitive to systemic needs but should not abandon the imperatives of freedom and participation. Contemporary crises, including those affecting the welfare state and the prosperity of the global market, increase the urgency of redefining these relationships. Rights are shields against abuse and tools for creating effective forms of participation and justice. In this perspective, the reconstruction of civil society represents both a theoretical task and a historical and political necessity.

Changes in the Perception of Legitimacy in Digitalized Environments

Between the extremes of absolute anarchy and an Orwellian oppressive universe, it is necessary to identify proportions that promote the utilization of human potential within a framework of extended freedom, while also ensuring that this does not lead to the disintegration of social or communal unity. This state must be adjusted in such a way that it supports the fulfillment of the human condition, where the rationality of action is a constitutive element

of its essence.¹ The development of human societies has never followed a linear and predictable trajectory; it has always manifested through alterations of balance and imbalance, progress and regression, stability and crisis. Contemporary social reality is shaped by a succession of sudden transformations and unpredictable phenomena, reflecting the profoundly dynamic and often contradictory nature of human organization. In this context, moments of stability are often interrupted by systemic asymmetries that generate multiple tensions — economic, political, cultural, or security-related - amplifying individual and collective vulnerabilities. Recent history shows that instability is not an isolated accident, but a constant feature of societal functioning, manifested through complex crises and recurrent conflicts. However, these dysfunctions must be perceived as manageable realities through adaptive interventions, integrated public policies, and effective prevention mechanisms. They are not inevitabilities. A deep understanding of the processes that generate social insecurity and institutional fragility is essential².

In this context, the capacity of social systems to anticipate, absorb, and adapt effective responses to external shocks becomes a key indicator of their long-term sustainability. At the same time, the intersection of new technologies, global mobility, and climate challenges radically redefines traditional concepts of public order and national security.

In the era of invisible infrastructures, social, economic, and political interactions are filtered and reconfigured through digital networks that transcend physical space and destabilize the traditional boundaries of authority. The emergence of a global digital ecology - a dynamic ensemble of platforms, algorithms, communication protocols, and social networks - generates a new and unpredictable distribution of power. Unlike classic models of authority that operated within geographically and institutionally bounded frameworks, this new form of organization produces decentralized forms of influence, where source code, software architecture, and infrastructural logic become vectors of decision-making and social control. The ability to shape information flows, to hierarchize the visibility of discourses, or to contour affective environments through algorithmic design is not only an extension of the communicative space but a profound transformation of the normative environment.

Manipulation of Public Perception through Digital Platforms

Digital ecology introduces a distributive form of governance, where non-state actors - tech corporations, developer communities, decentralized networks - influence norms of coexistence and mechanisms of public legitimacy. Thus, the logic of power no longer operates solely through coercion or legal authority, but through the infrastructural mediation of behaviors and perceptions. The 2016 U.S. presidential elections and the Brexit referendum exposed the vulnerabilities of democratic systems to algorithmic manipulation and information warfare conducted through social media platforms. According to Freedom House (Freedom on the Net 2023), the proliferation of disinformation campaigns orchestrated by both state and non-state actors has eroded public trust in institutions and contributed to social polarization, illustrating the urgent need for enhanced digital governance and cybersecurity measures within the framework of human security³.

Beyond the erosion of democratic legitimacy through disinformation, a deeper transformation affects the structural conditions of public participation.

This mutation radically redefines the conditions of possibility for democracy. The digital public space does not function as a neutral extension of the deliberative sphere, but as a field of forces in which political visibility, social validation, and the ability to coagulate solidarities are influenced by opaque technical factors. The logic of platforms - with its focus on engagement, virality, and retention - often favors forms of hyperpolarized and affective discourse, marginalizing the complexity of rational argument. In this framework, representation becomes unstable, and collective will risks being dissociated from the classic mechanisms of democratic decision-making.

At the same time, new forms of digital aggregation - hashtag-based movements, viral campaigns, or decentralized activism networks - introduce a new political temporality: one that is accelerated, discontinuous, and

¹ Bogdan Ștefanachi, *Human Action and Its Rational Limits: Some Considerations on Economy, Freedom, and the Individual*, "Human Rights Journal", No. 1, 2023, https://revista.irido.ro/english/index-arhiva.php?anul=2023&nr_revista=1&semestrul=1&limba=engleza, p. 8

² Mircea Mureșan, Gheorghe Văduva (Eds.), *Crisis, Conflict, War, Volume I: Defining Crises and Armed Conflicts in the New Configuration of National and International Network Philosophy and Structure*, Carol I National Defence University, București, 2007, p. 9

³ Freedom House, *The Repressive Power of Artificial Intelligence*, "Freedom on the Net 2023", <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Freedom-on-the-net-2023-DigitalBooklet.pdf> p. 5

often fragmented. Instead of stable and institutionalized solidarities, fluid forms of mobilization emerge, capable of exerting symbolic pressure but difficult to transform into structural change. Thus, the tension between the emotional intensity of online participation and the consistency of offline organization becomes a major challenge for the democratic configuration of the present.

Algorithmic Governance and the Challenges of Artificial Intelligence

In addition to these fragmented mobilizations, the advent of artificial intelligence raises further concerns regarding the transparency and accountability of decision-making processes.

Moreover, the proliferation of artificial intelligence and decision-making automation raises the issue of a new form of institutional opacity: the algorithmic one. Predictive models used in justice, credit, hiring, or surveillance redefine the distribution of social risk without being subjected to clear mechanisms of democratic control or public accountability. In this context, rights can no longer be understood solely as tools of defense against human abuse, but also as forms of protection against autonomous technical structures that can produce exclusion and systemic discrimination in the absence of deliberate intent.

The reconfiguration of power in hyperconnected societies involves not only a redistribution of influence but also a resizing of the political imagination. Democratic practices must respond to the challenges of a world where digital infrastructure becomes the primary arena of symbolic conflict, and individual autonomy is filtered through interfaces, default settings, and coding logics. In this sense, digital ecology is not merely an environment for expression, but a battleground for defining norms, visibility, and legitimacy in the contemporary world.

The Role of Public Order and Safety Institutions in the Context of Expanding the Concept of Security

When we discuss human security, we refer to several important aspects. From the perspective of the objectives pursued, it serves both an explanatory role, providing an analytical framework, and an applicative one, through the development of concrete policies and initiatives. Programmatic interventions complement existing tools and strengthen efforts to achieve sustainable development goals. Such initiatives are designed in collaboration with the targeted communities, helping individuals identify their own needs and sensitive points. In this way, the developed strategies become more efficient, leading to real progress toward sustainable development¹.

The opening of a new stage in the evolution of contemporary society brings to the forefront the tension between the legacy of nation-states and the necessity of structures adapted to global interdependence. The genesis of this dualism is found in the cultural transitions of early modernity – the Renaissance, humanism, and anti-authoritarian currents – which strengthened respect for individual autonomy and, by extension, for collective identity. These impulses led on the one hand, to the affirmation of the individual as an active political subject, and on the other hand, to the crystallization of nation-states as expressions of communities' aspirations for self-determination. This is how the cultural dimension of Western civilization was shaped.

At the same time, however, historical dynamics produced a profound transformation in economic and social relations. The traditional fragmentation of productive activities was replaced by global interconnection, favored by the development of transport and communication infrastructures, the diversification of resources, and the expansion of industrial production. This process eroded local self-sufficiency and intensified interdependencies between communities, feeding a material dimension of Western civilization characterized by functional integration.²

In this context of cultural and economic convergence, institutions responsible for maintaining public order and safety face the pressure to adapt. A static model, focused on reaction and punctual intervention, is no longer sufficient. Current difficulties – from hybrid threats to emerging social phenomena – require an intervention where order agents must be involved in prevention, collaboration, and risk management in partnership with other social sectors. This shift in vision entails revising institutional roles, developing competencies in new fields, and building strong relationships with communities, in a logic of accountability and co-production of safety. The security model undergoes a reconfiguration that redefines the traditional missions of order structures and calls for an articulation between the normative dimension of law, the operational dimension of intervention, and the relational dimension of public trust. The boundaries between internal and external, civilian and military, real and virtual, are increasingly

¹ Adrian Răzvan Serescu, *Securitatea umană în contextul dezvoltării durabile*, Institutul de Dezvoltare a Societății Informaționale, https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/239-243_8.pdf (22.04.2025)

² David Mitran, *An Operational Peace System*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, p. 36

fluid, and collective safety is shaped as a joint effort, sustained by adaptable, collaborative mechanisms aimed at protecting the fundamental values of life in society.

To be fully understood, the profound transformations of the security concept require an analysis of the impact on institutions responsible for maintaining public order and safety. These institutions, such as the police, gendarmerie, intelligence services, and civil protection structures, can no longer be considered purely operational actors, but dynamic components of a coherent system that requires constant alignment with social, technological, and geopolitical circumstances. In the classic model, these institutions primarily acted reactively, intervening after the emergence of a threat or disturbance. Now, risks such as online radicalization, misinformation, transnational organized crime, environmental degradation, or health crises demand a strategic reorientation toward preventing antisocial acts. This involves investments in modern infrastructure, the development of critical thinking capacity, inter-institutional collaboration with sectors such as education, health, or environmental protection, and, most importantly, an active relationship with the community.

Public safety institutions must evolve from a logic of control to one of protection through transparent, efficient, and ethical methods. In this sense, the concept of maintaining order through the consent and contribution of the community (policing by consent) is relevant and even indispensable. Citizen involvement in the safety defense process, through mechanisms such as community councils, civic patrols, volunteering, or local consultations, reflect an advanced level of democratic maturity. Public trust in these institutions is particularly important for preventing conflict escalation and for the effective normative integration of minorities or vulnerable groups. The expansion of the security concept also leads to a redefinition of the police role, which can no longer be perceived solely as a law enforcement force, but as a community actor involved in managing social risks such as domestic violence, addictions, or social exclusion. Acquiring socio-psychological competencies and developing partnerships with NGOs, social services, and educational institutions are essential prerequisites. Therefore, a hybrid profile emerges for the public order agent, capable of combining legal professionalism with the role of facilitating social cohesion.

Technological advancement and intense digitalization create spaces for social interaction, but also significant vulnerabilities. Among the most alarming threats are cyberattacks, which are already at a level where they pose a real danger to national and international prosperity, security, and stability. These attacks are increasingly organized and have a costly impact on government administration, businesses, the economy, transportation, supply networks, and critical infrastructure. The sources of these threats are diverse, including intelligence services, organized crime, and terrorist groups¹. In this context, public safety institutions must develop expertise in areas such as cybersecurity, online behavioral analysis, or combating disinformation campaigns. Cooperation between the police, computer incident response teams (CERTs), and media analysis units is vital to counteract risks associated with online radicalization or manipulation during electoral or crisis periods.

The concept of human security, focused on protecting the individual from existential risks, expands the responsibility of public order institutions. They must intervene not only in cases of criminality but also in crises generated by natural disasters, pandemics, emergency evacuations, or the protection of vulnerable individuals. Inter-institutional collaboration and ongoing professional training are no longer options but strategic imperatives. Classical order institutions must adopt a network-based operational logic, in which coordination, transparency, and effective information sharing become essential for the success of interventions. The expansion of the security concept is a substantial practical challenge for public safety institutions: they must be more flexible, more collaborative, and more citizen oriented. Moreover, order cannot be maintained solely through force but must be built through proactive participation, mutual trust, and shared responsibility. Transformations in human society directly influence the emergence and manifestation of phenomena such as challenges, dangers, threats, and risks – whether these are assumed, the result of events, or imposed from the outside. These phenomena are present in all areas of activity, directly related to the actions of individuals and social groups. They do not follow a linear trajectory: they intensify or weaken, appear temporarily or disappear, depending on context and interactions within the social system. It is precisely this variability that makes them difficult to fully understand, impossible to eliminate, or permanently

¹ Iulian Chifu, *The Reconfiguration of Security and International Relations in the 21st Century*, Volume II, RAO, București, 2023, p. 13

control. There will always be a continuous confrontation between these phenomena and the efforts made to stabilize and protect the affected processes and structures¹.

Nevertheless, operationalizing transnational security cooperation faces significant challenges. Diverging national interests, the persistence of sovereignty-based frameworks, and unequal distribution of resources complicate collective action. As Gerd Oberleitner (2005) points out, human security initiatives often encounter difficulties in aligning universal aspirations with localized political and economic realities².

Conclusions

The changes occurring in the international environment and the internal developments of modern states have brought transformations in the field of security. This process is not limited to the expansion of the spectrum of threats but requires a reconfiguration of how institutions and society perceive, prioritize, and manage vulnerabilities. There is a noticeable shift from an approach solely focused on defense and public order to a vision that integrates multiple dimensions of safety, reflecting the diversity of social relations, economic dynamics, and technological impact. This theoretical and practical reassessment of security involves a constant effort of adaptation from public institutions, especially those responsible for maintaining order and safety. Their role is both the application of legal norms, reacting to incidents, and active involvement in preventive processes, creating an environment conducive to social dialogue, and promoting a civic culture of responsibility. In this configuration, punctual intervention is gradually replaced by structured actions that consider the socio-economic dimensions of phenomena and the interdependencies between factors. At the same time, it is observed that security can no longer be guaranteed exclusively by traditional means, as contemporary threats are not geographically limited, do not respect clear institutional boundaries, and often manifest in diffuse forms that are difficult to anticipate or classify. Therefore, there is a need for increased anticipatory analysis capacity, as well as a real willingness to cooperate across areas that were previously treated separately: public order, health, environment, and digital infrastructure. In the absence of an integrative approach, responses remain fragmented and, often, ineffective.

In this sense, the academic approach underpinning this paper sought to highlight the mechanisms through which the state can support, without yielding to momentary pressures, an adaptable and sustainable security model. This pattern requires not only institutional reforms but also a type of professional commitment based on continuous training, a deep understanding of social realities, and the capacity to respond quickly without sacrificing the fundamental principles of the rule of law.

In conclusion, the redefinition of security priorities must be understood as part of a broader process of reconfiguring the functions of the state about global changes and the increasingly diverse expectations of citizens. As Roland Paris (2001) highlights, the human security paradigm represents both a normative aspiration and a strategic redefinition of security priorities³.

A model for institutional adaptation to the expanded concept of security is the establishment of integrated Early Warning and Crisis Anticipation Units at national and regional levels, inspired by the OECD's Strategic Crisis Management framework. These units would operate across sectors, ensuring rapid information-sharing, citizen engagement, and coordinated responses to multidimensional threats, from cyberattacks to pandemics. Additionally, the creation of Local Civic Security Councils could enhance community resilience and participation in shaping security policies, fostering a bottom-up democratization of risk management⁴.

The effectiveness of these transformations depends on how institutions succeed in combining operational rigor with the willingness to collaborate, adapting their methods and procedures without straying from democratic values, and responding through intervention and prevention, education, and constant involvement in community life.

¹ Mircea Mureșan, Gheorghe Văduva (Eds.), *Crisis, Conflict, War*, Carol I National Defence University București, 2007, p. 18

² Gerd Oberleitner, *Human Security: A Challenge to International Law?*, "Global Governance", Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005, pp. 185-203

³ Roland Paris, *Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air*, "International Security", Vol. 26, No. 2, 2001, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3092123>, pp. 87-102

⁴ OECD, *Strategic Crisis Management. 4th meeting of the OECD High Level Risk Forum*, 2014, [https://one.oecd.org/document/GOV/PGC/HLRF\(2014\)9/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/GOV/PGC/HLRF(2014)9/en/pdf) (25.04.2025)

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LIBRARIES AS FACTORS TO SUPPORT SOCIETAL SECURITY

Abstract:	<i>The link between culture and identity is a close one, being the identity card of each nation. Protecting a set of values, beliefs, traditions and characteristics gives rise to the concept of societal security and the dynamics of the concept at the level of society.</i> <i>On the one hand this paper focuses on the transformation that public libraries have undergone over time, precisely to ensure their continuity in the community. Libraries have adapted to the needs of the individual and the community they serve, becoming community hubs. At the same time, the work aims to explore the existing connections between libraries and the concepts of societal security, social inclusion and democracy.</i> <i>The relevance of the study consists in the analysis of the social and cultural performances achieved by the libraries in the activities carried out and the implications on societal security. The research methodology focuses both on the analysis of the available documents that give us an overview of library activities and the community's involvement in these activities, as well as on a quantitative survey method, which was applied to a sample of 54 public librarians from Romania, the respondents being selected both from urban and rural areas.</i>
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Introduction

Today's global world opens the way to multiculturalism and diversity but creates the perception of altering what is known to the individual and what represents him. In this process of reinvigorating the elements of cultural identity, libraries join the mission of heritage conservation and valorization through interactive, diverse and accessible library services. In this way, libraries support the positive transformations of communities and prepare the individual to be able to achieve them through a bottom-up effort.

This paper focuses on the transformation that public libraries have undergone over time, precisely to ensure their continuity in the community. Libraries have adapted to the needs of the individual and the community they serve, becoming community hubs. At the same time, the work aims to explore the existing connections between libraries and the concepts of societal security, social inclusion and democracy. The relevance of the study lies in analyzing the social and cultural performance achieved by libraries. In an increasingly digital and undefined space, libraries manage to physically bring communities together and dedicate themselves to educating generations, albeit without much public talk about these initiatives.

The current study is based on consulted specialist literature, addressing several key terms such as societal security, culture, identity and the link between public libraries and social inclusion, democracy and cultural heritage. Of note are the limitations this study faced, as the research and accessible literature sources were mostly conducted in the United States. European research is limited or inaccessible, most resources being reports resulting from the activity of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. Also, the present study

brings a current perspective of the situation of public libraries in Romania, in contrast to the existing specialized literature.

Starting from the research question “in what way public libraries in Romania represent support factors for societal security?”, the research methodology focuses on document analysis connected with the quantitative method of the survey. The document review included academic studies, various library organization reports, and library web pages for consultation of library services and initiatives undertaken by them. Regarding the survey method, it was applied to a sample of 54 public librarians from Romania, the subjects being an equal number from both rural and urban areas. The applied questionnaire aimed to collect data related to the function that public libraries perform as a neutral space, for interaction and inclusion, being promoters of democracy and, finally, as important factors in the valorization and preservation of the heritage of the communities they serve. The primary data obtained with the help of the survey will be processed in the form of graphs or tables that will then be explained to fulfill the objectives of this study.

Concerns about the erosion of cultural identity and the loss of diversity are highlighted by the constant transformation of the evolution of globalization, a process that “extends borders but also weakens them”¹. These dynamics become important in terms of security because, according to Arnold Wolfers and his perspective on the nature of security, it “can be understood as the preservation of the fundamental values of individuals in a group”². Seen through a constructivist lens, today's societies are the result of a historical journey, of interactions and social constructions between individual consciousness, ideas and experiences. The traditional approach no longer met the current needs of society, which extended far beyond the military, economy and politics - society sought to shed light on the individual, his needs (how he lives, how he communicates, how he develops) and the environment in which he lives.

Societal Security

In the traditional approach, the state is characterized by a fixed territory, borders to be defended, an administrative body that manages the proper functioning of the state, the economy and the population inside and outside the physical borders. On the other hand, society is shaped by individuals' interactions, their belonging to a community and self-perceptions and the way of affirmation, because “the concept of organization in the societal sector is identity”³.

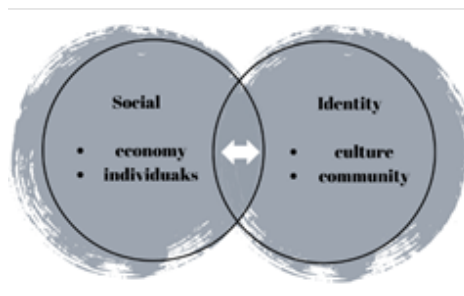


Figure 1. The elements of societal security⁴

Starting from Weaver's perspective on the interdependence between the individual – community – society⁵, and how these elements support each other, societal security derives from the identity, linguistic and cultural

¹ Victor D. Cha, *Globalization and the study of international security*, “Journal of Peace Research”, Sage Publications/PRIO 6 Bonhill Street, London Vol. 37, No. 3, 2000

² Paul D. Williams, *Security studies: an introduction*, Third edition, Routledge, London, New York, 2018, p. 50

³ Saleh, *Broadening the concept of security: identity and societal security*, 2011, “Geopolitics Quarterly”, in Buzan, Barry, Weaver, Ole., De Wilde J., *Security, A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publisher, London, 1998, p. 232

⁴ Janusz Gierszewski, Juliusz Piwowarski, *Theoretical basics of societal security*, “Security Dimensions International&National Studies”, No. 18, 2016, p. 57

⁵ Barry Buzan, *People, States and fear: An agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1991, p. 233

practices of a group. Societal security becomes “a logical extension of state security”¹, but also a point of insecurity, because the key element refers to survival. Survival is what ensures the continuity of the elements of language, culture, customs, preferences, which shape the way individuals think and act. In this way, societal security can also be understood through the logic of social identity theory, which attests to the fact that “group membership satisfies basic cognitive and emotional needs”².

The connection between social identity theory and societal security manifests itself through the identification of a threat to the group's stability, and the response aims to give rise to the securitization process, to isolate the group and maintain external threats. The group's assertion becomes prominent, and actions respond to the need for security and strengthen “a society's ability to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and in the face of possible or real threats”.³ Threats are exclusively to identity so Theiler, Herd & Löfgren and Roe summarize that an important characteristic of societal security is that each identity community sets as its main goal the preservation of its own identity, and not the achievement of other goals through this means⁴. In another definition of the concept, Bailes and Sandö find relevant the overall appropriation of the term, referring to “the protection of society as a whole - with its own complex mechanisms, values and culture as the objective, rather than at physical borders or, as in human security, in the isolated individual”⁵. Hough also points out that societal security refers to “the ability of a society to preserve its essential characteristics in the face of changing circumstances and despite potential or actual threats”.⁶ By bringing societal security to the fore, societies seek to ensure their survival and of course, functionality. To achieve these vital needs, they use defensive mechanisms, in this case cultural means, especially referring to “myths and symbols”⁷ and highlight elements of culture, language, history, traditions and customs. Thus, cultural factors shape society's attitudes towards security risks, influence the way individuals and groups perceive and respond to threats and affect how security measures and policies are implemented.

Culture and Identity

Culture represents the baggage of experiences, feelings and customs built over time and then transmitted from generation to generation. Orlando Patterson describes culture as an acquired or learned process; “a social repertoire”⁸, which traces a *modus vivendi* of the individual. Clifford Geertz presents it as “a deep description”⁹ of society which, at its core, turns to human interactions, values, practices and symbols. The “social repertoire” is transformed not only through individual experiences, but also through interaction with the external environment, through geographical, political manifestations and historical consequences. Culture sums up a set of shared behaviors, beliefs, values and landmarks, such as art, religious customs, clothing, music, traditions, that define a group, community or society. Understanding how groups express themselves results in an appreciation of diversity, and a promotion of respect between different identity categories.

According to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “culture is what determines the success of a society”¹⁰, because it can self-preserve and put up a certain resistance in the face of change and identified external dynamics. Culture makes a significant connection with economic progress and democracy, connections that are then expressed at the level of societies. The World Values Survey (WVS), through the Cultural Map of the World, made by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (Figure 3) argues how cultural models, acquired or learned by individuals,

¹ Tobias Theiler, *Societal security and social psychology*, “Review of International Studies”, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2003, Cambridge University Press, p. 250

² *Ibidem*, p. 264

³ Mark Rhinard, *Societal security in theory and practice*, “Nordic Societal Security”, Routledge, 2020, p. 22

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 24

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 26; A.J.K. Bailes, *Societal Security and Small States*, in C. Archer, A.J.K. Bailes, A. Wivel (Eds.), *Small States and International Security*, Routledge, London, 2014, pp. 66–79

⁶ Branka Panić, *Societal security–security and identity*, “Western Balkans Security Observer”, English Edition, No. 13, 2009; Hough, P. *Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku*, “Understanding Global Security”, Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 31

⁷ Alam Saleh, *Op.cit.*, p. 235

⁸ Lawrence E. Harrison, Samuel P. Huntington, *Culture matters: how values shape human progress*, Basic Books, 2000, p. 208

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. XV

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. XIV

outline economic progress, the support and development of democratic institutions, the achievement of certain standards high in gender equality or the effectiveness of governments. Political scientists highlight two paths that a society can follow, through a series of values and attitudes. Thus, if society adopts an individual, self-specific mode of expression through “own values of expression,” then it tends to support the consolidation of democratic regimes, unlike societies that adhere to a series of measures and “survival values”¹. More specifically, the map exemplifies how, following an increase in the standard of living and the transformation from a developing country through industrialization to a post-industrial knowledge society, a country tends to move from the lower left corner (reduced capabilities) to the upper right corner (increased capacities), indicating a transit in both dimensions, diagonally.

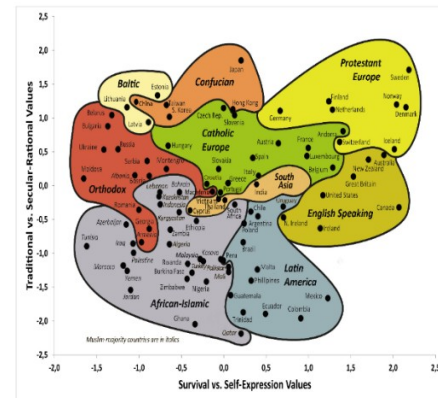
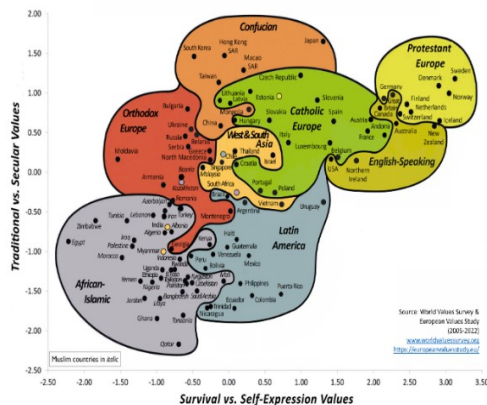


Figure 2. Cultural map of the world, Inglehart-Wezel, 2023² **Figure 3. Cultural map of the world, Inglehart-Wezel, 2010-2014³**

The interdependence between economic progress, the growth of the service industry and the power of self-expression values is felt through the behavioral imprint of individuals. Those with higher incomes, higher education, and positions in the service sector tend to prioritize self-expression ideals more strongly than the rest of their countrymen, ranking higher and to the right of them on this map, as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4.

The concept of identity does not only refer to the relationships that appear at the internal level of the group, respectively communities. If at the internal level the interactions outline principles of similarity between members, at the external level the interactions focus on differentiation, on the identification of others and their cultures. Consequently, cultural identity becomes much stronger and firmer when we define our 'self' in relation to a cultural 'Other'⁴. We can refer to the concept of identity from two perspectives: individual identity and state identity. When we refer to the identity of the individual, it can be categorized as an act, when supporters of common values have “the ability to support the narrative about themselves as a collective self”, but also as a structure, where the story is what facilitates the identity construction of individuals. But identity is always “a narrative, an active process” of individuals, because it is dynamic and in continuous evolution, depending on the environment and the present influences⁵.

Cultural identity narratives are those that ensure communication through stories told within and outside the group to shape perceptions of how we see “ourselves” and how “others” see us. All this takes place within a continuous process of choices and social interactions that contribute to the formation and consolidation of everyone's identity. Transposed to the next level, the values and beliefs assimilated by individuals are manifested through national identity, through a social space and a delimited territory, through which communities identify themselves. Starting from Smith's perspective, the main elements that characterize and stabilize the identity of the

¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 81–82

² <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/> (20.04.2025)

³ *Idem*

⁴ Simon Clarke, *Culture and identity*, “The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis”, Sage, London, 2008, p. 511

⁵ Branka Panić, *Societal security–security and identity*, “Western Balkans Security Observer”, English Edition, No. 13, 2009; Hough, P. *Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku*, “Understanding Global Security”, Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 35

state are “historic land, common historical myths and memories, common culture, common rights and duties for all members of the community, and common economy with territorial mobility for all members”¹.

Culture and identity influence each other, especially because the formation process of an individual can be shaped by the cultural patterns in his environment, and identity can exert its influence on the way culture is understood and assimilated. Culture is dynamic, fluid, and individuals can add value to known cultural diversity and expression, enriching the cultural landscape through the uniqueness of their own actions and experiences. In short, culture provides the framework for the manifestation of identity, and this fills the gap with traits and values that attest to how culture is interpreted. It is also important to mention how culture is not only under the umbrella of societal security, in the idea of protecting the identity values that define groups and communities. Cultural factors, either acquired or learned by individuals, can shape the social and political dynamics of the societies of which they are a part. Cultural factors can also shape the way a group of people perceive and respond to security risks, through a positive or less positive change in attitudes. More specifically, cultural factors can influence the effectiveness of security measures and policies, for which it is necessary to consolidate and assimilate a security culture. The need to educate the population in support of ensuring the security of the state is fundamental for a modern society.

Libraries in Overcoming Social Divides, Reducing Inequality and Promoting Citizen Interaction

In 2022, according to the Library Map of The World², 2.8 million libraries were registered globally, of which 410,297 were public libraries. In 2016, a study by the European Parliament mentioned that there are 65,000 public libraries in the European Union³. A report of the Public Libraries 2030⁴ initiative shows that in 2019, there were 9497 libraries in Romania. With a population of 19 million, the report shows that one library serves 2,047 citizens.

Since ancient times, libraries have been the result of the interaction between individuals and communities, a mélange of perspectives, personal experiences and the world of ideas. If at the beginning they maintained the function of the space, that of being a shelter for books and knowledge, with the progress of society, the services offered by libraries have folded to the demands of users. They became a point of connection between the exchange of information and knowledge, which then underpins a common culture. In essence, libraries were shaped around the idea of community, being “that homogeneous construct, equated with the formless public”⁵.

Libraries are institutions that have evolved around communities, the latter benefiting from resources, guidance, and above all, socialization and interaction. The evolution adopted by libraries has been driven by the changing needs and interests of local communities. Important to note is the fact that there was a continuous exchange between libraries and users, because once the institution made available to the public new materials and topics to exploit, individuals could deepen their understanding and expand their horizons of knowledge. It was accessibility that brought citizens together, regardless of socio-economic background and other individual characteristics. The finality of this cultural exchange was manifested by the promotion of literacy and education to all social classes. The effort to reduce inequality and promote interaction between citizens could only be manifested through a library whose services were adapted to the interests of the community. A culturally refreshed space would only mean increased curiosity on the part of groups of individuals and moreover, these spaces were able to fulfill a number of roles in strengthening the community, such as: 1) a comfortable, quiet space that offers safety; 2) a non-commercial and accessible space; 3) a space where you can be with and interact with other people (known or not), in a cultural environment, focused on learning; 4) a space of opportunities for learning, research and recreation; 5) a space of choice, where library services respond to the user's profile or seek to improve according to requests.

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 32

² IFLA Library Map of the World, <https://librarymap.ifla.org/> (06.05.2024)

³ Barbara Lison, German Library Association, *Research for Cult Committee - the New Role Of Public Libraries In Local Communities*, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, 2016, p. 9, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/supporting-analyses/sa-highlights> (06.05.2024)

⁴ *EU Library Factsheets Public Libraries 2030*, <https://publiclibraries2030.eu/what-we-do/eu-library-factsheets/>, (06.05.2024)

⁵ Bharat Mehra, Ramesh Srinivasan, *The Library-Community Convergence Framework for Community Action: Libraries as Catalysts of Social Change*, “Libri”, Vol. 57, No. 3, 2007, p. 10, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/LIBR.2007.123/html> (06.05.2024)

In short, at the community level, libraries have become “a common good, both intellectual and social”¹. At the same time, given the social nature that these institutions fulfill, they also become a space of gender, ethnic, racial, civic, community representation, precisely because “a community within a community” was created². Inequality felt in other social environments was here excluded by common cultural interests that led to socialization, free expression and empathy. The social function found within libraries highlights a place of equal opportunity, where opportunity and knowledge are for everyone. Every individual who is in the library can enjoy activities that involve collective actions of communication and knowledge, through innovative educational methods.

Furthermore, libraries are defined as a “third space” of knowledge that individuals - children or adults - frequent most of the time. Here they have access to material and digital resources, but learning can also be from individual to individual, through a transfer of information, experiences and skills. The “third space” derives from a ranking of the places where groups spend most of their time, the first position being occupied by the home, followed by schools and other educational institutions. For libraries to function and bring a change within the communities, they set a series of objectives which, then are achieved by putting into practice various methods and approaches that follow the particularities of proximity. Proactive community action from libraries brings individuals closer not only to knowledge but also to socialization in a space for knowledge. In this context we can recall the concept of “social capital”, being the resource created through formal and informal relationships between people in a community³. In essence, social capital materializes in the form of the relationship between the interactions of human capital in a space – such as that of the library, using varied material capital. The formula of social capital is subsequently identified by the level of prosperity of the communities.

To ensure the long-term prosperity and development of communities, IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions supports the United Nations Agenda 2030 initiative, “no one is left behind” and recognizes libraries as a particularly important pillar in achieving the SDGs - Goals of Sustainable Development. Libraries are de facto the right environment for social, economic and environmental growth, because “increasing access to information and knowledge throughout society, assisted by the availability of information and communication technologies (ICT), supports sustainable development and improves the quality of life of individuals”⁴. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda underlines the universality of the organization's commitment to achieving its goals. Putting them into practice, with the help of libraries, brings us back to the definition of today's global, interconnected and ever-changing world. Missionaries of knowledge, libraries act as catalysts to promote education for everyone, at a high quality, so that the inequities identified in society are gradually diminished through the individual's own forces, but with specialized, inclusive help.

As “local gateways” to knowledge, libraries contribute to meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda through access to information that builds skills and educational opportunities that improve the lives of individuals. In the medium and long term, these services that involve and bring together mean literacy, informed decisions that reduce poverty and improve quality of life. The quality of life is constantly improved through public access to information from various fields that serve the integration of the individual in society, but also through interactions with other citizens, professionals in the field, educational institutions and local authorities. Remembering the role of libraries as a neutral, safe space, meetings are held here in a framework that supports gender equality, investing at the community level in programs for citizens regarding entrepreneurship, ICT, health and more. The inclusion and integration of citizens also results through the social infrastructure that libraries offer, such as the help given by the staff of the institution in accessing the Internet, free of charge, guidance on applying for a job, a place of recreation, of all types of education (formal, non-formal, informal) and freedom of expression and trial, both in urban and rural environments⁵.

¹ Sam Demas, *From the Ashes of Alexandria: What's Happening in the College Library?*, “Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space”, Council on Library and Information Resources, 2005, p. 27

² Matthew R Griffis, *Space, Power and the Public Library: A Multicase Examination of the Public Library as Organization Space*, Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository.1103, 2013, pp. 10–11

³ Barbara J Snyder, *How the public library contributes to community building: a case study*, Theses and Dissertations. 846, 2007, p. 8

⁴ Irina V. Gayshun, *Access and Opportunity for All. How Libraries Contribute to the United Nations 2030 Agenda*, “Bibliotekovedenie. Library and Information Science”, Vol. 65, No. 4, 2016, p. 3

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 5–13

The attributes of libraries address the extended network at all levels, from the local level to the global level, because they can be the holders of the skills and resources necessary for progress. “Libraries have the skills and resources to help governments, institutions and individuals communicate, organize, structure and use information effectively for development”¹. The mission that libraries fulfill, both intellectually and socially, has materialized by transforming their own physical space into a space with symbolic resonances. The library, as a space, brings people and groups together and becomes a kind of community agora, a social, political and information center, where groups can freely express themselves and manifest, and the value of everyone is appreciated. Libraries thus become “shelters”, because they guarantee the user a protective and safe space, which emphasizes a greater openness to the exposure of curiosity and interpersonal connections. On the other hand, Lawson highlights the influence the quality of the space in which groups find themselves has on human behavior. He argues that “people communicate more through their ‘inherent spatiality’ than through any other form of language”². Libraries ensure continuity, the continuity of knowledge for communities, but also of a decent life that every individual deserves. In 2022, 28 years later, the Public Libraries Manifesto is renewed in a note that emphasizes the integration of technology in all aspects of everyday life, but does not depart from the fundamental vision of the project: “The public library, the local gateway to access to knowledge, (...) provides publicly accessible space for the production of knowledge, sharing, exchange of information and culture, but also the promotion of civic engagement”³.

Starting from the eleventh point of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations which mentions, among other things, the need for human settlements to be sustainable. Achieving this goal starts with the local actions that libraries take, focusing a good part of their activity on protecting, conserving and raising awareness of neighborhood heritage and connecting it to a national network. Any action to preserve material or immaterial heritage is dedicated to the knowledge and creation of a chronology of events, useful to today's citizens, but also to future generations. So, by definition, cultural heritage means “cultural capital that has been inherited from previous generations and that can be passed on to future generations”⁴. Knowing one's identity and shaping a sense of belonging, by connecting to future generations, makes libraries become supporters of the concept of cultural sustainability. According to Farsani et al., by cultural sustainability we mean “the concept of recovery and protection of cultural identities”⁵.

Libraries become factors of societal security through library services that shed light on the particularities and generalities of the community, movable and immovable heritage, resource citizens and all the elements that make it possible to know what was before. Public libraries in Romania have many concerns in the field of cultural memory and local knowledge, which consider the requirement at the national level for all public libraries, expressed by IFLA, UNESCO and the Library Law no. 334 of 31/05/2002. The requirement is aimed at increasing concern for the preservation and promotion of local heritage, supporting oral tradition and ensuring access to information concerning the community. Public libraries have the obligation to fulfill and develop their role of 1) community information centers; 2) storage of community memory. For this purpose, public libraries have an obligation to develop, regardless of their support (paper, audio, video, digital, etc.), genealogy and local history collections. Here we mention books, periodicals and serials, manuscripts, archival documents, films, photographs, postcards, biographical sheets, etc., relating to the localities or counties of which they are a part.

Fundamental elements of societal security are achieved by public libraries through the following directions of action: 1) encouraging the idea of local community, family and local history; 2) development of activity in the field at the level of any public libraries; 3) active continuation of research and documentation in archives, museums, libraries, identification of new information, references, images; 4) collection and purchase of documents related to the past and present of the community (village, commune, city); 5) organization, structuring of information

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 16

² *Ibidem*, p. 4

³ *IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto: renewing the 1994 common commitment between UNESCO and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) - UNESCO Digital Library*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377426> (06.05 2024)

⁴ Katriina Soini, Inger Birkeland, *Exploring the scientific discourse on cultural sustainability*, “Geoforum”, Vol. 51, 2014, p. 216

⁵ Farsani N. Torabi, C. Coelho, C. Costa, *Geotourism and geoparks as gateways to socio-cultural sustainability*, “Qeshm Rural Areas”, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 48

regarding the history of institutions, families, buildings, minorities, the environment, etc., from the respective locality; 6) promoting the cultural heritage of the place through traditional and modern means; 7) digitization of collections (transposition of existing collections on traditional or analog support, in digital format); 8) preservation and conservation of electronic documents and collections in the field to ensure access to information for future generations; 9) increasing the involvement of citizens in the creation of community memory, digital resources accessible to all, the training of volunteers to collect documents on local history; 10) promoting cooperation between libraries, museums, archives and other institutions.

Fundamental to preserving local memory are the articles published by people of culture in local culture magazines, being the result of research and documentation activities in various fields. Most of the libraries have created, over time, documentary funds that preserve and develop monographic or local research works, profiles of local personalities that are constantly updated. Specific or distinctive identity elements are enriched and reorganized according to each library service^{1 2}.

An example regarding the involvement of libraries in preserving local memory and history is the creation of the website www.istorielocala.ro, created at the initiative of five libraries from all over Romania: “Gheorghe Șincai” County Library Bihor, “Panait Istrati” County Library Brăila, the County Library “Octavian Goga” Cluj, the County Library “Antim Ivireanul” Vâlcea and the Bucovina Library “I.C. Sbierea” Suceava. The cultural objectives that formed the basis of the project are: 1) capitalizing on traditional collections of documents on history and, in general, local knowledge, the initiative also having the role of preserving information, to avoid their degradation/disappearance together with the physical support; 2) creating such a possibility for other partners - libraries or other hoarders of such documents (archives, museums, etc.); 3) making available online, free of charge, to all those interested, the content of information on traditional media existing in our libraries or in places that are accessible to us.

The adoption of technology as a library service has facilitated not only human interaction, external connection with the audience, but also the transmission of knowledge. Even though there were countless discussions about the loss of physical libraries, the existential threat was transformed into an opportunity. One of the traditional missions of public libraries is to bring individuals into the library and improve their knowledge of who they are and what is happening around them. By connecting to international trends, these cultural institutions have continuously evolved and sought the best solutions for the growth of the communities they serve. A much closer connection with the cultural element of identity was also achieved, precisely because the fear of technology, increasingly present in the daily activity of the individual, led to a revival of local history and memory. Before we do, we need to know. And the public libraries put at the disposal of every user’s necessary resource for personal development. Opportunities facilitate the integration of the individual in the world of culture and popular arts, and librarians give him guidance to use and put into practice what he has learned.

Case Study. Romania

The following questionnaire was applied to 54 individuals, library staff, who come from both rural and urban areas. Questioning considers the way in which the transmission of local memory and history is carried out at the community level, and finally, the extent to which public libraries maintain their role as a space of connection, of safety, where users learn through the accessibility of resources, but also of the experiences shared by other users. Public libraries still fulfill their traditional function of book repositories and other educational materials in physical format, but they have transformed themselves along with technological progress, using different methods and resources, according to Figure 4. Not to end up with a sort of “abandoned libraries”, librarians sought to adapt to the new demands of users, to ensure the continuity of library activity. Completing traditional information sources with online ones provides much more suitable learning and development support for the nowadays user; documentation that until now required a considerable amount of time can now be easily completed in a few hours³.

¹ *Memorie și Cunoaștere Locală Biblioteca Județeană Panait Cerna Tulcea*, <https://tulcealibrary.ro/portal/memorie-si-cunoastere-locala/> (06.05 2024)

² *Portalul Comunității*, <https://www.bjvaslui.ro/portal/> (06.05 2024)

³ G.T. ³ Freeman, *Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space*, Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR 129), 2005, p. 5

"The library, which is still a combination of the past (print collections) and the present (new information technologies), must be viewed with a new perspective and understanding if it is to be it to realize its potential to add value to the advancement of the academic mission of the institution and to move with it in the future" - Geoffrey T. Freeman, „Library as Place“

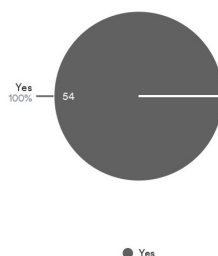


Figure 4. Public libraries within the technological progress¹

The equal representation of the two distinct areas (rural, urban), as shown in figure 5, illustrates a comprehensive perspective on how librarians perceive the link between practice, the cultural institution and societal security. Similarities and differences between the two environments can be identified, as well as particularities and personal perspectives on the assimilation of the concept of security in library services.

Your library is located in a...

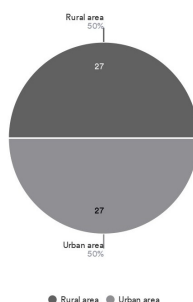


Figure 5. Representation of the areas (rural, urban)²

To the question "How would you define the notion of 'identity' of a community in the context of a library", subjects gave a variety of answers. These included:

How would you define the notion of "identity" of a community in the context of a library?
The library should provide a meeting place for reading, but at the same time, it should be a place where everyone can freely access information and spend their free time. The library plays an important role in the life of the community in economic, educational, cultural and social, as well.
In the context of a library, the notion of a community's "identity" refers to the distinctive features, values, interests and experiences that members of that community share and define as a group within the library. Community identity can be reflected in many aspects, including book collections, activities and programs offered, events organized, and target audiences. Here are some ways in which a community's identity can be expressed in a library: Collection of books and resources: The library may have a selection of books and materials that are relevant to the specific interests and needs of that community. It may

¹ *Idem*

² *Idem*

include books on local history, culture, traditions or other topics relevant to the community; • Programs and events: The Library may organize programs and events that reflect the interests and values of the community. These may be workshops, conferences, presentations, book clubs or other activities that promote and celebrate specific aspects of community identity; • Collaboration with local organizations: The Library may collaborate with local organizations and institutions to support and promote community identity. This may include partnerships with museums, schools, cultural groups or other organizations relevant to the community; • Community Participation and Involvement: The Library may encourage and frame the participation and involvement of community members in library activities. This may include soliciting suggestions and feedback, organizing working groups or advisory councils made up of community members to ensure that the library meets their needs and preferences; • Physical space and design: The design of the library space can be designed to reflect and represent the identity of the community. It may include design elements that fit the culture, history, or themes relevant to the community. It is important that the library is open and receptive to the diverse needs of the community, a place that encourages inclusiveness and values the diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social identities of its members. By promoting community identity, the library becomes a vital space where people can connect, learn and share experiences, thereby contributing to the development and strengthening of the community itself.
Libraries, along with museums and archives, are the places that keep some of the most valuable documents from both a cultural and historical point of view. The main challenge of these institutions is to preserve the information as best as possible for future generations, but also to find practical methods to make it accessible to the public. In a broad sense, identity represents the feeling of belonging to a social group with which the individual shares a series of feelings. The feeling of belonging can be manifested about family, country, people, ethnicity, ideology, professional group, etc. When we talk about cultural identity, we especially think about language, culture, cultural heritage, traditions and religion, libraries being among the most important institutions, along with schools, that contribute to the heritage unaltered preservation, especially in rural areas.

**Table 1. Defining the notion of “identity” of a community in the context of a library
(answers of respondents to the survey)¹**

Considering the origin of the subjects, in both contexts the library space is one that allows access to universal knowledge, but also to local history and memory. Community identity is recognized through the space of connecting individuals, building a sense of belonging, which leads, in the future, to the preservation and transmission of knowledge about what we were.

¹ Based on the author's research

How do you think digital platforms have influenced cultural production and consumption?

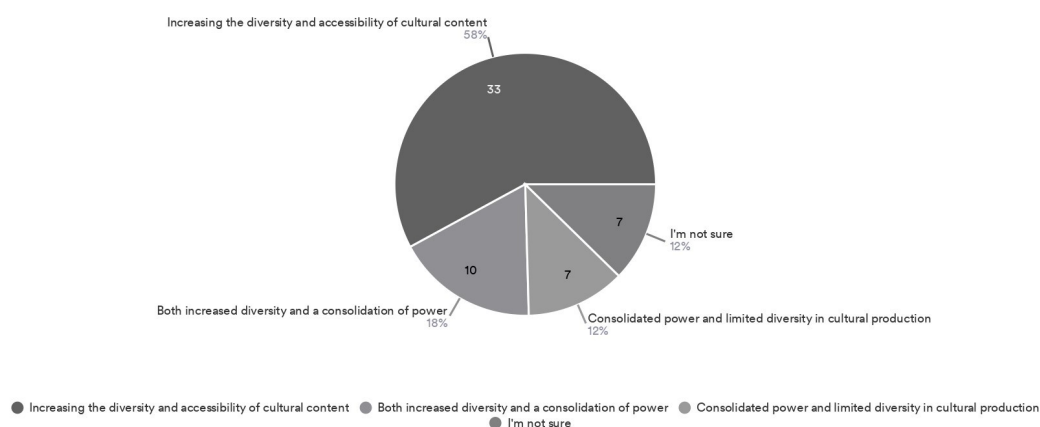


Figure 6. Digital Platforms and Cultural Production and Consumption¹

More than half of the subjects identify the impact of digital platforms on culture as positive, which means varied cultural content, while users can enjoy a diversity of cultural options, depending on their areas of interest and preferences. The second option points out the cultural diversity the user faces, but the power and influence of some individuals or groups can alter the character of these elements through monopolization. However, platforms can play an important role in limiting access to and production of cultural products.

Figure 7 illustrates the perspective of the 54 librarian subjects on how libraries contribute to the overall societal security of the community. Libraries determine the societal security of communities through all the variants mentioned. It is about the complex role that a library plays in ensuring the element of identity and sense of belonging in the community it serves. The responses highlight the journey of public libraries from a traditional institution of storing books to a point of reference in promoting the cultural values of the community.

How do libraries contribute to the societal security of the community?

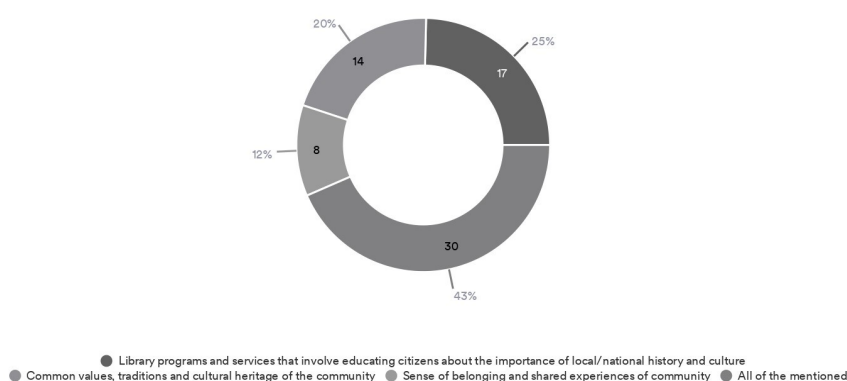


Figure 7. Libraries and Societal Security

According to figure 8., it is understood that public libraries' commitment to cultural heritage is fulfilled in several ways. For sure libraries provide a place for interaction and cultural diversity, through events, preservation of collections and archives, and collaboration with experts in the field. All these actions strengthen the link between library, culture and community. On the other hand, access to local, governmental or European funds necessary for

¹ *Idem*

the implementation of cultural projects is not high, which can be explained by insufficient information about the process of obtaining funds and the benefits and impact of such action, either limited resource, strict eligibility criteria and fierce competition for funds.

How do libraries actively preoccupy with the cultural heritage and history of the community to promote a sense of belonging and safety among community members?

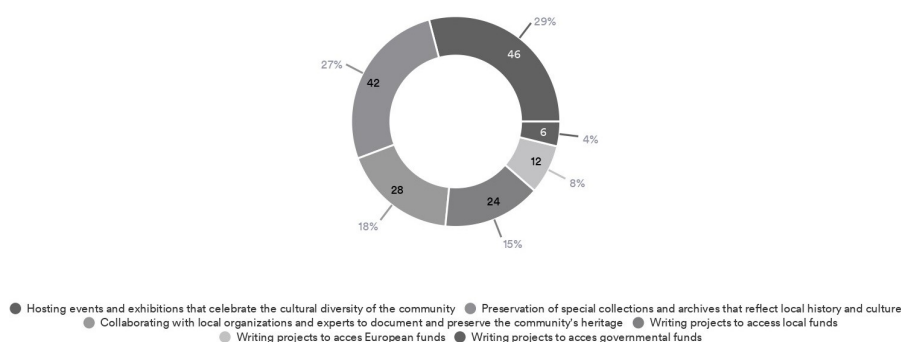


Figure 8. Libraries, belonging and safety¹

The next question looked for specific initiatives or strategies that have been particularly successful in strengthening the link between the public library and community identity. Some of the answers can be consulted in Table 2.

Have you noticed initiatives or strategies that have been particularly successful in strengthening the link between your library and community identity? What would these be?
“Preserving old family photographs in the library collections as a local memory”, project about promotion and support of ethnographic and folklore values (including Hungarian), the project on the Jewish community of Turda, the project on audio books for visually impaired citizens, activities with members of Roma communities, with special education students from the Poiana Special School and the SAMUS Special School, the production of digital stories, documentary films and photographic documents, very popular in kindergartens and schools.
“The dowry of the maidens” - a project to preserve local identity through service-learning techniques, a project through which young women from the village of Pietrari, Valcea county, discovered - from books, from their grandmothers' folk shirts, from the museums they visited, the mysteries contained in the stitches and needle pricks, mysteries that were beautifully crafted on the traditional blouses kept in the coffers. The patterns we discovered were collected, digitally processed and gathered in the first collection of folk motifs produced and preserved both in the classic paper format and online, thus preserving our sources over time, so that they do not somehow get lost in the way fickle times.
The establishment, within the library, of a small museum of the village, which reconstructs (with the help of original pieces), the life of the ancestors, their occupations, crafts, traditions and customs.

**Table 2. Link between the public library and community identity
(answers of respondents to the survey)²**

¹ Idem

² Based on the author's research

In addition to the responses highlighted in Table 2, 30 librarians generally mentioned activities involving learning and promotion of cultural heritage, through workshops, sewing, collection of local stories, folk costumes and traditions. 14 of them either did not notice or are not aware of initiatives and strategies, or did not provide an answer that would answer the given question. In some areas, the library has become a catalyst for the relationship between the individual and the cultural identity of the community. As for librarians who are not aware of initiatives and strategies to promote societal security, the need for an informative, best-practice intervention by the network of librarians at national level can be identified.

To the question “how did you bring the notion of “cultural identity” closer to the library users, respectively to the community?”, the subjects offered a series of specific answers, applied to their community level, as can be seen in the Table 3.

How did you bring the notion of “cultural identity” closer to the library users, respectively to the community?
Through cultural activities (traditions - sewing, weaving, painting icons on glass), courses, performances (Romanian, Hungarian, Roma folklore), literature contests (including students of special schools), festivals, establishment of the collection “Turda Fund”, with books written with and about Turda and Turda inhabitants (from the area of the former Turda-Arieș county), promotion of old photographs, illustrating the history, traditions of the place, contests and exhibitions (of photographs, tourist promotion of the area) etc.
Through projects aimed to preserve local identity, financed by European funding, thematic exhibitions of books, folk objects, photographs, workshops of folk sewing, participation in the “Traditional Clothing Hora”, a traditional local event, participation in cultural commemorative events, presentations of local specificities, writing and editing volumes of local monographs.

Table 3. The notion of “cultural identity” (answers of respondents to the survey)¹

Cultural identity has been brought into library services through initiatives and projects aimed at preserving it. By bringing together and involving all age groups in activities concerning knowledge of cultural heritage, public libraries have become increasingly aware of their role in integrating societal security as a reference point for community development. The stimulation of libraries as cultural centers is achieved through a range of cultural activities. All of these indicate the interest of librarians in connecting local groups with the concept of cultural identity.

As for the librarian’s vision regarding the future role of libraries in promoting and preserving the identity of communities, in an increasingly interconnected world, Table 4. exemplifies a series of demonstrative responses.

How do you envision the future role of libraries in promoting and preserving the identity of communities in an increasingly digital and interconnected world?
The future means digitization. Consequently, the organization of a set of events related to the community in the online environment, the preservation of photographs, manuscripts in special collections and their value, making them known to the public, the promotion of local values (writers, artists, athletes etc.)
Improving and preserving the identity of the community in and through the library can be achieved through face-to-face activities, indoor and outdoor, with the help of new technologies, in order to strengthen the bases of information held by the library. Cultural, social and educational library activities play a very important role in the development of communities, due to legitimacy upon citizens and the types of services and programs the library offers, which often go far beyond what might be considered traditional library services. Through its activities, the library develops innovative practices and becomes a catalyst for the community.

¹ Based on the author’s research

The key word remains “adaptation”... It's the term that has accompanied me throughout my career. By adapting and learning, library projects can have online components, digitize local heritage collections, and bring to light gems that might not otherwise be known to the public. Also, much easier collaboration with other libraries, associations, foundations (online, but also here at home, when possible), writing projects with funding dedicated to education and development of local communities, will ensure the future of libraries in Romania.

**Table 4. Future role of libraries in promoting and preserving identity
(answers of respondents to the survey)¹**

By using tools like social networks, blogs, websites, apps, public libraries can get closer to the users. Bringing traditional collections and resources into a digital form will facilitate the sharing of cultural identity not only locally, but to a wider audience. The role of public libraries in the long term is adjusted to the level of innovation these institutions demonstrate to remain flexible and responsive to the users' needs, to arouse their interest, but there is still reluctance to digital libraries.

When asked about their library's reflection of community diversity, responses varied: 43% said it's moderately good, indicating ongoing efforts but room to improve. 37% found it quite good, meeting cultural goals. 15% said very good, showing effective cultural programs. However, 4% said very poor and 2% said it was poor, possibly due to resource gaps or a need for more initiatives

How well does your library reflect the diversity and cultural heritage of the community?

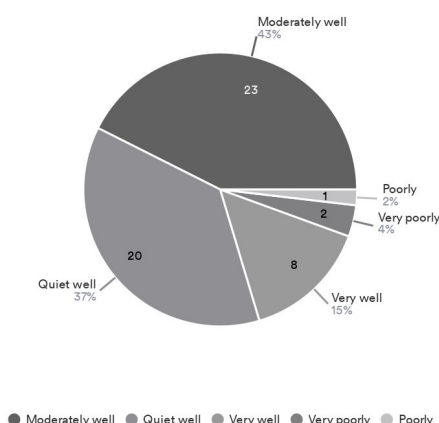


Figure 9. Library's reflection of community diversity²

According to Figure 10 we can identify the effectiveness of libraries as a meeting space that promotes social interaction. For more than half of the librarians, libraries are those meeting spaces, highlighting the function of a space of social connection, through the success of implementation of library services. The less positive answers suggest a lack of success in providing communities with a space for dialogue and human connection.

¹ *Idem*

² Freeman, G.T. *Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space*, Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR 129), 2005, p. 5

How effectively does your library serve as a meeting space that promotes social interaction and community involvement?

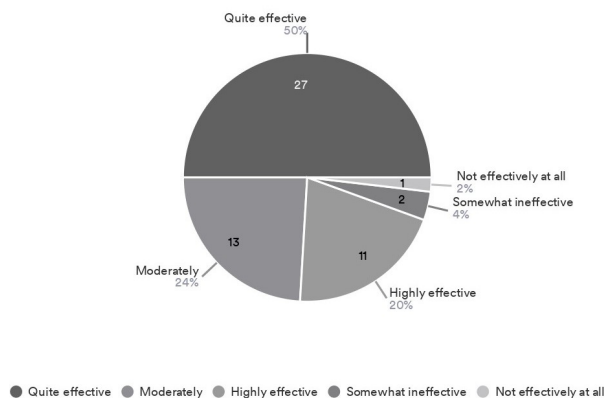


Figure 10. Effectiveness of libraries as a meeting space¹

Librarians were asked how they rate the library's cooperation with local schools, educational institutions and youth organizations to support learning and cultural identity development among the younger generation. Effective cooperation means continuity, quality results over time and future functional adults of society, with a sense of belonging and with a moral, appreciative duty to local memory and history. But certain limitations can be inferred in the long-term completion of educational and cultural initiatives and programs. These gaps in cooperation between institutions mean, in the medium and long term, a series of vulnerabilities for the individual, but also for society.

How does your library collaborate with local schools, educational institutions and youth organizations to support learning, education and community identity development among younger generations?

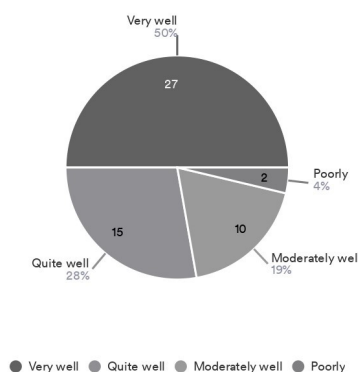


Figure 11. Library's cooperation with local institutions²

In the end, subjects were asked about their views on the importance of the role of libraries in providing access to information and supporting lifelong learning for users of all ages.

¹ *Idem*

² *Idem*

In your opinion, how important is the role of libraries in providing access to information and supporting lifelong learning for users of all ages?

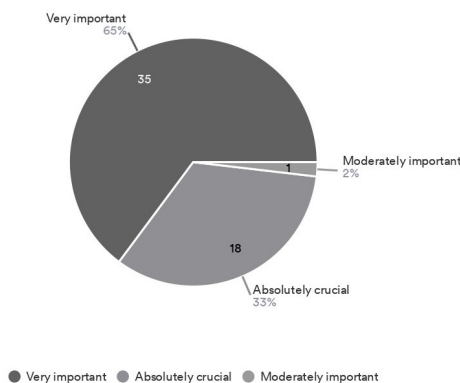


Figure 12. The role of libraries in providing access to information¹

We can conclude that 98% of the subjects attach substantial importance to shaping the public libraries as mechanisms that address all age groups which aim a lasting link between library resources, the user and knowledge. Even if 2% of the subjects do not consider the role of the library important in providing lifelong learning, the value of public libraries to the community is substantial.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Culture is one of the variables individuals and society exploit to ensure affirmation. Each individual attaches particular importance to a set of characteristics with which it identifies, and manifests then manifest a specific cultural identity. Starting from this set of distinct characteristics, groups begin to either relate or compete. It means growth, community development, while competition leads to the identification of a series of risks and threats to the survival of the individuals and the elements that define them. Thus, the concept of security becomes an umbrella to how the individual lives, communicates, develops himself and how it projects them to society. Societal security's cultural patterns emphasize a branch of security that focuses on the concept of individuals' identity and the communities they belong to. Libraries are essential factors in securing and perpetuating identity factors in communities, as they are usually mirrors of their realities. The traditional mission of public libraries has been to provide opportunities for all to know and interact with the world ideas, and over time it has become a catalyst for learning about the history of the individual: where they come from and where they are going to. Access to information, educating groups through books and direct interaction have led, over time, to the idea that libraries are spaces of dialogue, safe spaces of expression that give democracy a voice, apply it and offer equal opportunities to all who cross the threshold of the institution, as far as possible. The issue is the small number of libraries globally. Other impediments may arise from geographical space, material resources and human resources, which make it difficult to bring knowledge and culture to the beneficiaries. In Romania, public libraries that are still active in the service of the community aim to reconnect with the community and the groups that make it up, becoming factors of societal security through cultural initiatives carried out within the library. Librarians have put new life into the old one - they have integrated technology into traditional library activities and digitally transferred elements of cultural identity in a playful way to people of all ages.

Libraries can truly assume their fundamental role in preserving the cultural identity of the communities they serve, because the library's services are now adapted to acknowledge and promote values and local heritage. They adapt to the group needs they interact with and look for innovative ways to make libraries perceived as safe spaces for meeting and growing future citizens. In this way, most librarians educate themselves first, enhance the skills needed by the contemporary and set in motion initiatives to promote the societal security, resilience, and confidence

¹ *Idem*

that is at the heart of the foundation of personal progress. Librarians facilitate dialogue with other cultural institutions, organizations and local authorities to create new partnerships and collaboration. Overall, the opening to the digital space has brought new lines of affirmation and funding for libraries, such as the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Fund programs. But there is reluctance and barriers to a deeper integration of modern technology with the traditional library's mission, which over time means gaps between the social capital of the communities concerned. Public libraries are continuously transforming, with many seeking to respond to the needs of users in ways that are as authentic as possible, collaborations and opportunities that rekindle the interest of citizens of all ages to find themselves, learn about their past and grow. Public authorities should pay even greater attention to these institutions, precisely because libraries are the past and the future at the same time. And, more recently, these are social hubs that bring communities together.

Based on the aforementioned considerations, librarians can support strengthening the link with the cultural heritage of the community through developing a heritage collection at the library, in cases where local heritage items such as old photographs, documents, local newspapers, audio and video recordings, folk costumes, icons, postcards, coins or even stamps cannot be properly preserved and there is a risk of degradation or destruction (especially in rural communities, where based on the loss of older generations, local heritage items are neglected). Librarians have the knowledge and skills to manage heritage objects, are respected in the community, and can be entrusted with such objects. By collecting these materials, the library becomes a custodian of local memory, giving back to the community what has been given to it and being able to enhance this local treasure. Library collections can be presented as online museum exhibitions, which can increase their visibility and increase access to heritage items. Then, an important aspect is related to connecting the community's generations through "modern sittings", where seniors are invited to share stories, traditions and personal experiences.

Nowadays, these stories can be saved in written or electronic form, which helps individuals learn about local history and the particularities of the area, experienced in an original way by each subject. In ethnically diverse communities, libraries can reinforce the need for an inclusive space for every citizen, in a setting that presents the diversity of the local community in a broad geographic and historical framework. Another important aspect to follow is that related to collaborations with other NGOs and institutions as well as attracting funding. More precisely, it is important to pursue opportunities in order to attract funds, development of projects and collaborations with non-governmental organizations or other national and international cultural institutions or entities, that would allow for recurrent education of librarians on how to draw community attention to the subject and to develop plans and strategies that can be implemented at community level. And last but not least, it would be useful to consider expanding the network of libraries with the national chain of museums and to elaborate learning techniques that would enable the librarian to preserve local heritage and also to provide the funding and tools for self-preservation.

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THE WALL AS MARKER OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AT THE US-MEXICO BORDER*

Abstract:	<i>In an article from 2018, Iver B. Neumann analyzes the role of monuments in the construction and representation of the Other. Neumann observes that from the Bronze Age and up to the Second World War, monuments would display the Other either as absent, (literally) dead, or subjugated. While constructions celebrating the conquerors may be passé, one type of monument that doubles as an identity marker not only persists but thrives. The wall is alive and well. In America, the U.S.-Mexico border wall – either in practice or in discourse – represents a veritable battleground where identity is cast in supremacist terms and the alterities search for legitimacy. What sets walls apart from other classes of monuments is found in their utilitarian function, that creates normative conditions whereby the evolution or devolution of the Selves' relation to the Other is codified at the policy level to serve exclusionary designs. The present article analyzes how the construction of a walling in / out enterprise generates identities and assigns them value based on their proximity to the border, using as a case-study the wall at the border between the United States and Mexico. For this purpose, the article examines the practices of monumentalization outlined by Neumann and applies them to the U.S. border. In this sense, the article provides a historical overview of the border in order to illustrate that current developments, however paroxysmic, are not isolated only to the Trump Administration's policy on immigration but are part of a long-standing policy approach adopted by both Republican and Democratic administrations that, inadvertently, contributed to the present crisis.</i>
Keywords:	Alterity; identity; Nogales; practices of monumentalization; Trump administration; U.S. immigration policy; U.S.-Mexico border wall
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*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
[...]
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me
Emma Lazarus, The New Colossus (1883)*

* Author's note: parts of this study were previously featured during the 2018 RAAS-Fulbright Conference – Ideology, Identity, and the US: Crossroads, Freeways, Collisions, in the presentation titled "Walls and Specters of Alterity: Analyzing the Construction of Identity in the American Contemporary Monumentalization Subgenre of Wall Building" and the 2019 International Visual Methods Conference 6 – Crafting a Visual Plot, in the presentation titled *A Big, Beautiful Door in the Middle of the Wall. Analyzing Visual Depictions of Failed Security Constructions*.

Introduction

In the lead up to Donald Trump's first ascent to public office, the world was premised on a global polity of open borders and diminished barriers, presenting itself as a space where sovereignty had become fragmented and fluid, in which states ceded sovereignty freely and without (too many) reservations. A world without borders was beginning to take shape in the early '90s and the promise of further freedoms seemed close to fruition, however the mirage of a globalized world devoid of barriers did not last long. Freedom of circulation is not universal after all, but conditional, it comes with restrictions that clash with the frameworks of exile that exist in parallel, as a byproduct of wars, climate change, or poor governance. As such, the clash is equally physical as it is symbolic, counterposing the familiar Self with the uncanny Other, which is represented by the figure of the migrant. While the Selves embrace cosmopolitan worldviews – which profess that every person belongs to a universal community – these are not matched by cosmopolitan policies. This is why the Others' attempt to partake in the Selves's projected prosperity, triggers reactions of rejection, both rhetorically and on the ground¹.

Walls, barriers, and other fences have been encroaching upon the borderlands at an accelerated pace in the last thirty years. Currently, there are over seventy such constructions in place with more being constructed worldwide². David B. Carter and Paul Poast have noted “that over 50 percent of border walls built in the last two centuries were built in the post-Cold War era”³. In this context, the wall seemingly re-emerges as a memento from a bygone era which focused on symbols of power and separation. This is indicative of the fact that the current walling practices are neither new developments, nor outliers, but part of a long-standing practice that accompanies identity constructions. While one can find the rationales and contingencies behind each construction, the size and reach of these walling events are evocative of a narrative fueled by the reawakened specters of nationalism and intolerance, that is as much about security, as it is about identity and the separation of Self from the Other.

Using as a case-study the border wall between the United States and Mexico, this article argues that the contemporary narrative on walls as physical barriers is not designed to respond only to security imperatives but is linked to a process of identity construction that transcends the present moment. The case-study illustrates how this process did not begin with the Trump administration, but how instead it was built over decades, in the policies pursued by multiple US administrations, that seamlessly cross the ideological divide between the Republican and the Democratic Parties. The wall, therefore, is reified as a persistent and reiterative ideological monument, long after it has stopped fulfilling its intended security purpose. At its center, the research approach is based on Iver B. Neumann's article *Halting Time: Monuments to Alterity*, published in “Millennium: Journal of International Studies”, in 2018⁴. By reviewing a variety of monuments, Neumann wanted to determine how monuments construct and perform Otherness: “We have in monuments what seems to be a paradigmatic case of the ways in which a political Self gains its identity by marking a difference to Others, for the basic boundary markers are walls, fences, portals”⁵. Drawing from border studies, the analysis adopts a monumentalization framework to examine how identities are formed and reformed on the borderland, as a space where the wall enacts policies of separation and regimes of segregation in both its material and immaterial dimension, as a physical wall, as well as a symbolic / virtual wall. The monumentalization of the wall refers, therefore, to the process whereby the object is imbued with symbolic meaning for the purpose of memorializing a particular homogeneous polity, real or imagined. This is echoed in President Trump's words when he refers to the imperative of building a wall that is “impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful”⁶.

¹ Jacques Billeaud, *Volunteer Arrested After Border Agents Seen Dumping Water*, “Associated Press”, 23 January 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/ee090a053cb74c18be78303de370c9f> (20.02.2025)

² Kim Hjelmggaard, *from 7 to 77: There's Been an Explosion in Building Border Walls Since World War II*, “USA Today”, 24 May 2018, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/05/24/border-walls-berlin-wall-donald-trump-wall/553250002/> (20.02.2025)

³ David B. Carter, Paul Poast, *Why Do States Build Walls? Political Economy, Security, and Border Stability*, “Journal of Conflict Resolution”, Vol. 61, No. 2, February 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002715596776> (20.01.2025), p. 263

⁴ Iver B. Neumann, *Halting Time: Monuments to Alterity*, “Millennium: Journal of International Studies”, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829818771339> (20.02.2025), pp. 331-351

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 336

⁶ Nolan D. McCaskill, *Trump promises wall and massive deportation program*, “Politico”, 31 August 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-immigration-address-arizona-227612> (21.02.2025)

The article is also informed by the concept of a “border memoryscape”. Paul Basu describes the “memoryscape” as “a multiplicity of different forms of remembering”¹ and what is the border if not a space to remember, “a memory whose survival is guaranteed by individual and collective memories”², where competing forces are intersecting in a said moment³. In combining the two approaches – the wall as a memorialization device of an eminently statist order and the border as a memory cape, the article suggests that the wall should be seen as a monumentalizing dispositif⁴ which, in effect, does very little to mitigate the border issues, compounding them instead. Where it thrives though is in generating a regime of control over the border premised on the delegitimization of the Other through exclusionary practices.

Literature Review

Walls have generally been designed with the intention to separate, to keep apart, to insulate. Rarer are the instances where walls are built to keep people in, like in the case of the Berlin Wall whose fall was at that time tantamount with the end of history. How well do these walls fulfill this function is a matter of debate since walls have always been associated with a certain performative imagery: they must be durable, steep, unascendable – indomitable monuments. Their imposing presence prescribes an interdiction, yet, they can always be circumvented, subverted, disrupted. They are not a deterrent in and of themselves⁵. In developing a monumentalization framework, the analysis ascertains that the wall stops being just a security installation – a structure fulfilling a perfunctory purpose – and becomes something more. At what point does it metamorphosize from a physical wall into a symbolic monument? Or does it bear the semblance of one from the very first boundary marker? Of the US-Mexico border wall, Ronald Rael remarks that: “The wall itself is a monumental construct. Long after the optimistic possibility of its removal, evidence of the wall’s presence will remain in the environmental, genetic, cultural, topographical, geological, and ecological transformation it has created”⁶. Past decades’ wall-building spree on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere – from President Trump’s renewed efforts to (re)build the wall to the EU Member States’ thousands of kilometers of border walls and fences that resulted from the botched attempt at mitigating the mid-2010s refugee crisis – has attracted various types of research endeavors on this topic.

David Morley argues that as the world is *destabilized* and *detrterritorialized*, a tension manifests physically stemming from the “spaces of belonging (and identity)” [...] being encroached by the transnational⁷. Consequently, an effect of “reterritorialization” occurs “whereby borders and boundaries of various sorts are becoming more, rather than less, strongly marked”⁸. Consequently, the wall will act as a manifestation of the contemporary global environment. Elisabeth Vallet’s edited volume on *Borders, Fences and Walls. State of Insecurity* (2016) examines “the reterritorialization effected by border walls”, how they create new security regimes

¹ Paul Basu, “Memoryscapes and Multi-Sited Methods”, in Emily Keightley, Michael Pickering (Eds.), *Research Methods for Memory Studies*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2013, p. 116

² Mireille Rosello, Stephen F. Wolfe, “Introduction”, in Johan Schimanski, Stephen F. Wolfe, *Border Aesthetics. Concepts and Intersections*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2019, p. 5

³ Kendall R. Phillips, G. Mitchell Reyes, “Introduction: Surveying Global Memoryscapes: The Shifting Terrain of Public Memory”, in Kendall R. Phillips, G. Mitchell Reyes (Eds.), *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age*, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2011, p. 13

⁴ The dispositif should be understood in the Foucauldian sense, as an “ensemble of discursive and non-discursive elements” (Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh”, in Colin Gordon (Ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings (1972–1977)*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1980, p. 194

⁵ As Janet Napolitano, former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security under President Obama, observed: “Show me a 50-foot wall, and I’ll show you a 51-foot ladder”. Kevin Schaul, Samuel Granados, *5 Challenges Trump May Face Building a Border Wall*, “The Washington Post”, 25 January 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/challenges-building-border-wall/> (21.02.2025)

⁶ Ronald Rael, “Recuerdos / Souvernirs: A Nuevo Grand Tour”, in Ronald Rael (Ed.), *Borderwall as Architecture. A Manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2017, p. 150

⁷ David Morley, *Belongings. Place, space and identity in a mediated world*, “European Journal of Cultural Studies”, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2001, p. 425, <https://doi.org/10.1177/136754940100400>

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 427

where “legal and political instruments are being mustered to support ever stricter control over borders”¹. For Claudio Minca and Alexandra Rijke, the European states’ knee-jerk reflex to set up walls is framed along the lines “of an immunity-seeking machine, that may not be directly related to its actual *effectiveness* and may, instead, be connected to a social imaginary”². Slesinger examines “the neat dichotomy between one’s own identity and a foreign and dangerous ‘Other’”, by looking at the border between Israel and Lebanon where he regards “the borderland as a heterotopic space, rather than perceiving the border as a fixed line, and by examining the everyday “micro-political” operations and materialities that inhabitants of the border region perform and experience”³.

In *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (2010), Wendy Brown argues that “what we have come to call a globalized world harbors fundamental tension between opening and barricading, fusion and partition, erasure and reinscription”⁴. The form through which these tensions manifest themselves is defined both as a tendency towards “increasingly liberalized borders” between Selves and Others, and as a Sisyphean effort devoted to “border fortification”⁵. Brown describes how rampant the phenomenon of wall-building is by providing a small census of the walls and fences existing in the present: from post-apartheid South Africa to Saudi Arabia and its attempt to wall in the entire country; India walling out Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma while also walling in Kashmir, to Uzbekistan building a fence with Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001, while at the same time also being fenced out by Turkmenistan; to the “concrete and steel border wall” built in a cooperative effort between Thailand and Malaysia; to the wall between Egypt and Gaza to the walling out of Pakistan by Iran⁶. All these instances are representative of the wall as a tool of separation and a symbol of division.

The proliferation of walls has multiple causes, with security and economy⁷ remaining the two most dominant ones. During the 2015 refugee crisis, this phenomenon was witnessed in multiple European countries – by both Members and non-Members of the European Union (EU)⁸. Miles upon miles of border fences were erected to prevent people from entering and they remained in place even when there were no more people attempting to cross the border. In some cases, like in the Norwegian town of Kirkenes, the government decided to build a wall after the refugees / migrants had already stopped using that route⁹. This shows us that the walls are not built solely to perform their security purpose, they are not purely functional, but also symbolic, fulfilling their monumentalization potential, that creates identity domains, separating the Self from Other. The proliferation does not necessarily breed effectiveness, as Nick Buxton explains: “You can build more and more walls until you’re a completely walled society, but all you’re doing is making it more and more dangerous. People will find ways to cross walls”¹⁰.

A similar sentiment is shared by Minca and Rijke who note that while: “these new walls consist[...] of intricate combinations of visible techniques – such as bricks, chain link fences, barbed wire – and less visible ones – such as infrared camera and underground sensors – in practice they often remain porous and relatively unsuccessful in fully controlling the movement of such real-and-imagined-enemy-others”¹¹. Minca and Rijke explain that while the walls seal off the native population from foreign contaminants, they “at the same time keep[...] that very

¹ Elisabeth Vallet, “Introduction”, in Elisabeth Vallet (Ed.), *Borders, Fences and Walls: State of Insecurity?*, Ashgate, Surrey, 2014, p. 3

² Claudio Minca, Alexandra Rijke, “Walls! Walls! Walls!”, *Society & Space*, April 2017, <https://societyandspace.org/2017/04/18/walls-walls-walls/> (20.02.2025); Andrea Mubi Brighenti, Mattias Kärrholm, “Introduction: the life of walls – in urban, spatial and political theory”, in Andrea Mubi Brighenti, Mattias Kärrholm (Eds.), *Urban Walls. Political and Cultural Meanings of Vertical Structures and Surfaces*, Routledge, New York, 2019, p. 10

³ Ian Slesinger, *Alterity, Security and Everyday Geopolitics at Israel’s Border with Lebanon*, “Journal of Borderland Studies”, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2016, p. 123, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2015.1124246> (21.02.2025)

⁴ Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Zone Books, New York, 2010, p. 7

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 8, p. 19

⁷ David B. Carter, Paul Poast, *Op. cit.*

⁸ Rareș-Alexandru Văscan, *The European Discourse on Migration: Between Securitization and Desecuritization (2019-2021)*, “Studia Securitatis Journal”, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2024, pp. 74-85, <https://magazines.ulbsibiu.ro/studiasecuritatis/wp-content/uploads/STUDIA-SECURITATIS-No.-1-2024-74-85-1.pdf> (21.02.2025)

⁹ Laura Markham, *If These Walls Could Talk. The strange history of our futile border fortifications*, “Harper’s Magazine”, March 2018, <https://harpers.org/archive/2018/03/if-these-walls-could-talk/> (21.02.2025)

¹⁰ Palko Karasz, *Op. cit.*

¹¹ Claudio Minca, Alexandra Rijke, *Op. cit.*

possibility open so that more migrants will try to go through and... more walls will have to be built and managed by increasing human and non-human surveillance assemblages”¹. This ever-expanding wall becomes an ideological instrument serving the process of identity construction, creating a clear demarcation between the Self and Other, where the Other is framed as a subaltern or subordinate, and, always, in a subservient position. On this backdrop, the present article uses the lens of monumentalization to develop a framework illustrating how the walls shape the clash between identities and alterities, as well as the way in which they act as conduits for erasure and forgetting.

Conceptual Framework

The present analysis examines how walls construct and perform Otherness by applying a framework proposed by Iver B. Neumann, in the article *Halting Time: Monuments to Alterity*. Neumann suggests that, historically, until the end of the Second World War, there had been three main monumentalizing practices in which the Self has been constructed². The three prototypes in which the Other was halted in time are: “as visual absence, as dead and as subjugated”³. Neumann remarks: “The first, which had already emerged during the Neolithic, was the megalith monument, which celebrates the Self and excludes the Other by visual absence only. During the Bronze Age, it was joined by two others: The Eurasian Steppe practice of piling skulls in pyramids to represent the Other as dead, and the Egyptian and later Roman practice of depicting the Other as subjugated”⁴. Post-World War Two, a fourth way that immortalizes and *damns* the Other emerges where the Other stands for “a previous incarnation of the Self”⁵.

Where walls are concerned, Neumann explains that they depict otherness “as a visual absence” and “given that the Other is always there, the Other’s visual absence amounts to a negation of the Other’s very being”⁶. They are removed from our sight and kept at a distance. Walls, Neumann argues: “are definitely boundary-drawing structures that put an easily visible mark on a landscape”, in doing so, they enact a polity given that “the territory is constitutive of states”⁷. Or in the words of President Trump: “[F]or the people that say no wall, if you didn’t have walls over here, you wouldn’t even have a country”⁸.

In his analysis, Neumann employs the notion of *longue durée temporality* to assess “the longest possible history and a maximum number of heterogeneous polities”⁹. The region from which he retrieves this taxonomical framework of Otherness is Western Eurasia. Neumann argues that while the triumphal monumentalizing practices have been a constant throughout history, the Second World War broke with this binary cycle of immortalizing victors and losers and brought to the forefront “the futility of freezing a specific constellation between Self and Other”¹⁰. Monuments represent a break from temporality: they isolate one particular poignant moment in time and encase it in a distinctive medium for preservation purposes. As such “monuments are constitutive of a polity’s identity by commemorating the Self in a specific constellation with its constitutive Others”, where the Self has the resources to institutionalize hierarchy¹¹. Consequently, a monument is a structure that captures the moment that constituted the polity¹² and in building the wall, we try to reconfirm this formative state.

Triumphal monumentalization practices became obsolete because there has been a reconsidering on the part of the Selves with regards to “the futility of celebrating the Other’s permanent subordination”¹³. In developing this argument, Neumann draws on the theorization of historical sociologist, Norbert Elias who argues that in so far as

¹ *Idem*. On this topic: Claudio Minca, Alexandra Rijke, “Walls, Walling and the Immunitarian Imperative”, in Andrea Mubi Brighenti, Mattias Kärholm (Eds.), *Op. cit.*, pp. 79-93

² Iver B. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 331

³ *Idem*

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 348

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 331

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 341

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 348

⁸ Elisha Brown, *Trump in California Says ‘You Wouldn’t Even Have a Country’ Without Border Wall*, “The Daily Beast”, 13 March 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/trump-in-california-says-you-wouldnt-even-have-a-country-without-border-wall> (22.02.2025)

⁹ Iver B. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 333

¹⁰ *Idem*

¹¹ *Idem*

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 334

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 350

civilizations evolve, there comes a moment defined by the “advance in the frontier of shame and the threshold of repugnance”¹. However, in the post-Second World War period, the Cold War’s externalized theaters of the bipolar confrontation reflected an environment where the goal was one of annihilation and erasure. If the goal is to erase, a monument, then, defeats this purpose. According to Neumann, “the key may lie in the word celebration: what has changed a little may not be practices as such, but the way in which these practices are made a spectacle of”², thus highlighting, once again, the symbolic function of the wall.

This conception is predicated on the idea that such displays of restraint in the Selves’ depictions of the Other would also influence foreign policy: “refraining from boosting the identity of the Self by monumentalizing a vanquished or dead Other, should make it somewhat harder to mobilize violence against a certain Other”³. In practice, this prescription seldom materializes given that practices crossing into the realm of taboos, do not disappear, instead, they find other outlets of expression. This, in turn, becomes institutionalized if no fundamental changes are brought to the framework that enabled the practice in the first place. In paraphrasing from Foucault’s seminal work, *Discipline and Punish*, Neumann warns that “the ending of one kind of violence simply opens the field for another to emerge”⁴. The wall exhibits such a form of violence given that it acts as an instrument to demarcate between Self and Other, whereby to function as a deterrent and keep the Other away, it has to punish the trespassers, as will be shown in the subsequent sections.

While the practices of depicting a subjugated Other in stone or other mediums are outdated, the instinct has not been fully repressed. Instead, these practices repurpose the walls to operate outside their utilitarian purpose, as symbolic markers of power and identity. The walls of today attempt to provide a break with temporality, but in safeguarding a certain space in the present moment, they call back to a more homogeneous past. Or if homogeneity was never there to begin with, they try to construct it and put it in the service of an existent, dominant community. The wall then does not celebrate a *status quo*, but attempts to preserve a crumbling one, by stitching it together with mortar and barb wire. In this symbolic act of imposing a different temporality, irrespective of how vulnerable or infallible it is, the wall acts as a *damnatio memoriae* dispositif, seeking to erase the Other and memorialize the Self.

The walls remove or obscure the Others from the Selves’ line of sight, but as rhetorical devices, they also conceal the Selves’ share of responsibility. It is far easier to conjure an image that delegitimizes the Other than to acknowledge that the policies pursued by the Selves create the very conditions of delegitimization. But if the responsibility is obfuscated, then the otherizing projections – economic (*the Others want to take the Selves’ jobs, benefits*) social (*the Others seek to disrupt the Selves’ routines*), or security-based (*the Others pose a security risk*) – can be more easily rationalized and will resonate with various segments of the public⁵, conditioned to see themselves as “contemporary manifestations of exceptionalism” and the Other as something harmful, to be wary of⁶. The Other’s erasure contributes to the amorphous nature of the contemporary threats, rooted in a rhetorical mechanism in which they are presumed to be illegitimate. The wall, therefore, stands as a confirmation and a limitation. The loop is now closed: the wall is a temporary stopgap that tries (and fails) to conceal one side from the other, but at the same time, it is a constant reminder that there is some fluid, non-conventional, asymmetrical, anonymous, stateless, *borderless* entity, out there on the borderland, that wants in. Even if this entity does not actively try to cause the Selves harm, it is still perceived as being detrimental to the Selves well-being.

In this context, the wall represents a limitation because the policies that enact it tend to disregard the chain of

¹ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994, p. 114

² *Idem*

³ Iver B. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 350

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 351; Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, New York, 1979

⁵ For example, the case of the civilian volunteer-based Minuteman Civil Defense Corps patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent illegal crossings. Douzet has analyzed how, in turn, a group like the Minutemen has been instrumental in fermenting animosities and “building up popular pressure for immigration reform [...] in a context of heightened fear about national security”. Frédéric Douzet, *The Minutemen and Anti-immigration Attitudes in California*, “European Journal of American Studies”, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2009, article 2, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.7655> (22.02.2025)

⁶ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *States of Exception on the Mexico-U.S. Border: Security, “Decisions,” and Civilian Border Patrols*, “International Political Sociology”, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2007, p. 113, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2007.00008.x> (22.02.2025)

causality that produces it in the first place. Any remedial measures to normalize relations between the Selves and the Others will be palliative and vulnerable to executive decisions. For example, in the case of President Trump, he acted to remove such measures altogether (like those concerning the asylum and immigration policies that bypassed congressional approval and were taken at the level of government agencies or through executive orders)¹. The wall, then, is both powerful and powerless. For those who use it as a shorthand for discriminatory rhetoric, we can see how the image of the wall retains some of the triumphal reflexes of the monumentalization that Neumann invokes and President Trump evoked in his speeches “a great wall on our southern border”; “a wall with a very big, very beautiful door”². At the same time, the wall reveals an underlying vulnerability and instability, or, as Rodney remarks, “[a] theatrical expression of insecurity”³. There is an interplay between the Self and Other and their relation to power, with the former casting itself as both powerful and powerless and the latter holding power over the Self, by physically or symbolically projecting themselves over the other side of the border.

The Wall at the US-Mexico Border: Brief Overview of the Bipartisan Approach to Border Politics

In the United States, wall politics may ebb and flow depending on the political climate⁴, but the depreciated condition of the Other remains a constant, their status depending on political whims rather than on inviolable institutional mechanisms. A report of the Physicians for Human Rights from 2019 found that over the course of the last three decades, both Republican and Democratic administrations implemented “border enforcement strategies that have led to the deaths or injuries of a growing number of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border”⁵. The institutions and agencies mandated to ensure border security or to deport undocumented migrants have resorted to physical abuse against the immigrant Other, both on the borderland where the exceptional status of the frontier facilitates and expedites rights violations and on the mainland itself. Judith Ann Warner notes that these are patterns of “human rights abuses under international law and violations of the U.S. Constitution”⁶. The unlawful treatment of immigrants ranges from: “illegal search of people and property” to “verbal, psychological, and physical violence”⁷. Other instances of abuse include: denying access to food and water, medical care, and torture. On the low end of this spectrum of violence, we find “verbal abuse and threats”, humiliation, and intimidation, while, on the opposing end, instances of “assault, battery, and [even] murder” have also been recorded⁸. This difference in treatment is indicative of the fact that the separation between the Self and Other relies on the dehumanization of the Other to enact exclusionary policies.

In the case of US border politics, the undocumented immigrant is framed as an illegitimate body who becomes further delegitimized depending on their proximity to the border. In this sense, we can recall Victor Konrad distinction between *citizen* and *subject*: “certain citizens” are privileged while “those deemed less worthy of full rights” are othered⁹. These frameworks of otherization refer to “a process of constructing and representing the

¹ Amanda Holpuch, How Trump’s ‘Invisible Wall’ Policies Have Already Curbed Immigration, “The Guardian”, 15 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jan/15/invisible-wall-trump-policies-have-curbed-immigration>, (22.02.2025); Sarah Pierce, Jessica Bolter, Andrej Selee, *U.S. Immigration Policy Under Trump. Deep Changes and Lasting Impacts*, “Transatlantic Council on Migration”, Washington, D.C., July 2018, pp. 7-9, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/us-immigration-policy-trump-deep-changes-impacts> (22.02.2025)

² Ron Nixon, Linda Qiu, *Trump’s Evolving Words on the Wall*, “The New York Times”, 18 January 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/18/us/politics/trump-border-wall-immigration.html> (23.02.2025)

³ Lee Rodney, *Looking Beyond Borderlines. North America’s Frontier Imagination*, Routledge, New York, 2017, p. 83

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ Kathryn Hampton, *Zero Protection: How U.S. Border Enforcement Harms Migrant Safety and Health*, “Physicians for Human Rights”, 10 January 2019, <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/zero-protection-how-u-s-border-enforcement-harms-migrant-safety-and-health/> (27.02.2025)

⁶ Judith Ann Warner, *U.S. Border Security. A Reference Handbook*, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, 2010, p. 88

⁷ *Idem*

⁸ *Idem*

⁹ Victor Konrad, “Borders, Bordered Lands and Borderlands: Geographical States of Insecurity between Canada and the United States and the Impacts of Security Primacy”, in Elisabeth Vallet (Ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 96

“other” in negative or inferior terms to justify discrimination, exclusion, or even hostility toward them”¹. Through these frameworks, one creates conditions of exception that, over time, become entrenched in US politics. In an Agambian understanding (“no-man’s land between public law and political fact, [...] between juridical order and life”²), the security apparatus asserts “the power to arrange the fate of any persons not fitting an ideal type”³, dispensing punitive measures haphazardly, with little regard for the human toll.

Previous administrations from Nixon onwards have all invoked the need to secure the border and though there are many strategies that go into realizing this objective, some form of visible fortification always comes into play. This was true for all three of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. In Texas (El Paso), Arizona (Nogales), and California (San Diego), Bill Clinton’s Operation Hold the Line (1993), Operation Safeguard, and Operation Gatekeeper (1994) were three initiatives that, according to Tony Payan, represented “a definite turn in the war against undocumented migration on the border and gave it its distinctive look today”⁴ – what President Clinton described as the “get-tough policy”⁵. The three operations authorized the construction of fences and Operation Gatekeeper was the origin point of the *fence* as it is known today. At that time, a 23 km / 14-mile-long wall was built which stretched all the way to the Pacific Ocean. According to Joanna Griffin, Operation Gatekeeper “expanded existing structures to keep out illegal immigrants” and introduced “multi-tiered fencing”⁶. Armando Navarro describes that this operation spearheaded the “prevention through deterrence” strategy and involved “the construction of a Berlin-type iron curtain”⁷. These policies draw from a memoryscape where the Self is a monopolizing force at the border, erecting monuments dedicated to physical and symbolic separation from the Other.

In October 2006, President George W. Bush signed the Secure Fence Act which allotted 1.2 billion dollars to the construction of a security barrier on the border, approximately 1 000 km long (the equivalent of 650 – 700 miles)⁸. By January 2009, departing Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff stated that at the end of President Bush’ second term, the fencing constructions covered “580 miles of the 2,000-mile border, short of the planned 661 miles”⁹. The Bush administration also had designs for a *virtual wall*, advanced under the Secure Border Initiative Network, that involved the use of surveillance technologies. The *smart wall* was intended to compliment the physical barrier however it proved to be cost ineffective, and the Obama administration put an end to it. In the intersection between virtual and material, we can see an interplay between the utilitarian and performative dimensions of the wall: no matter how far it stretches, it will always be incomplete, hence the need to constantly reinforce it and upgrade it.

In 2010, President Obama put the construction of the wall on the Southern border on hold due to a funding shortage¹⁰, in parallel, however, he further enabled and enacted strict border and immigration measures¹¹.

¹ Raquel Recuero, Felipe Soares, ““How Does the Other Half Tweet?”: Analyzing the Construction of “Otherness” During the 2022 Brazilian Presidential Campaign”, in Alexandre Novais, Rogério Christofolletti (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook on Right-Wing Populism and Otherness in Global Perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2025, p. 108.

² Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005, p. 1

³ Edward S. Casey, Mary Watkins, *Up Against the Wall. Re-Imagining the U.S.-Mexico Border*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2014, p. 52

⁴ Tony Payan, *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars. Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security (Second Edition)*, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, 2016., p. 113

⁵ Clinton, William J., “Remarks on the Immigration Policy Initiative and an Exchange with Reporters (February 7, 1995)”, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States – William J. Clinton – 1995 (In Two Books) – Book I – January 1 to June 30, 1995*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1996, p. 167

⁶ Joanna Griffin, “Operation Gatekeeper”, in Lee Stacy (project editor), *Mexico and the United States. Volume I*, Marshall Cavendish, New York, 2003, p. 607

⁷ Armando Navarro, *The Immigration Crisis. Nativism, Armed Vigilantism, and the Rise of a Countervailing Movement*, AltaMira Press, Lanham, 2009, p. 129

⁸ Said Saddiki, “Border Fences as an Anti-Immigration Device: A Comparative View of American and Spanish Policies”, in Elisabeth Vallet (Ed.), *Op. cit.*, p. 183

⁹ Randal C. Archibold, *U.S. Plans Border ‘Surge’ Against Any Drug Wars*, “The New York Times”, 7 January 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/08/us/08chertoff.html> (28.02.2025)

¹⁰ William A. Callahan, *Op. cit.*, p. 472

Meanwhile, his policy decisions attracted the ire of the conservatives¹. In 2011, President Obama declared that: “We have strengthened border security beyond what many believed was possible. [...] we now have more boots on the ground on the Southwest border than at any time in our history. The Border Patrol has 20,000 agents – more than twice as many as there were in 2004, a buildup that began under President Bush and that we have continued. They wanted a fence. Well, that fence is now basically complete. And we’ve gone further”². At that time, the Department of Homeland Security declared that the fencing project was 99.5% complete. On the ground, that percentage was reflected in 1044,46 km / 649 miles out of the 1049,29 km / 652 miles originally estimated³. The issue now stemmed from the fact that the original text of the Secure Fence Act had been amended in the years since it was adopted. Originally, it stipulated that the fence would need to be double layered (the type that allows cars to drive between the layers), but the provision was changed in 2007 at the request of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)⁴. DHS stressed that the heterogeneity of the terrain made the construction of a double-layer fence from one border to the other, unfeasible⁵. Once again, the wall needed to be retrofitted.

Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo argue that the Obama administration’s decision to further (hyper-)militarize the border, arguably played a key part in (re)legitimizing the dyadic reflexes of the previous administration: “the hyper-militarization [...] contributed to the merger of images of undocumented immigrants and terrorists in the public imagination”⁶. If these practices were adopted during a liberal presidency, it follows that a Republican administration would advance an even stricter policy. Arguably, these attempts on the part of the Democratic Party to placate the Republican opposition did not broker a compromise, as a similar scenario would be replayed during the Biden administration. Leti Volpp recounts how the Republican establishment and conservative media had repeatedly tried to delegitimize the policies pursued by President Obama, noting that the president was “rhetorically [...] thrust outside the territorial space of the United States as the “first foreign president”, and as the “first immigrant president”, as an “anti-American racist,” and as a “disloyal terrorist sympathizer”⁷. According to Volpp, when such dynamics are instituted against a perceived Other, even the president can be subjected to a process of otherization and can be placed “outside the law”, not unlike the undocumented immigrants that the Obama Administration deported in mass⁸.

¹¹ José D. Villalobos, *Promises and Human Rights: The Obama Administration on Immigrant Detention Policy Reform*, “Race, Gender & Class”, Vol. 18, No. 1-2, 2011, pp. 151-170, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23884873> (28.02.2025); Lauren Gambino, *Orphaned by Deportation: the Crisis of American Children Left Behind*, “The Guardian”, 15 October 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/oct/15/immigration-boy-reform-obama-deportations-families-separated> (27.02.2025); Dora Schriro, *Weeping in the Playtime of Others: The Obama’s Administration’s Failed Reform of ICE Family Detention Practices*, “Journal of Migration and Human Security”, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2018, pp. 452-480, <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500212> (28.02.2025); Benjamin Hart, *Trump’s Draconian Immigration Policies Highlight Obama’s Missteps*, “New York Magazine”, 20 June 2018, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/06/trumps-immigration-policies-highlight-obamas-missteps.html> (27.02.2025)

¹ Leti Volpp, *Immigrants Outside the Law: President Obama, Discretionary Executive Power, and Regime Change*, “Critical Analysis of Law”, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2016, pp. 385-404, <https://doi.org/10.33137/cal.v3i2.27264> (28.02.2025)

² Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo, *Feminism after 9/11. Women’s Bodies as Cultural and Political Threat*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2017, p. 75

³ Robert Farley, *Obama Says the Border Fence Is ‘Now Basically Complete’*, “Politifact”, 16 May 2011, <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2011/may/16/barack-obama/obama-says-border-fence-now-basically-complete/> (28.02.2025)

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ Lisa Halverstadt, *The Phantom Triple Fence: Fact Check*, “Voice of San Diego”, 15 May 2013, <https://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/05/15/the-phantom-triple-fence-fact-check/> (28.02.2025)

⁶ Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo, *Op. cit.*, p. 75

⁷ Leti Volpp, *Op. cit.*, p. 404

⁸ The Obama Administration also sought to create legal pathways through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA)

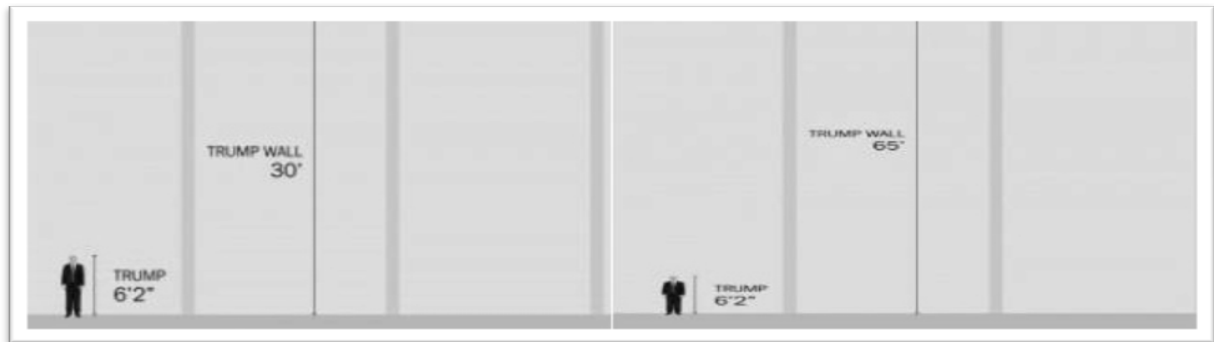


Figure 1. Various sizes of the proposed wall on the Southern border¹

During Donald Trump's first term, his vision for the wall had only timidly begun to materialize² (its height ranged anywhere from 9 meters / 30 feet on the low end to 20 meters / 65 feet on the high end) (Figure 1) and the president would repeatedly revise his assessment on the length of the wall ("We have 2,000 miles of which we only need 1,000 miles, because you have a lot of natural barriers, [...], that are extremely tough to get across. We have 1,000 miles"³). Not for the first time, the rhetorical wall superseded the pre-existent fortified border constructions laid by the previous administrations. The wall then is not only about the physical separation of Self and Other, but also a symbol of power, with each administration putting their stamp on the matter, to further emphasize the Other's unwelcome status and imprint their own vision on the issue in order to ensure the Other's continued exclusion.

If the head of state can be othered to the point that his very political legitimacy was put into question⁴, then those that by their very status are illegitimate find themselves in double jeopardy. Moderate policies will seek to pacify the immigration hardliners which, in turn, leads to hypermilitarization and to a state of "low-intensity warfare against (im)migrants"⁵. The rise of Donald Trump shows that this policy of appeasement did little to quell the discriminatory and racist reflexes involved in the construction of a White nativist identity. In this sense, Philip Kretsedemas and David C. Brotherton point out how Trump's election put the presidential office in contact with "far right identity politics – defined by inherited culture, race, nativity, and religion" and predicated on the idea that "undesirables" must be purged "as an end in itself"⁶. During President Trump's second term, this ethos was accelerated and to a degree, automated⁷.

¹ Image Source: Philip Bump, *Donald Trump's Mexico Border Wall Will Be as High as 55 feet, according to Donald Trump*, "The Washington Post", 26 February 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/02/26/so-how-high-will-donald-trumps-wall-be-an-investigation/> (05.03.2025)

² Aaron Martinez, *Mexico Border 'Bollard Wall' Construction Begins in Santa Teresa*, "El Paso Times", 10 April 2018, <https://eu.elpasotimes.com/story/news/2018/04/09/mexico-border-bollard-wall-construction-santa-teresa/498773002/> (28.02.2025)

³ Speech from 30 December 2015 quoted in Byron York, *7 Times Trump Said Wall Not Needed on All 2,000 Miles of Border*, "Washington Examiner", 18 January 2018, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/byron-york-7-times-trump-said-wall-not-needed-on-all-2-000-miles-of-border> (28.02.2025)

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 402

⁵ On this issue: Martha D. Escobar, *Captivity Beyond Prisons. Criminalization Experiences of Latina (Im)migrants*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2016, p. 55; Jose Palafox, *Opening Up Borderland Studies: A Review of US-Mexico Border Militarization Doctrine*, "Social Justice", Vol. 27, No. 3, 2000, pp. 56-72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29767231> (28.02.2025); Timothy J. Dunn, *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border (1978-1992). Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine Comes Home*, CMAS Books, Austin, 1996, pp. 19-33

⁶ Philip Kretsedemas, David C. Brotherton, "Introduction: Immigration Policy in an Age of Punishment", in Philip Kretsedemas, David C. Brotherton (Eds.), *Immigration Policy in the Age of Punishment. Detention, Deportation, and Border Control*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2017, p. 16

⁷ Rodrigo Nieto-Gomez, "Walls, Sensors and Drones Technology and Surveillance on the US-Mexico Border", in Elisabeth Vallet (Ed.), *Op. cit.*, pp. 191-290; Mitxy Mabel Meneses Gutierrez, *Researching the Mexico-US border: a tale of dataveillance*, "Journal of Global Ethics", Vol. 19, No. 3, 2023, pp. 347-358, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2023.2271005> (17.05.2025); Josiah McC. Heyman, "Constructing a virtual wall. Race and

The Nogales Section at the US-Mexico Border as an Exercise of Monumentalization

Though walls in and of themselves are insufficient in exerting exhaustive control over the borderland, the manifestation of tangibility conceals the Selves. President Trump's envisioned wall provided cover for the proliferation of walling structures and embellishments. In the city of Nogales – the largest port of entry in the state of Arizona, which borders its Mexican namesake in the state of Sonora – one such addition was a drape of razor wire over-imposed on the wall (Figure 2). The Nogales wall evolved over time: prior to the walling efforts that began in the '90s, the border was divided by a cattle fence, even a river fence (Figure 3); afterwards, it even comprised of metal landing mats from Vietnam welded together¹ (Figure 4). The Mayor Arturo Garino described how: “later on, we had a little section made out of concrete, which was more like a designer wall in the DeConcini Port of Entry to make it look nice”... “It had big squares with mesh through which you could actually see into Nogales, Sonora”² (Figure 5). The mayor continues: “after that is when we got this metal bollard fence, (made of) this big, thick steel about 4 to 6 inches (cca 1-2 meters) wide, and in some places from 18 to 20 feet (cca 5.5-6 meters) high”³ (Figure 6).

Unlike the old metal mats, the bollard pillars were considered more efficient, they required less maintenance, the transgressors could be more easily identified and intercepted and, according to the U.S. Custom and Border Patrol officials, they were also more aesthetically pleasing. Randall H. McGuire remarks that “[t]he new wall is taller, more imposing, and crueler than the old landing-mat fence. It visually dominates the border landscape even more than the old wall did”. These bars crisscross the landscape akin to those of a prison. The new barbed additions solidify this image. Only this time, the prison is mirrored inside. In Mayor Garino's view, “all this razor wire curled along the border [...] looks like we're trying to keep Americans in, not like we're trying to keep Mexicans out”. There is a power dynamic exerted on the border that disciplines not only the Other, but the Self itself, because now, the wall stands as a memento, it does not conceal, but, in fact, reveals the penalties that the body illegitimate is subjected to.

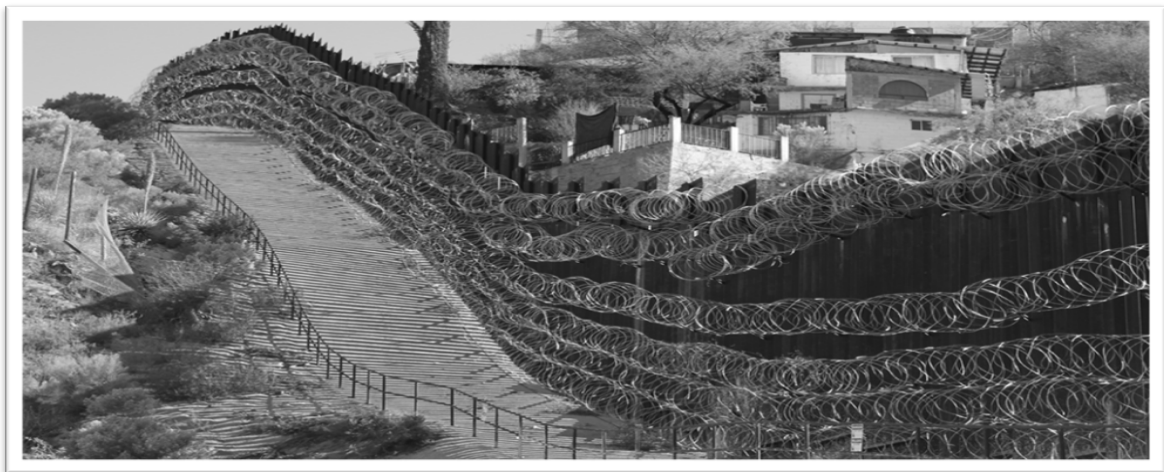


Figure 2. Nogales – The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall with the Concertina Wire Additions⁴

citizenship in U.S.-Mexico Border Policing”, in Julie A. Dowling, Jonathan Xavier Inda (Eds.), *Governing Immigration Through Crime. A Reader*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2013, pp. 99-114

¹ Mary Harris, This Border Town Mayor Wanted More Roads. What He Got Was Razor Wire, “Slate”, 12 January 2019, <https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/02/trump-border-wall-nogales-arizona-razor-wire> (28.02.2025); on this issue: Victoria Hattam, *Imperial Designs: Remembering Vietnam at the US-Mexico Border Wall*, “Memory Studies”, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2015, pp. 27-47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698015613971> (28.02.2025)

² Mary Harris, This Border Town Mayor Wanted More Roads. What He Got Was Razor Wire, “Slate”, 12 January 2019, <https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/02/trump-border-wall-nogales-arizona-razor-wire> (28.02.2025)

³ *Idem*

⁴ Image Source: Photo ID 171407938 © Rebekah Zemansky, <https://www.dreamstime.com/border-wall-eastward-nogales-arizona-us-december-looking-east-along-bollard-style-hung-barbed-wire-mexico-image171407938> (22.05.2025)



Figure 3 River Border Fence in Nogales, Arizona¹

If the wall is a marker of identity, then what does it say about the state of the Selves' identity if one way in which it can be confirmed is through the severed body parts of the Other². In 1978, early in the Carter administration, George Norris, a manager from a company contracted to build a section of the border wall, boasted that the projected wall would be *razor-sharp*, its purpose would be to draw blood, and that it would be equipped with "punched-out metal [that] would leave edges sharp enough to cut off the toes of barefoot climbers"³. President Trump's dehumanizing rhetoric was indeed a break of decorum, but his policies did not constitute a radical break with the past, as he preserved the binary dynamic of US versus Them in adversarial terms. The implementation was cruder, but the ethos behind the wall-building enterprise had been echoed before.



Figure 4. Section Built from a Steel Landing Mat. The Crosses Commemorate Those Who Died Attempting to Cross the Border⁴

¹ Image Source: Photo ID 133642444 © Linda Johnsonbaugh, <https://www.dreamstime.com/river-border-fence-separating-us-mexico-nogales-arizona-dry-river-bed-river-border-fence-road-near-image133642444> (22.05.2025)

² Jason De León, *The Land of Open Graves. Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2015, pp. 25-26

³ Greg Grandin, *How the U.S. Weaponized the Border Wall*, "The Intercept", 10 February 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/02/10/us-mexico-border-fence-history/> (05.03.2025)

⁴ Image Source: Photo by Jonathan McIntosh / Flickr, in Greg Grandin, *The Militarization of the Southern Border Is a Long-Standing American Tradition. NACLA Report on the Americas*, "NACLA", 17 January 2019, <https://nacla.org/blog/2019/01/17/militarization-southern-border-long-standing-american-tradition> (05.03.2025)

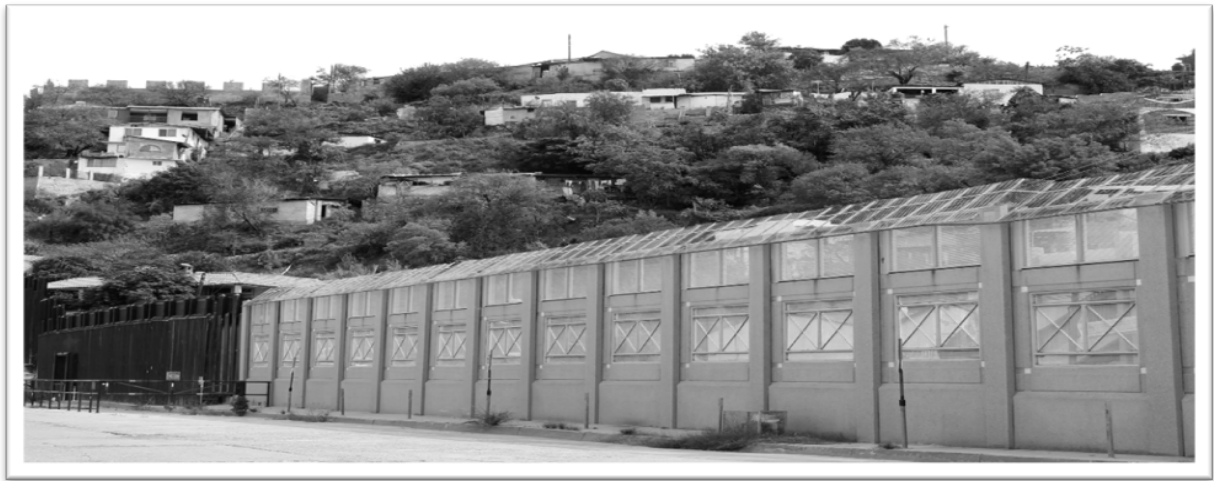
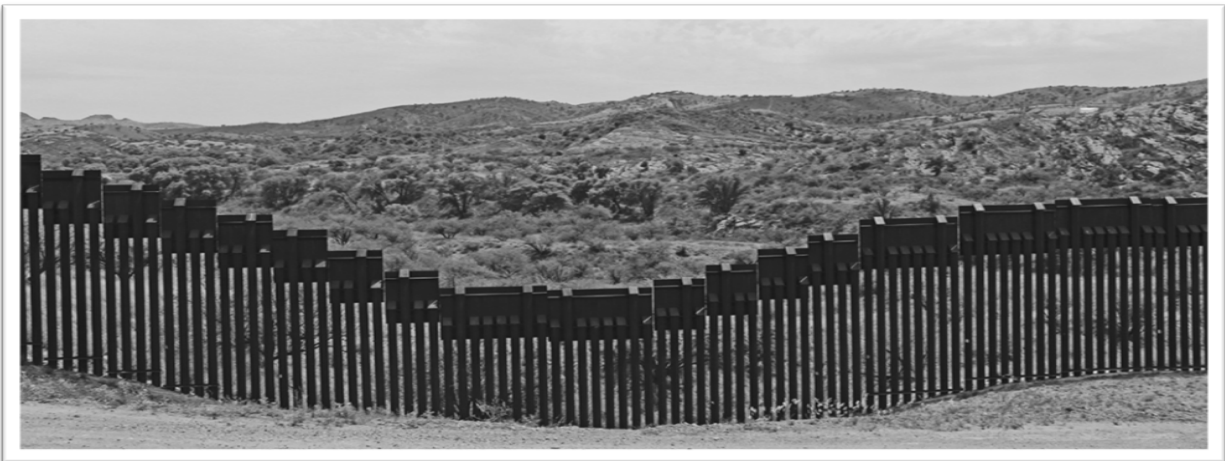


Figure 5. Section Of the Wall in Nogales, Arizona. Materials: Concrete And Mesh¹

The Nogales wall frequently harms the bodies of trespassers: it fractures bones, it shreds through skin, it severs limbs². The added concertina wire covering the inside of the wall is even more perilous. For one, it cannot be seen very well from the Mexican side, as Mayor Garino observes: “If somebody climbs it and they don’t know anything, and it’s pitch-black, that’s when something’s going to happen”³. To a certain degree these walls restore Neumann’s instantiation of the Other as dead: “The building of a monument that consists exclusively of the Other’s severed [body parts] to celebrate the Self’s victory [...] The Self celebrates itself by putting the dead Other on display”⁴. In this, the wall is both a material and ideological construct since no security imperative can justify the cruelty, but cruelty can be sublimated into something acceptable by a Self inured to these expressions of dehumanization and willing to do anything to separate Themselves from the Other.



¹ Image Source: Photo ID 53326087 © Pkorchagina, <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-wall-mexico-usa-nogales-image53326087> (22.05.2025)

² Randall H. McGuire, *Steel Walls and Picket Fences: Rematerializing the U.S.–Mexican Border in Ambos Nogales*, “American Anthropologist”, Vol. 115, No. 3, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12029>, pp. 466-480

³ Mary Harris, This Border Town Mayor Wanted More Roads. What He Got Was Razor Wire, “Slate”, 12 January 2019, <https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/02/trump-border-wall-nogales-arizona-razor-wire> (28.02.2025)

⁴ Iver B. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 342

Figure 6. Section of the Metal Bollard Fence Near Nogales, Arizona¹

While the present walls are both celebratory and perfunctory in nature, they are washed in the blood of Others. The Mayor from Nogales somberly worried that if an individual attempts to go over the wall, they might get trapped in the razor-wire contraption and the emergency services might not even be able to adequately provide first aid². Neumann explains that the dead Other is often *primary subject matter*, “occur[ing] in a sublimated form, where death is intrinsic”³. The walls are therefore macabre omens: the Other can die by wall, by man, or by nature. They may die when attempting to jump over, they may die if the Border Patrol assesses them to pose a threat⁴, they may die of exposure when attempting to circumvent the wall.

According to Neumann, monuments are characterized by *slow temporality* which enables them to reawaken *old stimuli* like those of nationalism, but the walls as can be seen in the case of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, exhibit an inhibited temporality⁵. As borders are renegotiated, walls fall, change designation, or arise where they were previously absent. In the case analyzed, the wall tries to preserve – like a fly in amber – a hegemonic order that has been demographically dislocated, but which still retains enough control to impose its own will, irrespective of costs. Instead of halting the Other in time, the wall is halting the very Self. That the Self goes to such extremes to achieve this outcome reflects an inside / outside outlook meant to preserve the Self’s claim over the homestead. The homestead embodies the Self’s home, land, and polity – projecting a memoryscape conveniently devoid of native and naturalized Others or Others that ended on the other side of the border as a result of conquest and expansion. The wall, therefore, overlooks this internal dissonance while its architects are content to devise more and more instruments that perpetuate the Self’s division from the Other.

Conclusions

Former Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Democrat Nancy Pelosi described President Trump’s wall as “an immorality between countries. [...] an old way of thinking [...] [that] isn’t cost effective”⁶. The Speaker talked about building a “positive, shall we say, almost technological wall”⁷. The article has shown that the border wall existed long before Donald Trump came to power. Should we infer that the pre-Trump bollard fences also constituted an immorality? The wall’s existence continues to endure irrespective of who occupies the White House because it is rooted in a policy of border absolutism, which single outs the border as a place to be insulated from foreign contaminants to reclaim the nation for the homogeneous Selves, with the wall as their protector.

A technological wall may be more sophisticated than the crude Nogales barbed wire, more delicate and less of an eye-sore, but it would still operate on the existent parameters of otherization outlined above. Such a *wall* works as an amplifier, further exacerbating the barriers of separation. According to Tanvi Misra, “biometric surveillance technology such as iris sensors are already being piloted at the border”⁸. On the risks posed by the virtual wall, Misra contends that “Computerized risk-assessment programs at or near the border [...] may lead to racial profiling. Expansions in drone and marine surveillance may capture the faces of anyone who lives or works in the vicinity, not

¹ Image Source: Photo ID 133642362©Linda Johnsonbaugh, <https://www.dreamstime.com/border-fence-road-nogales-arizona-separating-united-states-mexico-border-fence-separating-us-image133642362> (22.05.2025)

² Mary Harris, This Border Town Mayor Wanted More Roads. What He Got Was Razor Wire, “Slate”, 12 January 2019, <https://slate.com/podcasts/what-next/2019/02/trump-border-wall-nogales-arizona-razor-wire> (28.02.2025)

³ Iver B. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 343

⁴ Sabrina Siddiqui, *Family of Mexican Teen Shot Dead by US Border Patrol Agent Can Sue, Court Rules*, “The Guardian”, 7 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/07/mexican-teen-us-border-patrol-agent-lonnie-swartz-court>, (03.03.2025); Southern Border Communities Coalition, *Fatal Encounters with CBP Since 2010*, updated 1 April 2025, https://www.southernborder.org/deaths_by_border_patrol (01.04.2025)

⁵ Iver B. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 346

⁶ Michael Hirsh, *Will Pelosi Be the First to Out-Bully Trump?*, “Foreign Policy”, 4 January 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/04/will-pelosi-be-the-first-to-out-bully-trump/> (05.03.2025)

⁷ Ian Sherr, *How Trump’s Border Wall Could Embrace Drones, Camera and AI*, “CNET”, 1 February 2019, <https://www.cnet.com/culture/drones-cameras-and-ai-could-be-border-wall-alternatives/> (05.03.2025)

⁸ Tanvi Misra, *The Problem with a ‘Smart’ Border Wall*, “Bloomberg”, 12 February 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-12/the-problem-with-a-smart-border-wall> (05.03.2025)

just undocumented migrants, and license-plate readers would track their movements over time”¹. The virtual wall reaffirms its utilitarian bona fides while retaining its monumentalization potential: it operates from the same logic of exclusion, rendering the Other invisible and subject to abuse, but with an added element of gamification – turning attempted crossings of the wall into a game – through which the Self asserts dominion over the Other.

We can conclude that the walls and their accoutrements reflect the existing tensions between universalist discourses designed to enable intercultural coexistence and the practices of security designed to safeguard the allegedly inviolable domain of identity that nativism thrives on. At times, the wall is the expression of a course correction, at others, a manifestation of tribalism. In either case, the Other is to be kept at a distance, surveilled, and deported if it manages to cross the border. Neumann’s exploration of Otherness ends with a normative appeal: the Selves should refrain from “monumentalis[ing] Others in humiliating ways, for humiliation breeds contempt and contempt may breed unnecessary conflict”². Yet, degradation has become, maybe more than ever before, a core element of the zero-tolerance / deterrence-based policy towards irregular immigration instituted by the Trump administration. Arguably, the spectacle of gratuitous brutality serves a baser memorialization instinct. This article examined how identity is formed and reformed in liminal spaces to discuss what are the implications for universal human rights considering the established hierarchies of separation that discipline and punish the body rendered illegitimate. The process of otherization analyzed is a cautionary tale for the Self, whose status must be supported using symbolic and physical violence. The excesses of border politics risk crossing over and being turned not just against the domestic Others, but against the very Self, if it arbitrarily fails to meet the set criteria for belonging. As the liberal / cosmopolitan polity disintegrates at an accelerated pace and sovereignty reverts to a hard state, the wall (re)surfaces as an accessible solution to keep the Other out, but in so doing, we disregard the global political, economic, or environmental processes that make separation impossible and the fusion between the Self and Other inevitable on the long term. Resisting the pull of otherization is imperative if we are to avoid cruel scenarios as those envisaged above, and a first step in this direction would be to dismantle the monuments dedicated to Self.

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² Iver B. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 351

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POVERTY AND HUMAN SECURITY: A STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS

Abstract:	<i>Poverty is one of the fundamental problems of the contemporary world. A wide range of actors treat it as a priority, from states and international organisations to businesses, communities, and individuals. The goals focus on increasing levels of social cohesion and economic well-being, as well as achieving visible progress in reducing scarcity at the international level. This thesis aims to analyse the relationship between poverty and personal security empirically. To test the relationship between the two variables, we use semi-structured interviews to highlight individuals' perceptions of the insecurity generated by various forms of poverty.</i> <i>The qualitative approach allows for a detailed investigation of the types of deprivation present in different geographical areas of Romania, as well as their connection with subjective representations of security. To ensure the authenticity of the paper, a triangulation process was applied using secondary data from surveys and official reports. The topic is crucial for security studies because the issue of scarcity has been high on the broader security agenda. Initially associated with vulnerabilities and risks at the individual level, poverty has gradually become a central concern of state actors. Analysed in terms of its effects (social exclusion, illiteracy, radicalisation), it has become a source of unpredictability at the level of action. The relevance of this study lies in the novelty it brings to the literature by analysing the relationship over the period 2019–2022.</i> <i>The chosen interval is significant due to the proliferation of systemic threats, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, which generated medical, economic or security effects. The data analysed confirmed an increase in the feeling of insecurity, against the background of exacerbated economic disparities, both in the immediate living environment and in public spaces. The pandemic period also created a generalised fear of the medical effects of the pandemic, directly linked to the failure to comply with the imposed distancing rules.</i>
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Introduction

Poverty, one of the fundamental problems of the contemporary world, influences the development of individuals and the relationship between the state and the civil component of society.¹ Both state policymakers and international organisations have increased their interest in reducing poverty and, by implication, the disparities between social strata.² The projected goals have been framed around increasing social cohesion and economic well-being, subsequently operationalised as relevant objectives for international actors. The

¹ Tim Unwin, *No end to poverty*, “The Journal of Development Studies”, Vol. 43, No. 5, 2007, p. 945, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220380701384596> (10.03.2025)

² Gabriela Neagu, *Percepția populației asupra stării societății*, “Revista de Inovație Socială”, No. 1, 2012, p.11

representation of poverty as a threat to human security opens new perspectives associated with the broader security agenda, with perceptions of the issue providing an opportunity to explore people's vulnerabilities and lived experiences.¹ Relating perceptions of poverty to human security implications shapes a research agenda on how the issue of scarcity can have a wider impact on the security of individuals.

Several studies have linked poverty and security, particularly since the 1990s, when the broader agenda of security studies encompasses the economic, environmental and societal sectors.² Although human security is described in the literature with conceptual ambiguity, some approaches identify it with the absence of threats and others with "the protection which society accords to each citizens, for the conservation of person, his property and his rights"³. One aspect is stable, however, namely that the problems associated with the human security spectrum, including poverty, relate mainly to individuals and less to the state.

Until now, the relationship between poverty and human security has been approached from a theoretical perspective, with theories emerging from literature that exploit the causality between the two concepts⁴. Two theories, modernisation and dependency theories, associate poverty with "a threat to human security".⁵ Empirically, perceptions of poverty and personal security have been studied in isolation, with little effort to link the two variables. This relationship is especially important for understanding how individuals' perceptions of poverty influence their security. To address the existing gap in the literature, this paper aims to emphasise the relationship between perceptions of poverty and human security in Romania in 2019-2022, an aspect identified as under-researched in the writings in the field of security studies. This study aims to answer the question "How is poverty perceived in relation to human security?", using a theoretical framework focused on the two issues and an analysis of primary data collected through interviews.

Theoretical Framework

Defining poverty

In literature, complex definitions have been attributed to the problem of poverty, starting from maximising the economic meaning and reaching the relevance of individual determinism as a constant in the fight against poverty. Resulting from an accumulation of factors, studies on the causes of poverty have concluded that there are both economic and non-economic factors that can generate deprivation.⁶ Other authors have attached to the concept characteristic of multidimensionality, which they have explained by appealing to empirical circumstances: "employment situation, low income level, family dimension, marital status, alcoholism, education", all of which are inherently linked to poverty.⁷ Empirical studies that aim to determine the broad characteristics of poverty "evidence abounds that poverty has dimensions that transcend these simplistic and prescriptive definitions"⁸. One of the broadest definitions found on the specialised literature on poverty integrates several areas of interest for the study of the issue. It identifies the relationship between needs and minimally acceptable living conditions and the developmental qualities of the individual as part of society. Poverty consists in any form of inequity, which is a source of social exclusion, in the distribution of the living conditions essential to human dignity. These living conditions correspond to the capabilities of individuals, households and communities to meet their basic needs in the following dimensions: income (1) education (2)

¹ Nuria Lorenzo-Dus, Steve Marsh, *Bridging the gap: Interdisciplinary insights into the securitization of poverty*, "Discourse&Society", Vol. 23, No. 3, May, 2012, p. 276, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926511433453> (10.03.2025)

² Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Securitatea: un nou cadru de analiză*, CA Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p. 9

³ Shehu Enoch Amila, Baiyi Viniru Luka, *Poverty as a Threat to Human Security in Nigeria*, "International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)", Vol. 1, No. 1, 2020, p. 158

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 159

⁵ *Idem*

⁶ Leonor Pereira da Costa, José G. Dias, *Perceptions of poverty attributions in Europe: a multilevel mixture model approach*, "Quality&Quantity", Vol. 48, No. 3, May, 2014, p. 1410, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-013-9843-3> (15.03.2025)

⁷ *Idem*

⁸ Rufus B. Akindola, *Towards a Definition of Poverty: Poor People's Perspectives and Implications for Poverty Reduction*, "Journal of Developing Societies", Vol. 25, No. 2, April, 2009, p. 123, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X0902500201> (10.03.2025)

health (3) food/nutrition (4) safe water/sanitation (5) labour/employment (6) housing (living environment) (7) access to productive assets (8) access to markets (9) community participation/social peace (10)¹.

Following the approaches identified in the literature, poverty is defined in this paper as a social process with numerous causes and manifestations, the core of the problem being the financial and social deprivation that individuals experience within their communities. The global scale of poverty, the interest of state actors in alleviating the phenomenon and the insecurity of communities experiencing one form of poverty are leading to growing interest in this subject, the consequences of which can be visualised in several areas. The multidimensional nature of poverty, which is determined by numerous conceptual approaches (economic, social, cultural, individual, etc.), indicates the problem's capacity to explore vulnerable social sectors and underpins the formation of social perceptions of the subject. Most of the approaches identified in specialised writings associate poverty with pecuniary aspects such as insufficient income and the inability of vulnerable groups to access well-paid jobs. This creates a series of causes and effects of poverty that can take the form of a causal cycle that causes, propagates, and makes it more difficult to live on the poverty line.

Defining human security

Originally defined as “a special form of politics”², human security is a broad range of actions that protect people from a variety of threats. Scholars, international organisations and national governments have opened the concept of 'human security' to the public, which has given increased attention to the well-being of people facing various threats.³ The concept is gaining several definitions due to the numerous approaches identified in the literature, its particularities shaping theoretical debates and having a particular significance in relation to the issue of poverty. One of the conceptual approaches to human security is offered by the School of Rights and the Rule of Law, which provides a definition by referring to the serious threats arising from “the denial of fundamental rights such as the right of minority (self-determination) and the lack of the rule of law”⁴. With “safety from chronic threats” as its object of reference, human security not only shifted the focus from the state to the individual but claimed the legitimate responsibility of state actors to protect individuals⁵. The focus on the individual rather than the state has delimited the explanations offered in support of the concept of human security. The breadth of the notion has come to provide benchmarks and an awareness of the complex problems facing humanity.

Criticisms of the concept of human security focus on the following characteristics: vague, incoherent, arbitrary, and difficult to operationalise. In this regard, Roland Paris criticises previous scholars for the definitions associated with the concept of 'human security' because of their vagueness and expansiveness, failing to provide guidance on policy objectives⁶. Another important issue that has marked the international debate on human security centres around state's involvement in effectively managing its citizens' protection. Some scholars have recognised in their research that human security “is not about transcending or marginalizing the state” but is “about ensuring that states protect their people”⁷. Under this rubric of setting state priorities around the welfare of the individual, some scholars have expressed concern about the legitimacy of states using greater control in society in the name of protection⁸.

¹ Louis-Marie Asselin, *Analysis of Multidimensional Poverty: Theory and Case Studies*, “Economic Studies in Inequality, Social Exclusion and Well-Being”, Springer New York, New York, 2009, p. 3

² Edward A. Kolodziej, *Security and International Relations*, “Themes in International Relations”, Reprint, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 22

³ Ronald F. Inglehart, Pippa Norris, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Understanding Human Security: The 2011 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture*, “Scandinavian Political Studies”, Vol. 35, No. 1, March, 2012, pp. 71–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.2011.00281.x> (15.03.2025)

⁴ Hawre Hasan Hama, *State Security, Societal Security, and Human Security*, “Jadavpur Journal of International Relations”, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2017, p. 14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973598417706591> (11.03.2025)

⁵ Giorgio Shani, *Human Security as Ontological Security: A Post-Colonial Approach*, “Postcolonial Studies”, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2017, p. 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2017.1378062> (15.03.2025)

⁶ Giorgio Shani, Makoto Satō, Mustapha Kamal Pasha, *Protecting Human Security in a Post 9/11 World: Critical and Global Insights*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p. 6

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 7

⁸ *Idem*

In conclusion, since the end of the twentieth century, human security has been a concept reiterating the many problems facing humanity. Starting the application of fundamental human rights and even going as far as identifying solutions to alleviate poverty, human security aims to maximise both individual and collective well-being and security. The involvement of state actors in prioritising individual security has reorganised the international agenda for problem-solving, with the imminent link between state and citizen being reconfigured. In addition to state actors having to actively contribute to maximising human security in diverse contexts, individuals also have a particular role. They “contribute to increasing security by identifying threats and implementing solutions aimed at improving their own security”¹. In this paper, starting from the inclusion of personal security in the human security paradigm, the term of reference will be personal security.

Literature Review

Poverty is an issue that influences the lives and interactions between individuals². Evolution or involution configures a dynamic of poverty in which trends, seasonality or timing of experiences are the benchmarks of traditional studies that focus on historical moments and narratives of poverty.³ The social situation associated with poverty-related disadvantage fluctuates in relation to both the temporal dimension and other factors such as welfare policies, individual effort, severity of the condition, etc.⁴. Intensified international efforts to recognise the vulnerabilities that poverty causes among communities are also drawing attention to states of insecurity⁵. Some authors argue that poverty and insecurity are related problems that hinder individual and collective development⁶. Other authors have argued that security “is both a feeling and a reality”⁷, which reveals the importance people attach to maximising security as a basic need. The first chapter's objectives are the dynamics of poverty and the perceptions that form around it, as well as understanding of the conceptual evolution of the term 'security'. Therefore, in the theoretical chapter, I conceptualise the terms, review the literature, and construct the analytical framework of this paper.

The vulnerabilities caused by poverty among certain population sectors have raised concerns about the measurability of this social state with a view to the subsequent use of tools to alleviate or combat it. Treating poverty as a state of individual or collective insecurity makes it possible to subjectively assess several factors, which the specialist literature attempts to systematise to give the subject a clear shape. However, 'perceptions' and 'realities' are not always consistent, and outsiders' perceptions of what constitutes security and insecurity are not always the same as insiders' perceptions of what constitutes security and insecurity⁸. For this reason, understanding poverty as a perception can be achieved through a brief analysis of studies that have assessed people's tendencies to categorise themselves as poor, identifying some constants that allow the shaping of common attributes. I therefore propose in this sub-section to identify some studies that have focused on assessing perceptions of poverty in different geographical areas and then highlighting commonalities.

At the macro level, perceptions of poverty among national governments often suggest a one-sided view because they “often view poverty only as a result of the internal political and social workings of developing

¹ Janusz Gierszewski, *Personal Security within the Human Security Paradigm*, “Security Dimensions International & National Studies”, No. 23, 2017, p. 62

² Călin Anastasiu, Cătălin Zamfir, *Dicționar de sociologie: urmat de indicatori demografici, economici, sociali și sociologici*, Dicționarele Babel, București, Babel, 1993, p. 50

³ Maria Vaalavuo, *Poverty Dynamics in Europe: From What to Why*, Working Paper 03/2015, “Publications Office of the European Union”, Luxembourg, 2015, p. 6, <https://doi.org/10.2767/956213> (20.03.2025)

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5

⁵ Mariana Chilton, Michelle Chyatte, Jennifer Breaux, *The Negative Effects of Poverty & Food Insecurity on Child Development*, “The Indian Journal of Medical Research”, Vol. 126, No. 4, October 2007, p. 262

⁶ Angela Ajodo-Adebanjoko, Ugwuoke Okwudili Walter, *Poverty and the Challenges of Insecurity to Development*, “European Scientific Journal”, Vol. 10, No. 14, May 2014 Edition, p. 361, <https://www.eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/3985> (25.03.2025)

⁷ Bruce Schneier, *The Psychology of Security*, in Serge Vaudenay (Ed.), *Progress in Cryptology – Africacrypt 2008*, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2008, p. 50

⁸ Sandra J. MacLean, *A Decade of Human Security: Global Governance and New Multilateralisms*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2010, p. 11

countries, and not as a part of the larger, global forces reshaping the economic landscape”¹. Consistent with this view, policy responses also fairly limit the problem of scarcity, with economic development seen as an “effective and efficient cure for poverty, regardless of the country’s history or current social, economic, or political conditions”². At the level of communities where chronic forms of poverty are found, some scholars demonstrate how certain social underclasses isolate themselves within cities or rural areas, “concentrating poverty”. In specific contexts, “(...) poor people develop a weak labour-force attachment, which signifies for Wilson their marginal position due to limited job opportunities and limited access to informal networks through which jobs are often obtained” shows that the problem does not coexist with the desirability of work as a motivation to get out of poverty³. Thus, one of the solutions identified at the theoretical level for poverty alleviation is economic and social change through sectoral public policies⁴.

While researchers and specialists in the sciences dealing with the issue of poverty have developed theoretical triggers, theories or assumptions about this social condition, the World Bank produced a report in 2000 entitled “Voices of the Poor”, which was based on studies that explored how individuals define security about their own economic and social status⁵. Aiming to “deepening the idea of human security by incorporating the perspectives of the poor in the security and development policy debate”⁶, the report provided the public with a particular way in which vulnerable people self-assess their state of well-being. This participatory approach shapes people’s perceptions of well-being, i.e. the lack of adequate levels of it, and synthesised four dimensions of reference in the perception of poverty: income stability, predictability of daily life, protection from crime and psychological security⁷. People’s needs revolved around pecuniary aspects, vulnerability to violence and psychological security that coexist both as a feeling and as a reality.⁸ This allows me to state that poverty as a perception is represented by a set of situations that individuals go through in particular, and their relationship with security is provided by individual or collective expectations⁹. The omnipresence of threat, instability and poverty in people’s everyday concerns established some conclusions of the report based on the dimensions of security: deficiencies in access to resources and secure income, hunger specific to food insecurity, health insecurity among poor people as a prerequisite for deaths from infectious and parasitic diseases, and in terms of community security, tensions and conflicts were noted due to limited access to opportunities¹⁰.

The existing consensus on the primacy of human needs in the applicability of human security has generated international debates on the concept’s appropriation in African thinking. The impact of poverty in this geographic space “which prescribe that security institutions have a role to play in poverty reduction”¹¹, and idealised the purposes of human security. Food insecurity and climate change facing the African territory have consequently shaped people’s perceptions of poverty. Thus, relying mainly on agriculture and natural resources that are susceptible to floods and droughts caused by climate change, countries such as The Gambia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Zambia locate communities where urban poverty rates fluctuate around 50%¹². This reality where poverty patterns influence the nature of development of regions or communities (the literature emphasises that poverty in Africa is not homogeneous but can be classified as chronic, borderline or

¹ Nadeja Ballard, *Globalization and Poverty*, Chelsea House Publ, Philadelphia, Pa, 2006, p. 89

² *Idem*

³ Mark Gould, *Race and Theory: Culture, Poverty, and Adaptation to Discrimination in Wilson and Ogbu*, “Sociological Theory”, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1999, p. 173, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00074> (25.03.2025)

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.174

⁵ *Idem*

⁶ K. Hussein, D. Gnisci, J. Wanjiru, *Security and Human Security: An Overview of Concepts and Initiatives; What Implications for West Africa?*, “Issues Paper. Sahel and West Africa Club”, OECD, 2004, p. 13

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 13–14

⁸ Bruce Schneider, *Op.cit.*, p. 50

⁹ K. Hussein, D. Gnisci, J. Wanjiru, *Op.cit.*, p. 31

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 13

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 15

¹² Kempe Ronald Hope Sr., *Climate Change and Poverty in Africa*, “International Journal of Sustainable Development&World Ecology”, Vol. 16, No. 6, December 2009, p. 454, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504500903354424> (01.04.2025)

occasional¹) also deepens class antagonisms. For example, “black Africans still perceive themselves as lacking enough food and income to meet all their household needs” while whites or Indians “never or seldom experience shortages of food and income”². On the European continent, communities vulnerable to poverty are analysed from several perspectives; individualistic explanations contribute to understanding perceptions of the subject and are treated in detail in the literature. Some authors theorise that the institutional structure of each welfare regime frames how the public perceives the poor and the unemployed, but also self-interested perspectives: “there are studies that support the assumption that those who perceive themselves to be poor are more likely to agree with the external cause of poverty than people well above the poverty line”³. Regardless of the approach, poverty as a perception among vulnerable communities contributes to the creation of an identity that legitimises the characteristics of people experiencing disadvantage. Dealing with poverty as a perception complements theoretical approaches to the causes of people's insecurity at both individual and collective levels. The literature thus points to a conceptual difference between the perception and the feeling of security as social constructs: “Security is the actual state of being free from threat, while the sense of security is the cumulative effect of a set of subjective and objective factors”⁴.

Poverty and the Security Dimensions

The notion of “security” is complex and often debated in specialised literature. Most people look at security in an antinomic way, identifying more easily the state associated with insecurity, e.g. an individual/group/state's life/members or livelihoods are threatened.⁵ Given the numerous classifications made of the concept after 1991, when a terminological reform practically took place, the issue of poverty has been briefly discussed about food security, as well as human, environmental or economic security. Although theoretical discussions continue due to tendencies to understand “the wide range of conflicting perceptions and perspectives of actors about security”⁶, the intervention of subjects such as individuals, international organisations or compact groups allows a rethinking of the way security is understood at these levels. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development “poverty encompasses different dimensions of deprivation that relate to human capabilities including consumption and food security, health, education, rights, voice, security, dignity and decent work”⁷, the implications of these dimensions lead to a multilevel approach to poverty and related perceptions. The numerous connections between the dimensions of security and poverty also make it necessary to visualise how specialised works approach the issue in relation to food security - a sub-category of human security, which is why highlighting the congruent aspects in this area is necessary for a general understanding of the subject.

The focus on the human dimension of security has, since the 1990s, reiterated social and economic interactions that have at their core the primacy of human beings⁸. The priorities on the United Nations agenda, such as the particular rights of children in war zones, proposals to tackle transnational crime or the refugee problem⁹, have concretised both the traditional spectrum of threats (those of a military nature, for example) and the non-traditional ones corresponding to poverty, disease or education¹⁰. Pivoting on this categorisation of the nature of threats to individuals, two schools of thought associated with the field have developed: one school of

¹ *Idem*

² Yul Derek Davids, Amanda Gouws, *Monitoring Perceptions of the Causes of Poverty in South Africa*, “Social Indicators Research”, Vol. 110, No. 3, 2013, p. 1202, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9980-9> (05.04.2025)

³ Johanna Kallio, Mikko Niemelä, *Who Blames the Poor?*, “European Societies”, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2014, pp. 3–7

⁴ Rihards Bambals, *Human Security: An Analytical Tool for Disaster Perception Research*, “Disaster Prevention and Management”, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2015, p. 153, <https://doi.org/10.1108/DPM-06-2014-0106>, (15.03.2025)

⁵ Edward A. Kolodziej, *Op.cit.*, p. 1

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 3

⁷ Fikret Berkes, *Poverty Reduction Isn't Just about Money: Community Perceptions of Conservation Benefits*, in Dilys Roe et al. (Eds.), *Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Alleviation: Exploring the Evidence for a Link*, Vol. 1, 2012, p. 271, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118428351.ch17> (22.03.2025)

⁸ Catia Gregoratti, *Social Science. History, Disciplines, Future Development& Facts Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-security> (13.04.2025)

⁹ Paul D. Williams, *Security studies: an introduction*, Routledge, London; New York, 2008, p. 279

¹⁰ Gregoratti Catia, *Op.cit.*

thought focuses on “freedom from want” (the primacy of economic, health, food, social and environmental problems), and the second school of thought focuses on the elimination of the use or threat of force or violence against people, which would translate into “freedom from fear”¹. At a narrow level, human security approaches revolve around people's basic needs and introduce the prevention of elements that can disrupt social life.

Associating poverty with its multidimensionality², the specialised literature captures this issue as an integrated part of human security, and the consensus among researchers is in line with the approach that international institutions give to these concepts. In addition to the specialists who subscribe to the arguments of the conceptual revolution of the 1990s on security, we also find critics of the empirical usefulness of human security in academic and political circles under the premise of hostility and scepticism to operationalise the concept and use it in social research³. The re-dimensioning of security has coincided with the coming to the fore of a persistent problem in most societies: poverty. Implicitly, the assessment of the living conditions of individuals has coincided with the redefinition of security, with the resolution of this long-standing problem being a major issue in the contemporary world. Understanding human security through a bottom-up approach translated into maximising problems at the individual level for international cooperation of state actors⁴. Thus, systematically identifying people's problems, incorporating them into sectoral policies and then, the implications of state management in the solution component was a process whose objective was to improve the quality of life. The disparate dimensions of human security capture the importance of poverty as an international problem in different socio-cultural arenas, from conflict-torn states to actors within which extreme poverty defines a specific social sector⁵. In line with the diverse social situations monitored worldwide, the United Nations stated goal of the cross-cutting approach to human security proposes to clarify the importance of poverty as a dimension and benchmark: (...) human security includes the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair, stressing that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential⁶.

Although the socio-economic domain governs most interpretations of poverty due to the operationalisation of deprivation, the emergence of the 'war on poverty' has led to a reinterpretation of the meanings of this phenomenon. Thus, the terminology proposed by Kaldor in terms of the traditional use of the concept of 'war' argues against the structure. Globalisation and the reduction of traditional wars raise awareness of the association of the term 'war' with ways of combating poverty.⁷ Although the persistence of deprivation over time makes both individuals and the state structures of which they are part vulnerable, the international commitments that are made to reduce poverty are a first step towards understanding the applicability of human security. Major contributions in the literature focus on the relationship between poverty and human security with a view to maximising individual security. Presented both as a state of insecurity and as a threat to international economies, poverty and, implicitly, the perception of it is often associated with the lack of resources and the effects it produces in society through the interaction between individuals. Thus, the evolution of the concept of human security has captured the growing interest of researchers and policymakers to mitigate the effects of poverty and related problems.

¹ Monica den Boer, *The Viability of Human Security*, edited by Jaap de Wilde, Amsterdam University Press, Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar, 2008, pp. 150–151

² Erik Thorbecke, *Multidimensional Poverty: Conceptual and Measurement Issues*, in Nanak Kakwani, Jacques Silber (Eds.), *The Many Dimensions of Poverty*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, 2013, p. 3, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230592407_1 (26.03.2025)

³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Ellen Bal, Oscar Salemink, *A world of insecurity: anthropological perspectives on human security*, Anthropology, Culture and Society, Pluto Press, London, 2010, p. 2

⁴ Yuzuru Matsuoka, Mamoru Yoshida, *Challenges for human security engineering*, Springer, New York, 2014, p. 20

⁵ Paul D. Williams, *Op.cit.*, p. 286

⁶ Dorothy Estrada Tanck, *Human security and human rights under international law: the protections offered to persons confronting structural vulnerability*, Hart Publishing, Portland, Oregon, 2016, p. 4

⁷ Monica den Boer, *Op.cit.*, p. 152

Analytical framework

The literature review identified several approaches to the relationship between people's perceptions of poverty and the concept of human security. One of the meanings attributed to the concept "poverty" captured in the literature is that of "lack of income", which will be used in this paper. Thus, I will analyse people's perceptions of poverty in Romania from 2018 to 2020 and their relationship with elements that make up human security. How perceptions of poverty influence people's security in the communities they are part of summarises the objective of this thesis. Throughout the paper, I will focus on two major factors that shape individuals' perceptions of poverty: insufficient income in the community of belonging and limited opportunities in the labour market. Eurostat reports on the evolution of poverty in Romania support the representativeness of these factors on the targeted problem. For example, the state actor was confronted with a poverty risk rate of 23.4 per cent in 2020¹, which demonstrates the economic nature of the problems governing the lives of individuals facing poverty and the vulnerabilities that it potentiates.

Reiterating the aim of this paper, which is to visualise the extent to which the perception of the economic dimension of poverty affects people's perceptions of individual security, I will consider in the final paragraphs of this section other potential factors influencing these perceptions: age, educational level, area of residence and experience with insecurity. As an important factor in people's perceptions of poverty, income insufficiency is one of the economic components of the study of poverty. Income insufficiency leads to an economic condition whose impact on the individual is felt both in terms of the fulfilment of basic needs, as represented by Maslow², and in terms of the deepening of social divisions and the vulnerability of individuals to their own needs. Romania faces difficulties in securing an income that would allow a decent standard of living, and the population without a stable source of income is a particular group at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Income dynamics and financial instability increase the risk of exposure to poverty.

Limited job opportunities are another relevant factor in determining people's perceptions of poverty. Economically advantaged communities (those with thriving businesses or where investment is taking place, where educational standards are constantly adapting to the labour market) will have a more diverse range of opportunities in terms of what employers offer. In contrast, rural areas experiencing the effects of migration and with a predominantly ageing population will have fewer employment opportunities and possibilities. The psychological component arising from restricted employment opportunities is also an important aspect in studying perceptions of poverty. The first indicator of personal safety, the degree of safety felt on the street in the community to which one belongs, is one of the components of human security in the social environment. By this factor, I want to emphasise the perception of safety in certain individual contexts, such as walking in the street, going to the shop, etc. Safety means security; it must be permanent in any context or activity that people carry out; it represents the guarantee for the absence of dangers that could disrupt the life of the individual or the community to which he/she belongs. The perception of street safety refers to the "subjective assessment of the risk and the magnitude of its consequences" and is directly influenced by experiences or contextual situations³. Another indicator of perceptions of personal security is home protection. Putting in place advanced security systems to protect a dwelling can mean a high risk of burglary existing in the territorial area. People, in their constant attempt to protect their livelihood and property from possible external threatening agents, implement security measures to maximise their safety. The absence or presence of such measure's shapes people's perceptions of their security state.

The last factors I will refer to in this section are age, education, area of residence and experience with insecurity. Their role in influencing perceptions of individual security brings to the foreground the different ways in which people understand and evaluate their own state of security in each environment/context. The level of education an individual attains makes a major contribution to shaping perceptions of personal security. This factor summarising the educational pathway refers to institutionalised educational progress and the body of

¹ European Union, *At-risk-of-poverty rate*, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tespm010/default/table?lang=en> (13.04.2025)

² Eugene W. Mathes, *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a Guide for Living*, "Journal of Humanistic Psychology", Vol. 21, No. 4, October 1981, p. 69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678810210040> (12.04.2025)

³ Sergio F. Acosta, Jorge E. Camargo, *City Safety Perception Model Based on Visual Content of Street Images*, 2018 "IEEE International Smart Cities Conference (ISC2)", IEEE, Kansas City, MO, USA, 2018, p. 1

information associated with a given level of training. Through education, the individual not only assimilates a body of information but also interacts, acquires and adapts knowledge and perceptions. In this paper, the level of education influences people's perceptions of security.

The area of residence of individuals (rural or urban) is particularly important due to the configuration and nature of differentiated social relations. Thus, if the rural environment is characterised by low population density, closer social relations and predominantly agricultural economic activities, the urban environment will have different characteristics that may influence people's way of life and, consequently, their perceptions of certain issues. Opposition to rural areas, cultural diversification, communication routes and services are just some distinguishing features of urban areas subject to rural-urban disproportion. However, “the perceived tranquillity, changelessness and security offered by rural areas continues to attract in-migrants from towns and cities” while the latter face new insecurities for some social groups¹. Some sociological researchers have concluded that “people's perceptions are formed within a societal and historical context as much of an individual's knowledge is socially derived, rather than the result of direct experience”, which demonstrates the dependent relationship between individuals and the places in which they². Insecurity can have a different meaning for everyone, and experiences are the main contributors to the formation of perceptions of security/insecurity. In relation to the theme of the study, by “experience with insecurity”, I refer to previous situations of insecurity that people have faced in the social environment in relation to personal or family security.

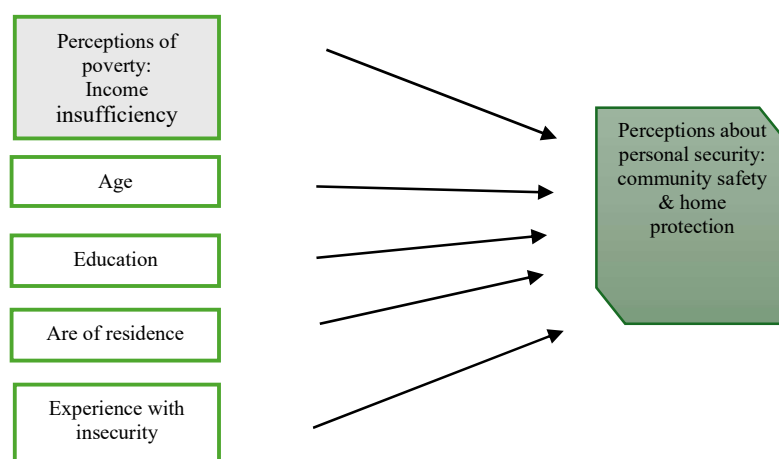


Figure 1. Analytical framework³

Methodology

Case selection

Areas such as poverty, immigration or social inequality link the research work of ethnographers and qualitative researchers with the evaluation coming from economists, demographers or sociologists⁴. This research-evaluation dynamic captures the importance of case selection, “that not only generate theory but also somehow speak to empirical conditions in other cases (not observed)”⁵. From a methodological point of view,

¹ John Vail, Jane Wheelock, Michael James Hill, *Insecure times: living with insecurity in contemporary society*, Routledge, London New York, 1999, p. 19

² Hui Li (et al.), *Factors Influencing Residents' Perceptions, Attitudes and Behavioral Intention Toward Festivals and Special Events: A Pre-event Perspective*, “Journal of Business Economics and Management”, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2018, p. 290, <https://doi.org/10.3846/jbem.2018.5536> (10.04.2025)

³ Author's own elaboration based on literature review

⁴ Mario Luis Small, ‘How Many Cases Do I Need?’: On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research, “Ethnography”, Vol. 10, No. 1, March 2009, p. 5, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138108099586> (05.04.2025)

⁵ *Idem*

there are two ways in which case selection can be achieved: single-case or multiple-case selection¹. In single case selection, the qualitative research literature identifies a classification of case studies according to the characteristics they summarise typical, extreme, deviant, diverse, and influential². The typical case provides a representation of a phenomenon or exemplifies a stable relationship³. Researchers choose to select them to “better explore the causal mechanisms at work in a general, cross-case relationship”⁴. In short, the typical case brings to the fore a general understanding of the problem under study⁵. By exemplifying 'what is considered to be a typical set of values, given a general understanding of a phenomenon', the selection of the representative case creates a context in which descriptive features and causal relationships are harmoniously analysed⁶. In this study, Romania is a representative case for assessing how perceptions of poverty have evolved socially in relation to personal security. Poverty dynamics show specific characteristics from one state actor to another, and the tendency of people to condition poverty on the economic component (see theoretical framework) is predominant at the social level. The process of democratisation after the fall of communism and, implicitly, the gradual shift from centralised to market economy have made people's ability to have an adequate standard of living vulnerable. Romania is an illustrative case for research into the dynamics of perceptions of poverty. This aspect is also supported by Eurostat statistics, which rank Romania negatively in terms of the at-risk-of-poverty rate.

Romania is also a representative case for promoting human security at the social level through specific measures. The recognition of interdependence between security threats and elements of human security is recognised in Romania's National Security Strategy. If, at the normative level, there are provisions that subscribe elements of individual security to the social environment, this paper aims to highlight what people's perceptions of human security are in specific situations. The period chosen for analysis, 2019-2022, illustrates how perceptions of poverty have evolved given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The health crisis brought about by the pandemic has, in addition to a curtailment of fundamental rights, required a rethinking of people's security in different environments, from spending time outdoors to specific workplace activities. An important point to note about this period is that the results cannot apply to the whole of 2022 because it is not finalised. The main argument behind this time frame is the time when the interviews were carried out (March-April 2022), which conditions the timeliness of the primary data on the reference period of the analysis. Having highlighted the differences in perceptions of poverty over the indicated period, the study aims to analyse their link with perceptions of human security.

Data Collection Method

The data collected for this paper cover the dimensions outlined in the analytical framework: perceptions of poverty and individual security. Related to the perception of poverty, two subdivisions are prioritised: income insufficiency and limited opportunities. In terms of perceptions of personal security, I will consider the level of safety in the community and the protection of housing. This paper utilises qualitative research to find explanations for people's perceptions of poverty in relation to human security. Qualitative characteristics refer to “research about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations”⁷. Therefore, this paper uses qualitative data collected through interviews to analyse perceptions.

¹ Jason Seawright, John Gerring, Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options, “Political Research Quarterly”, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2008, p. 306, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077> (30.03.2025)

² *Ibidem*, p.294

³ *Ibidem*, p. 299

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, David Collier, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, Oxford Handbooks of Political Science, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p. 647

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 648

⁷ Md Shidur Rahman, *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language Testing and Assessment Research: A Literature Review*, “Journal of Education and Learning”, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2016, p. 103

The use of the interview has many advantages: it can be applied to all segments of the population, it is flexible and orientated towards the interviewee rather than the standard, and it can be used to explain questions that the respondent cannot understand.¹ Investigating the focus group hypotheses for idea generation, Fern concluded some assumptions related to the advantages and disadvantages of individual interviews: high quality of ideas an aspect of great usefulness for research, the time needed for the conduct (30-45 minutes) can sometimes be tiring and therefore an interviewer can only conduct 5-6 interviews per day.² Highlighting a lot of information, the effectiveness of an interview also depends on the way it is structured, one of the criteria to be respected being the order of the questions asked to the participants³ through the interview grid. Using the interview as a primary data collection method, this paper aims to highlight how perceptions of poverty influence human security. To this end, the study will assess through interviews the individual views and motivations of the respondents about perceptions of poverty and personal security. The method of semi-structured interviews is an important concern of qualitative researchers because of the respondents' viewpoints that provide authenticity to the data collected⁴. This type of interview has become popular due to its flexibility and versatility as a method of data collection and can be combined with other tools in the methodological approach⁵. In this study, the criterion used in the selection of interview participants is diversity to emphasise the most varied perceptions on the proposed topic. The interview is applied to the general population, with variations in age, gender, residence environment, and level of education, in March-April 2022. Respondents have a diverse profile, localised in several areas of Romania (Cluj, Neamţ, Iaşi, Bucharest). Some of them identify with the status of "student", while others are people in the labour market: teachers, servants, unemployed, retired elderly people (Annex 1 gives an overview of the profiles of the interviewees). The number of interviews that are used to collect primary data is 20, with respondents chosen based on diversity.

Data Analysis Method

In this paper, the method of analysis used is the 'deductive thematic method'. In the literature, the term "thematic analysis" is integrated into the category of qualitative analyses, which present themes and classifications relating to data⁶. Suitable for any study that operates with interpretations of qualitative data, thematic analysis has a number of advantages: it is systematic, requires the understanding and collection of data appropriate to the research topic, and offers the opportunity for a broader understanding of any problem under study⁷. Another important characteristic, namely its flexibility, refers to the possibility of analysing a wide range of types of data, from those labelled as 'traditional' collection methods (interview or focus group) to textual data, diaries, online discussion forums or other media sources⁸. The concept of 'thematic analysis' is associated with three objectives in terms of examining data: commonalities, differences and relationships⁹. In deductive thematic analysis, refining certain findings or understanding theories is both a goal and a pre-existing framework¹⁰. The purpose of this mode of coding is to "evaluate existing knowledge rather than to generate new

¹ K. N. Krishnaswamy, Appa Iyer Sivakumar, *Management research methodology: integration of principles, methods and techniques*, Pearson Education, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 307–308

² *Ibidem*, p. 308

³ Geoffrey R. Marczyk, David DeMatteo, David Festinger, *Essentials of research design and methodology*, Essentials of behavioral science series, John Wiley&Sons, Hoboken, N.J, 2005, p. 117

⁴ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, Fifth Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York, 2016, p. 6

⁵ Hanna Kallio et al., *Systematic Methodological Review: Developing a Framework for a Qualitative Semi-Structured Interview Guide*, "Journal of Advanced Nursing", Vol. 72, No. 12, December 2016, p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031> (01.04.2025)

⁶ M. Ibrahim, *Thematic Analysis: A Critical Review of Its Process and Evaluation*, "West East Journal of Social Sciences", Vol. 1, No. 1, December 2012, p. 40

⁷ *Idem*

⁸ Carla Willig, Wendy Stainton-Rogers, *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, The Sage handbook of, Second edition, SAGE, London, 2017, p. 22

⁹ William James Gibson, Andrew Brown, *Working with qualitative data: an integrated guide*, SAGE, Los Angeles, 2009, p. 128

¹⁰ Michelle E. Kiger, Lara Varpio, *Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data: AMEE Guide No. 131*, "Medical Teacher", Vol. 42, No. 8, 2020, p. 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030> (06.04.2025)

knowledge.”¹ The steps involved in applying a deductive approach are subjectively interpreted by different authors in qualitative research. Deductive thematic analysis constantly relates to prior knowledge associated with the research topic, the shift from 'general' to 'specific' intended to bring out new context².

Topics	Codes/Subtopics	Sentences matching the codes
Poverty	Low income	There are many people with insufficient income (who also have one or more dependent children) for survival I consider that most incomes are insufficient given the costs of a decent living To me, poverty means lack of a decent living, for example, a balanced diet generated by insufficient income
	Limited job opportunities	(...) The pandemic period was the hardest in terms of opportunities, and now they are trying to get back to the life and dynamics of before the pandemic, and they are looking for new employees (...) Many are choosing to go abroad to realise their ideals. Young people are especially the most disappointed by these limited opportunities
Human security	Safety in the community	I and my family should be able to always move around safely (...) there are a lot of conflicts in my community about freedom of opinion. (...) I would not have the security to express myself freely without being judged
	Home protection	Most people I know have installed surveillance cameras and alarm systems I consider the main tools for home protection in my locality to be cameras, guard and protection services, and alarm systems. (...), some people who can afford the purchase of such tools and who have a better material situation

Table 1. Data coding examples³

Analysis

Romanians' Perceptions of Poverty

The paper confirms the influences that perceptions of poverty have on personal security. Many respondents rated poverty as one of the primary causes of both social and personal insecurity. The dependence of all activities on the financial factor, and therefore on income, underlines the insecurity felt by vulnerable groups in the face of insufficient income and the inability to meet minimum needs. Examination of the interviews we conducted shows that people tend to understand poverty regarding income. The expenses necessary for everyday life indicate a lack of money and even the impossibility of meeting basic needs. Analysis of the responses brings to the fore several meanings that respondents attribute to poverty, ranging from limitation, financial conditionality, and inability to meet needs or necessities to emotional meanings such as hopelessness. The phrase “living from today to tomorrow” was also associated with poverty. At the same time, we identified among the interviewees an awareness of the hardships that vulnerable people experience in the face of insufficient financial resources. Either having had experiences of poverty themselves or having visualised examples in their

¹ Eva Thomann, Martino Maggetti, *Designing Research With Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): Approaches, Challenges, and Tools*, “Sociological Methods & Research”, Vol. 49, No. 2, May 2020, p. 10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124117729700> (06.04.2025)

² Satu Elo, Helvi Kyngäs, *The Qualitative Content Analysis Process*, “Journal of Advanced Nursing”, Vol. 62, No. 1, p. 111, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x> (06.04.2024)

³ Author's own elaboration based on collected data (semi-structured interviews)

community, the interviewees provided exhaustive descriptions of how they perceive poverty, identifying effects, causes and characteristics. In principle, most respondents emphasised the interrelationship between insufficient income and poverty. As the main determinant, income that is far too low coexists with the impossibility of purchasing the necessities of life, constraining certain actions that play a vital role in the development of the individual.

For example, a large majority of those we interviewed perceived poverty about empirical situations, ranging from restricting children from poor families from attending an institutionalised form of education to the generational perpetuation of poverty. Thus, the respondents described the relationship between insufficient income and education, they underlined the insecurity to which uneducated people are exposed in the social environment, their marginalisation being inherent: “I can underline that poverty generates a lack of education and, implicitly, a lack of chances to change socio-economic status” (R6). Personal insecurity generated by insufficient income, with reference to stunted educational development, was highlighted in the interviews as one of the systematic problems faced by vulnerable sectors of the population. Basically, the interviewees suggested the existence of a causal cycle that leads to children not being able to go to school: ‘It is not new in Romania that a child drops out of education at an early age because of insufficient family income. Poor people and their deviant behaviours can create toxic environments for the families and communities in which they live(...)’ (R8) Poverty understood in terms of insufficient income threatens, as we observe in the interviewees' answers, the personal security of individuals. In the first place, the people concerned live in insecurity, we are referring here to families or individuals who do not earn enough income to live on: “People with lower incomes are more prone to insecurity, they are more vulnerable than those with satisfactory incomes.” (R10) The fact that personal security is one of the concerns of individuals denotes how vulnerable the poor feel to the permanency of their own financial situation. Second, insufficient income leads to certain behaviours among vulnerable people. These can turn into real insecurity factors for those around them: “People who do not have enough to eat certainly do not have the security of tomorrow, they can sometimes have violent reactions or commit crimes to ensure their minimum food, thus affecting the security of others”. (R18) Asked about their views on the income in Romania in relation to the needs felt by citizens, respondents had three types of answers. A representative proportion of them consider that people's incomes are low and insufficient in relation to the efforts made in the workplace. Respondents explicitly referenced to the minimum wage level that some families must manage, highlighting the high costs of utilities, rent and food. Some of the characteristics attributed by interviewees to income were very low, insufficient, and low. They also emphasised that with very low incomes, they cannot achieve a good quality of life or an average level of well-being. The insufficiency of income that a family face determines certain decisions regarding their diet and a shift of people towards cheap products: “I see people very much balancing prices against their health. I see people in the market who choose to buy the cheapest without paying attention to the content of the product” (R14) From this description we observe not only people's consumerist tendencies but also the self-imposed limitations of their income.

The last category of respondents emphasised the huge discrepancies between the average salaries in the European Union and Romania, which explains young people's decisions to go abroad and the widespread phenomenon of migration. The family context or their own experiences have determined this variation in the answers regarding income in Romania. As exemplified, income as an indicator of poverty capitalises on situations in which most people cannot meet their needs with the minimum wage. Lack of income makes survival impossible. With many families facing financial problems, the deterioration of living conditions below an accepted minimum standard becomes a reality.

People's perceptions of poverty are based on their own experiences and how the social climate propagates or exacerbates certain problems. Visible changes in one's community, an increase in the number of people claiming social assistance, or even one's inability to meet expenses are just some of the issues that can influence perceptions of poverty. For example, perceptions of poverty among rural respondents have been influenced by the pandemic period, the mismanagement of local resources, the economic migration of people to more developed countries, and the bankruptcy of local businesses. For urban areas, the changes that took place were directly related to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the cessation of some companies' activities or the reduction in the flow of investors. These changes directly impacted respondents' perceptions, with poverty being perceived as an insecurity of personal security.

In Romania, homeless people or beggars on the streets have undergone a process of segmentation in certain areas. This action is defined as a 'micropolitics of fusion and dissection linking different populations to specific territories'.²⁸⁰ In practice, the creation of shelters for the homeless aimed to 'attract the very poor away from the city centre and towards the periphery', with population segmentation being realised about sources of income. However, although some policies have aimed to filter demographics along economic lines, beggars, both housed and homeless, have continued to be present in urban centres. The insecurity that poverty creates in certain areas has led to the prominence of these policies to improve the social security environment. Interviewees also perceived poverty in terms of the behaviours of vulnerable people, "looking around us and noticing that some children, young or old people are living on the poverty line, they also have tendencies of violence in society associated with theft." (R3)

Limited Employment Opportunities

Poor people are often stigmatised by society, as their marginalisation on the periphery of communities limits their employability. Lack of or limited employment opportunities creates insecurity for all people seeking to integrate into the labour market. In the delimitation of employment opportunities, generalized patterns of insecurity have spread. Both the requirements and the distribution of job offers are principles governed by the need for human sourcing. Respondents brought to the fore the negative predisposition of human societies to stigmatise vulnerable people: "Stigmatisation and discrimination are again profound for those who suffer financially" (R16), which hinders their ability to integrate into the community and the labour market. The seemingly limited environment to which poor people can relate is often unattractive in terms of employment opportunities, with different forms of work in rural areas dominated by different forms of work that are paid in cash, food or other items essential for living. Capitalising on perceptions of poverty through the lens of insufficient income and limited employment opportunities brings to the forefront the opinions and experiences of Romanians in the last four years related to these topics. The contribution to the literature by analysing the subjective perceptions of poverty in Romania and their correlation with personal security synthesises the vulnerabilities and risks that scarcity causes among disadvantaged groups and society. Dissatisfaction with the standard of living, wage discrepancies compared to the rest of Europe, and the excessive scarcity of employment opportunities denote society's perceptions of poverty and imminence.

Perceptions of Individual Security

From the perspective of analysing perceptions of individual security, through this study, we have identified several threats that exist in the community, and which are the main tools people use to secure their property. Among the threats expressed by the respondents were also the violent behaviours of people living in poverty or on the border of poverty. These perceptions prompted respondents to take additional security measures for themselves and their possessions. The different ways respondents defined personal security are subjective and influenced by their own experiences. Most participants associated security with peace of mind, lack of physical danger and respect for human rights. A relatively small number of respondents understood the concept by appealing to digital safety and data protection in this environment. In contrast, others explicitly referred to financial security and making a decent living by meeting needs. Thus, some interviewees explained their security by appealing to the existence of financial resources that would enable them to have a certain standard of living. Other respondents broadly defined the concept of 'personal security'. Interviewees pursuing university studies in fields such as security studies, political science, or medicine conceptualised the term along several dimensions, giving concrete situations as examples: personal security, we think, highlights several nuances and meanings. First, it can mean the absence of the bare minimum problem. We mean here that a person maximises his personal security if he can afford adequate food and social life. At the same time, this concept can mean the absence of imminent or foreseeable danger (R4).

Safety in the Community

By analysing the questions in the interview grid, we realised that the vast majority of those we interviewed were able to provide a clear definition of individual security concerning specific domains or contexts. Thus, we had participants who referred to personal security in the online environment, in their daily activities about certain living standards. At the same time, some responses aimed to explain the threats that the poverty of others in the community poses to personal security: "I think that people who commit theft or are violent to get something that

is not theirs make the safety of a community very vulnerable. Poverty, I think, underlies these behaviours, not having enough to eat basically” (R14).

Asked what personal safety in the community means to them, respondents gave a wide range of answers, covering aspects of living in the community. Thus, some participants referred to respect for oneself, property and the environment, while others assessed community safety in terms of access to diversified employment and quality products. Some interviewees gave examples of situations in their communities where personal safety is not guaranteed. For example, community issues exposed in social media can cause insecurities among the public depending on the positions they take in relation to a given situation: “In my community there are a lot of conflicts about freedom of opinion. Every word is analysed and reinterpreted on social media. If I was now a public person in my community, a person to express my opinions, I would be harassed for my opinions”(R10). In order to highlight how perceptions of poverty influence individuals' personal security, we embedded questions in the interview grid to identify, based on the answers, the main sources of insecurity. Thus, the main threats identified by the interviewees were criminal acts, the lack of empathy of people in the community in emergencies, and the violent behaviour of poor people such as beggars or homeless people. The generation of insecurity by the human factor was associated in the answers with the presence of beggars on the streets: (...) there are also some disturbing factors that negatively influence the tranquillity of the area. One security problem in this respect is the presence of large numbers of child beggars on the streets. Perhaps the fact that they have not received an institutionalised elementary education leads them to behave violently, both physically and verbally. There are also young teenagers in this situation (Interview 14). Different threat perceptions highlight how people relate to their own security and their environment. Experiences play a vital role in perceiving certain threats as more salient. By assessing perceptions of personal security, we were able to identify the main views of community safety, visualise the main threats to individuals and outline the level of security associated with the environments from which respondents come.

Home Protection

Home protection is one of the benchmarks when people want to optimise the security of their living space. The need to secure the home is an intrinsic part of the general need for security, and in this sense, people tend to be pre-emptive when implementing specific systems. Through the interview grid, we assessed both the respondents' perceived need to secure their homes with different tools and the main items that other citizens in the community use to increase their level of security. The perception of personal security as seen through the prism of home protection reflects on the one hand, how individuals are cautious in relation to threats in society. On the other hand, preventive conduct aimed at increasing safety takes the form of various actions that can increase the level of security felt in the living environment. When asked about the reasons for acquiring modern security systems (audio-video surveillance cameras, alarms), most respondents explained the permanent need to feel safe and have a sense of peace of mind. Other interviewees reiterated the existing threats in the community in which they live, stating that these threats led them to implement active measures to protect their homes.

People living on the poverty line and their behaviours pose threats to individuals' personal security. Respondents emphasised this assumption to motivate the implementation of home security systems. Because poverty can generate a high level of delinquency, people tend to increase their level of security. Thus, a significant proportion of the interviewees emphasised the need they felt to improve the protection of their homes, prompted by theft by vulnerable members of the community: “poverty affects the material and physical spheres. In the material and physical spheres, I am referring to the use of certain acts: street theft, violent housebreaking, threats, all motivated by poverty and therefore lack of money” (R13).

Another approach that reveals the impact of perceptions of poverty on personal security from a housing protection perspective is the insecurity of vulnerable people. A range of respondents emphasised how people living on the poverty line are directly affected by high levels of insecurity. The main motivation behind these responses is precisely the financial inability of certain sections of the population to have a decent living, secure housing and income: “There are many people who cannot afford certain personal security schemes, they can barely meet their basic needs. Somehow the financial side causes some dependencies” (R18)

Factors Influencing Perceptions of Personal Security

Age, education, area of residence or experience with insecurity influence perceptions of personal security. These factors energise inter-human relations and coordinate one's experiences towards forming opinions and views. Thus, in this section, I analyse these factors to identify differentiated response categories in terms of perceptions of personal security.

Age. One of the main differences between people is age. In perceptions and thinking, age differences reflect disproportionalities in people's experience, knowledge and different ways of relating to their own security risks. In the interviews conducted, the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic was often identified by respondents as a constant feature in the lives of Romanians over the last 3 years. It was described as a direct threat to personal security as well as shaping Romanians' perceptions of poverty. The restrictions imposed and the stoppage of many activities have increased the number of people on technical unemployment as well as those living on the verge of poverty: “ (...) the impact of the pandemic has certainly been felt negatively in terms of people's standard of living. If we look only at sectors such as tourism, which have had to stop their activities, we must consider the problems faced by both entrepreneurs and their employees (R 4). To emphasise the age difference and the perception of risk, I evaluate two answers given by the interviewees, the first given by a 40-year-old and the second given by a 19-year-old. The first respondent emphasised that the virus posed a direct threat to health. The perception of individual safety was altered by the presence of a threat that could cause health problems: if we refer to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, there was a period when the crowdedness of the city, especially in areas frequented by many people, created a direct threat to my health and that of my family (R11). Young people tend to perceive the experience during the pandemic as a restriction to their usual activities. Thus, the second respondent, compared based on age, emphasised the threat to personal security in terms of stopping the development and relocation of activities online: given the development of the COVID-19 pandemic, this virus directly threatened personal security. In addition to this, all the work in high school and part of the university period was carried out online, which is why we had to stay isolated from each other, adopt new learning methods and adapt (R20).

Education. At the level of this study, respondents presented diverse educational backgrounds. We selected, based on diversity, both university graduates and labour market participants with vocational schooling. Those respondents with a social or political science background referred to human security conceptually and empirically, while the other participants chose to refer to their own experiences.

Area of residence. Rural-urban differences in Romania are identifiable in several areas. Regarding the issue of poverty, the area of residence usually represents only one of the many dimensions or only one of the influential factors of poverty in Romania, without any systematic study of the differences/similarities between urban and rural poverty¹. Regarding perceptions of human security, our study aims to visualise the respondents' tendencies related to this topic according to their areas of residence. As mentioned earlier, most respondents are rural residents, while the rest live in rural areas. A proportion of respondents living in rural areas rate their personal security in terms of community cohesion and harmony. In general, communities in these areas, being even smaller in numbers, benefit from a higher level of cohesion, but can be more easily destabilised in the face of certain serious problems. The existence of norms, customs and traditions at the community level complements interactions between people and limits malicious actions, especially by the residents of the community in question: ‘unpleasant events happen quite rarely in rural communities because people know each other well and social stigma works as a moral censor for different actions’ (R2) Perception of security in urban areas is associated with a greater presence of local authorities which increase the sense of security: being in an urban area, we are talking here about the presence of more authorities that ensure the security of citizens, from the police and gendarmerie to the civic sense present in the morals of each person (R4). Area of residence is an important factor in shaping perceptions of personal security. Differences in perceptions in this respect coexist with the level of cohesion of the community in question, the frequency of interactions and the prominence of disturbing factors.

¹ Elisa Paraschiv, «Problema Sărăciei în Comunitățile Urbane și Rurale din România», “Revista Română de Sociologie”, 2008, p. 424

Experiences with insecurity. Analysing the interviews we conducted reveals that most participants had no experiences where their personal safety was directly threatened. The examples we received centred in indirect threats that generated a relative level of fear. Thus, some of the respondents felt threatened by the consequences of the pandemic and its associated impositions, but also by the deviant behaviours of some individuals/social groups: “Alcohol, cheap and accessible drugs can make poor people insecure for those around them, they can become violent” (R8). Experiences with insecurity at an individual level were relatively few among the respondents. This leads perceptions of human security to relate either to the experiences of others or to their own knowledge about maximising it in different contexts. Perceptions of poverty influence individuals' personal security. Through this analysis, we identified two approaches among respondents related to this relationship. The first one refers to how poverty causes violent behaviours among vulnerable people that can create insecurities at the social level. Respondents gave various examples, ranging from beggars becoming verbally and physically violent to situations where people living on the edge of poverty resort to theft to survive, fuelled by poor economic situations. In this way, poor people become factors of insecurity for the safety of others. The second approach we have identified is summarised by the insecurity generated by poverty among vulnerable people. Interviewees related poverty expressed in terms of insufficient income and limited employment opportunities to insecurity. More specifically, poor people are in a permanent state of insecurity because they cannot afford to fulfil their basic survival needs. They may make poverty-influenced decisions that may jeopardise their personal security and, by extension, their lives. These approaches were complemented by analysing factors that may influence perceptions of personal security, such as area of residence, age, education and experience with insecurity. These factors led to a categorisation of the responses, and the mapping of differences in perceptions relevant to the study.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to analyse how perceptions of poverty influence individuals' personal security by providing an answer to the research question “How is poverty perceived about human security?” Using the responses from 20 semi-structured interviews, we analysed the period 2019-2022. The findings reveal that in the period 2019-2022, respondents perceived poverty and the behaviours of people on the borderline of poverty as a threat to their personal security, and they had to preserve their safety through specific measures to secure their properties, especially their homes. Equally importantly, interviewees' perceptions of poverty also reflected personal security issues for vulnerable individuals or communities. Thus, some arguments revolved around the vulnerability of people living in poverty, with issues such as food needs, the burden of labour market integration or restricted access to education being prioritised in the responses. In other words, the essence of the answer to the research question lies in the way Romanians associate poverty with a state of insecurity at an individual level.

The findings point to the problems Romania faces in poverty and the personal insecurity it generates. The two components investigated have a twofold effect on personal security: they may diminish the sense of security in social interactions (the perception that poor people can be violent represses possible interactions with them), but they may also insecurities poor people by restricting access to resources, opportunities and services. Equally importantly, both categories of individuals (those with sufficient income and those living on the poverty line) experience a direct threat to their personal security from scarcity. On the one hand, insecurity may take the form of a feeling generated by stereotypes or previous events for those who associate the poor with the possibility of disruption to their security. On the other hand, actions in the social sphere, and financial hardship that do not allow a minimum standard of living, directly affect the personal security of those experiencing poverty.

The personal security of individuals in the community is also closely correlated with groups living in poverty. The behaviour of the latter, prone to acts of physical and verbal violence, and theft, conditions people's safety. These assertions are supported by the respondents' responses, which emphasised the insecurity they feel in the community, and how local authorities intervene to quell and resolve such events. Deviant actions resulting from the needs exacerbated by poverty turn individuals into factors of insecurity for the community and, by extension, for the individuals. On the other hand, social stereotyping of the poor contributes to the deepening of existing social class divisions and makes it more difficult to integrate them into various collective structures.

Poverty is thus perceived as a threat to human security, both for those living on its borders and for the rest of the community.

The results confirm, in the context of Romanian society, the emphasis on poverty (understood in terms of income) in the respondents' perceptions, an aspect also found in previous research that assessed the dynamics of penury. Romanians profile perceptions of poverty on an amplified note, hence the considerable differences between perceptions and statistical measurements. Thus, although insufficient income is associated to a considerable extent with poverty due to the inability to buy necessities, this can also be linked to non-conforming living standards or citizens' dissatisfaction with leadership. From the assessment of perceptions of personal security, we identified the main threat the behaviours generated by deprivation, as well as other related issues. These include ethnic communities and their lack of integration, marginalisation on financial criteria or the conditioning of education to pecuniary aspects. The implications for the literature are that the relationship between poverty and personal security is centred on the dynamics of perceptions, which can be exploited at the institutional level. This emphasises, by reference to the empirical environment, the actual way in which individuals relate their security to the existence of social problems such as poverty.

The analysis part of this paper is limited by the number of participants in this study, and the results cannot be generalisable by its qualitative nature. Thus, the main problem that can be identified is the impossibility of applying these results to similar social constructs or case studies. In addition, due to the limited time, the questions in the interview grid focussed exclusively on the analytical dimensions, limiting the possibility of identifying other issues related to the topic. In future research designed to deepen this analysis, focus groups could lead to more elaborate discussions and opinions by which passive participants could also step out of their comfort zone. Finally, the qualitative nature of this study coexists with criticisms of qualitative research that highlight the lack of transparency, namely how and in what way the researchers arrived at certain conclusions.¹ Further research could strengthen existing findings by investigating the motivations behind perceptions of poverty and personal security.

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Annex 2: Interview guide

1. In your opinion, what are the main problems facing our country now?
2. What do Romanian citizens face the main financial challenges?
3. What does poverty mean to you?
4. How do you think incomes in Romania compare to the needs of citizens?
- How do you rate your income level compared to the average income in Romania?
5. Can you tell me whether, in the last three years, any changes have influenced the occurrence of poverty in your community?
 - Do you know if there are people in your locality who are unable to provide for their survival needs?
6. How do you assess the evolution of employment opportunities in the Romanian labour market in the last 3 years? To what extent have you or someone in your family faced employment difficulties?
7. What does it mean for you? 'personal security'?
8. How would you characterise the area in which you live in terms of security?
9. What does personal safety in your community mean to you? - What do you consider to be, in your opinion, the greatest threat to personal safety
 - To what extent has street violence or theft occurred in your community in the last 3 years?
10. Can you tell me about situations in the last 3 years where your safety was directly threatened?
11. What do you consider to be the main tools to protect housing in your locality?
 - Please tell me whether you consider purchasing one necessary.
12. How do you think the disadvantages caused by poverty affect a person's security in Romanian society?

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PERISCOPING RUSSIAN – UKRAINIAN CONFLICT THROUGH THE LENS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Abstract:	<i>The Russian Ukrainian conflict of 2022 has had a significant impact on the world politics. This conflict, which involves military and non-military actions, raises important questions regarding the applicability and effectiveness of public international law in resolving and mitigating it.</i> <i>This article aims to analyze the Russian – Ukrainian conflict through the lens of international law. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to a better understanding and provide insight into the possibilities for potential solutions.</i> <i>The paper explores the extent to which the Russian – Ukrainian conflict violated the principles of international law, the positions of intergovernmental bodies on the conflict and the prospects for reaching a solution consistent with the standards of international law.</i> <i>The study relied on the analytical approach by examining the basic elements of the conflict from a legal perspective.</i> <i>Findings reveal the inability of the UN to deal with and or stop the conflict. Also, again, the justifications for both parties to legitimize their actions violated international rules and are far from satisfactory. Hence, adopting a legal perspective is crucial in addressing the complex and ongoing Russian Ukrainian conflict is recommended.</i>
Keywords:	Russian – Ukrainian conflict; international law; UN; rules
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Introduction

Among the contemporary international events that have cast a shadow on international reality is the Russian Ukrainian conflict of 2022, because of its far-reaching implications for regional stability and global politics, this conflict, not only has serious social, political and economic consequences for both countries, but also raised complex legal questions regarding the application of public international law. This article aims to analyze the Russian Ukrainian conflict within the framework of public international law and study its regional and global repercussions. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to a better understanding and provide insight into the possibilities for potential solutions. This conflict fundamentally stems from the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and political divide between Russia and Ukraine. The roots of this division can be traced back to centuries of shared history, intertwined identities, and regional disputes¹.

In this context, the pace of the conflict escalated in 2022 when Russia launched a military war on Ukraine. This move was met with international condemnation and sparked a series of events that exacerbated tensions between Russia and Ukraine. This has resulted in thousands of casualties, the displacement of residents, and significant economic and social repercussions². Public international law has been instrumental in shaping responses to the Russian Ukrainian conflict, as it provides the legal framework through which states, international

¹ Samantha Wilson, *The Origins of the Russia-Ukraine War*, “Foreign Policy Magazine”, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2021

² Mary Robinson, *Causes and Catalysts of the Current Russia-Ukraine Crisis*, “Journal of Conflict Studies”, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 202

organizations and individuals can address conflict and seek justice. Fundamental principles of international law, such as the prohibition of the use of force, respect for human rights, and the right to self-determination, have been invoked by various actors involved in the conflict to strengthen their positions and lend legitimacy to their actions. We begin by outlining the historical and political background Russian Ukrainian conflicts, before briefly addressing the impacts of Russian – Ukrainian conflict. The main body of the article is then separated into analysis, in turn, of the international rules being violated in the conflict, and the position of the intergovernmental bodies on them. The article concludes with some proposed solutions to the Russia/Ukraine conflict.

The Russian Ukrainian Conflict: Historical and Political Background and Reasons

The Russian Ukrainian conflict has been an ongoing No. since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, the conflict reached its peak in 2022 when Russia launched military operation against Ukraine. This conflict has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and the displacement of millions of people, and it has had significant political and economic consequences for both countries and the region. The conflict is a complex and multifaceted No. that has garnered international attention and has far-reaching implications. It is essential to understand the background, motives, and roots of this conflict to gain a comprehensive perspective.

The Historical and Political Background of the Russian Ukrainian Conflict

The history of Russia and Ukraine goes back to centuries. They share a complex and intertwined history, marked by periods of cooperation, tension, and conflict. The origins of the relationship can be traced back to the medieval state of Kievan Rus, which included parts of present-day Ukraine and Russia. This early civilization laid the foundation for the cultural and linguistic ties that still exist between the two countries to this day. Over the centuries, the region has witnessed the rise and fall of several powerful entities, including the Mongol Empire and the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, which exercised influence over parts of Ukraine and Russia. These external influences have contributed to the divergent paths and identities developed by Ukraine and Russia¹.

In the late 18th century, the Russian Empire began to expand its territory, gradually annexing Ukrainian lands. This process intensified during the reign of Catherine the Great, who pursued a policy of Russification, seeking to assimilate Ukraine into the larger Russian identity. In the early twentieth century, Ukraine's struggle for independence gained momentum amid the collapse of the Russian Empire and the chaos of the Russian Revolution. However, this quest for self-determination was short-lived, as Ukraine soon found itself under Soviet rule after the creation of the Soviet Union in 1922². Under the Soviet rule, Ukraine witnessed a period of economic development and political repression, and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic became one of the republics within the Soviet Union, where Moscow exercised significant control over its affairs. Despite this, Ukraine was able to maintain its distinct cultural and national identity, throughout the Soviet era. Ukraine was an important component of the Soviet Union, serving as an agricultural and industrial stronghold, but this relationship was characterized by periods of tension. Under Soviet rule, the Ukrainian language and culture faced repression, and there were political and economic imbalances in Russia's favor.³

The relationship between Russia and Ukraine witnessed a major transformation in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed, as Ukraine declared its independence, which represented the beginning of a new chapter in their relationship. Initially, there were hopes to strengthen friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries, but this vision was challenged by a series of issues. The period since, has been characterized by tensions arising from Russia's loss of influence in its near abroad and policies centered on efforts to reclaim this in the face of indications on the part of some ex-Soviet states, principally Ukraine, that they seek a future founded on closer relationships with the EU and NATO, leaving Russia feeling 'boxed in' by the perception of the reach of these organizations extending ever closer to its borders.

¹ Ahmed Ali, *The Roots of the Russian Ukrainian Conflict: A Historical Perspective*, "Journal of International Studies", Vol.53, No. 2, 2021, p. 432

² Muhammad Jadallah, *The Development of Relations between Russia and Ukraine: A Historical Reading*, "Journal of Human Sciences - Kuwait University", Vol. 44, No. 2, 2017, p. 33

³ Mustafa Abdel Tawab, *Russia and Ukraine Throughout History, The Roots of the Current Conflict*, "Journal of International Studies - University of Baghdad", Vol. 11, No. 41, 2014, p. 71

The relations between the two countries witnessed the two most dangerous crises, the repercussions of which continued and led to the outbreak of war, and they are:

1. The Annexation of Crimea 2014

The crisis erupted in November 2013 after Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich announced his withdrawal from negotiations for a partnership agreement with the European Union and his intention to join the Eurasian Customs Union, which Russia sought to establish as a counterpart to the European Union. This sparked outrage among the Ukrainian public, particularly in Kyiv and Western Ukraine, who were eager to join the European Union, leading to a wave of massive protests in the capital. Despite the signing of the partnership agreement on February 21, 2014, between the government and the opposition, the situation deteriorated further the next day when the opposition revolted against President Yanukovich, forcing him to flee the country¹.

This situation faced opposition from the Russian-speaking residents of Eastern Ukraine, prompting them to hold counterdemonstrations. Russia responded by sending special forces to the strategically important Crimean Peninsula, where they took control of government buildings and strategic locations such as the Sevastopol port, which serves as a base for the Russian navy. On March 16, 2014, a referendum was held in Crimea, where 95% of the population chose to join Russia. Thus, Russia swiftly and decisively defended its vital interests in Ukraine and prevented the West from attempting to choke it off by sea through the seizure of the last maritime route connecting Russia to the Mediterranean, thereby imposing a new geopolitical reality in Crimea before the new Ukrainian authorities could begin to address the chaos across the country².

2. The war in Donbas and the division of Ukraine

The opposition that emerged against the new regime in eastern Ukraine is of strategic value as an effective tool for Russia in pressuring Ukraine or at least keeping its borders as far as possible from NATO's influence. Therefore, Russia hastened to support the opposition and the rebellion that began to appear on the Ukrainian scene, where pro-Russian protesters occupied government headquarters in the Donbas region. Two regions within the area declared their independence from Ukraine, namely (Donetsk) and (Luhansk), on May 12, 2014. Russia supported the establishment of self-defense forces in Donbas, where Ukrainian forces launched a large-scale attack on the Donbas regions. Russian support was not limited to providing weapons and training; it was accompanied by a wide-ranging media campaign against the Ukrainian military operation. Russia was also working covertly in Ukraine to create the appropriate conditions for a rebellion as part of the hybrid warfare strategy it launched in Ukraine³.

It is worth noting that this Russian intelligence role in Ukraine did not happen suddenly but has been ongoing since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with Russian nationalist movements attempting to penetrate the Ukrainian arena. Therefore, we find that some Russian-speaking Ukrainians belonged to the Eurasian Movement. Additionally, activists in establishing the Donetsk People's Republic were previously introduced between 2006 and 2009 to training camps supervised by the Eurasian Youth Union Movement. This led to the spread of pro-Russian sentiments in the Donbas region as early as 2005, coinciding with the expansion of Russian nationalist activities there. This is a method of hybrid warfare that Russia has practiced within Ukraine, resulting in these nationalist sentiments in the Donbas region playing a significant role in encouraging the separation of this area from Kyiv's authority⁴. In general, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev summarized in a letter to Ukrainian President

¹ Nawar Muhammad Rabi, *The Political Crisis in Ukraine and the East-West Tug-of-War*, "The Political and International Journal", No. 27, 2015, pp. 28-29

² Imad Qaddoura, *The Centrality of Geography and Control of the Eastern Gateway to the West: Ukraine as a Focal Point of Conflict*, "Arab Policies", No. 9, July 2014, p. 49

³ Kevork Almassian, *The Conflict over Syria and Ukraine from the Perspective of "Putin's Brain"*, "Katykhon Center for Studies", 21/6/2016, <http://katehon.com/ar/article/lsr-l-swry-wwkrny-mn-mnzwrdmg-bwtyn> (08.04.2025)

⁴ *Minsk Agreement*, DW German Channel website, 15/11/2016, [http://www.dw.com/ar/\(08.04.2025\)](http://www.dw.com/ar/(08.04.2025))

Viktor Yushchenko on August 11, 2009, that the crisis was preceded by problems between Russia and Ukraine as follows:

1. Ukraine supplying Georgia with weapons through secret deals before the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.
2. Ukraine's efforts to join NATO
3. Ukraine's obstruction of the Russian fleet's operations in the Black Sea and its base in Sevastopol port
4. The dispute over energy supplies and pricing, specifically the gas that Kyiv receives from Moscow.

The Ukrainian Russian crisis of 2021-2022 turned into a military confrontation and a continuous international crisis that also involved the United States, NATO, the European Union, and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Reasons for the Russian Ukrainian conflict

To understand Russia's motives the war on Ukraine, it is necessary to understand the status Ukraine holds with Russian decision – makers. Ukraine has strategic, economic and even cultural significance for Russia. Hence, the recent war had roots represented by the following motives:

Political Reasons

In December 1991, Ukraine, along with Russia and Belarus, were among the republics that hammered the final nail into the coffin of the Soviet Union, and the two separate states continued to maintain close relations. They agreed to maintain friendly relations with Ukraine agreeing in 1994 to give up its nuclear arsenal and sign the Budapest Memorandum on security guarantees, if Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States No. a guarantee against the use of force that threatens the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. However, Moscow wanted to maintain its influence by establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States. While Russia was able to build a close alliance with Belarus, it was unable to bring Ukraine into the CIS, as Ukraine's desire was directed towards the West. This troubled Moscow, but it did not reach the stage of conflict throughout the 1990s because the West was not seeking Ukraine's inclusion in NATO. The Russian economy was also weak, and the country was preoccupied with the war in Chechnya. In 1997, Moscow, through the so-called "Grand Contract" formally recognized Ukraine's borders, including Crimea, which has a Russian-speaking majority¹.

Russia was one of the signatories to the Charter for European Security at the Istanbul Summit, 1999, where it "reaffirmed the inherent right of every state to be free to choose or change its security arrangements". The Russian leadership viewed Ukraine as part of its sphere of influence. Indeed, according to Romanian analyst Iulian Cifu, Russia dealt with Ukraine with an updated version of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" which states that Ukraine's sovereignty cannot be greater than that of the Warsaw Pact member states². This view assumes that Russia's actions to appease the West in the early 1990s should have been met with reciprocal action from the West, but without NATO expansion along Russia's borders.

The two countries experienced their first major diplomatic crisis in the fall of 2003 when Russia suddenly began building a dam in the Kerch Strait, adjacent to the Ukrainian island of Kosa Tusla. Kyiv viewed this as an attempt to redraw the border between the two countries. This tension was not resolved until a bilateral meeting between the Russian and Ukrainian presidents resulted in a halt to dam construction. However, the declared friendship between the two countries still bore signs of discord. During the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections, Russia strongly supported its pro-Russian candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, but the "Orange Revolution" prevented his victory and replaced him with the pro-Western politician, Viktor Yushchenko. During his presidency, Russia cut off gas supplies to the country twice, in 2006 and 2009. It also cut off gas supplies to Europe passing through Ukraine³. In 2008, former President George W. Bush attempted to integrate Ukraine and Georgia into NATO and accept their membership through a preparatory program. Moscow protested and explicitly declared that it would not accept Ukraine's complete independence. During the NATO summit in Bucharest, the No. of Ukraine's membership

¹ Walter Lacobert, *Putinism: Russia and its Future with the West*, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Lebanon, 2016, p. 58

² Alexander Dugin, *Salvation from the Eurasian West: Terrestrial Civilizations versus Maritime and Atlantic Civilizations*, Dar Al-Ka, Baghdad, 2021, p. 128

³ Walter Lacbourg, *Op. cit.*, p. 94

in NATO was raised for Georgia and Ukraine, but Germany and France blocked it. President Vladimir Putin also explicitly rejected Ukraine's membership in the alliance, considering it a threat to Russia's national security.

After weeks of protests as part of the Euromaidan movement (2013–2014), pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych and leaders of Ukraine's parliamentary opposition signed a compromise agreement on February 21, 2014, calling for early elections. The next day, Yanukovych fled Kyiv ahead of a vote to remove him from the presidency. However, the leaders of Ukraine's Russian-speaking eastern regions declared their continued loyalty to Yanukovych, sparking what became known as the 2014 pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine. These unrests were followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, and then the outbreak of war in Donbas in April 2014, at a time when Russia was working to support or even establish “quasi-states” within Ukrainian territory, namely the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. Russia understands that Ukraine's location constitutes the western gateway and the last geographical barrier against NATO expansion. Additionally, the location of the Crimean Peninsula as a forward naval base for Russia grants it control over the Black Sea due to its central position in the sea. Russia realizes that losing Crimea, in particular, and Ukraine, in general, would serve the strategy of NATO powers in containing Russia by reaching its land and maritime borders, especially in the case of a NATO base being established there. This would prevent Russia from navigating the Black Sea and consequently from accessing the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, Russian actions to annex Crimea were swift and decisive.¹

Economic Reasons

Russia is considered the largest gas supplier in the world, exporting about 16 billion cubic feet per day, most of which goes to Europe. Through Ukraine, 80% of Russian gas flows towards Europe. Therefore, if Ukraine shifts its orientation towards NATO, it will disrupt Russia's gas exports to Europe, putting pressure on the Russian economy, which largely relies on energy, with Europe being one of its most important markets².

Security Reasons

Russia realized that it had an open mandate to defend its interests in regions it considers a natural extension of itself. Russia also recognized its influence in its vital area through control over Ukraine and preventing it from joining NATO. In addition to the strategic importance of the Sevastopol port, which houses the Russian military base with the largest Russian naval fleet, and the necessity of protecting it, especially since the ruling political regime in Ukraine is aligned with the West and seeks to annul the agreement signed between President Vladimir Putin and former Ukrainian President Yanukovych. This agreement included the extension of the naval base's presence in this port in the Crimean Peninsula, which was originally set to end in 2017 and was extended to 2042. Under the agreement, this extension was in exchange for \$7 billion annually and a 30% reduction in the price of Russian gas exported to Ukraine³.

Social Reasons

When the Ukrainian crisis erupted in 2013, it had roots dating back to Ukraine's separation from the former Soviet Union, where two types of political trends prevailed. The first was the Ukrainian nationalists in Western Ukraine, who sought to strengthen Ukraine's ties with Europe and the United States. The second was the Ukrainians of Slavic Russian origin in Eastern Ukraine, who sought to maintain strong relations with the Russian Federation. This means that Ukraine suffers from the same identity crisis that Russia is experiencing. Therefore, the Ukrainian political arena witnessed conflicts and tensions between these two opposing directions, which escalated during the Portuguese Revolution between 2004 and 2005, following allegations of election fraud that led to the pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovych winning the presidency by defeating the Western-backed opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko. However, the political conflicts did not stop, and this time they were within the pro-Western camp between President Viktor Yushchenko and his ally, the leader of the parliamentary minority, Yulia Tymoshenko. After the old political elite loyal to Russia managed to ally with Yushchenko, exploiting their political influence and economic capabilities to regain their positions within the system, this led to the old elite reaching power, where

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 94

² Muhammad Jassim Hussein, *Russia and the Game of Energy Dominance (A Vision of Roles and Strategies)*, Amjad Publishing and Printing House, Baghdad, 2018, p. 77

³ Enaad Kazim Al-Naili, *The Russian Federation and the Future of the Global Strategic Balance*, Arab Scientific Publishers, Beirut, p. 190

Viktor Yanukovych was able to assume the position of Prime Minister, receiving wide political and economic support from Russia as part of the struggle between Russia and the West for influence in Ukraine¹.

Impact of the Russian Ukrainian Conflict

The aggravation of the Russian Ukrainian conflict, and Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, led to losses on the Russian side, which varied at all levels, from human losses resulting from combat operations to economic losses resulting from the sanctions imposed by Western countries on Russia, which affected oil and gas. The freezing of balances and the collapse of commercial banks and supply programs in general. This war imposed international isolation on Russia, which led to the severing of commercial, cultural and political exchange, and exacerbated Western sanctions on Russia by closing airspace to Russian aviation in most European countries and prohibiting the movement of Russian ships in European ports. These sanctions also reached the point of halting all Russian activities and participation in many celebrations and programs. On the Ukrainian side, the losses of the Ukrainian economy worsened, which was reflected in many economic activities, and the damage to the infrastructure, which was affected by large-scale destruction operations directed by Russian forces, as the operations targeted civilian targets, not just military ones.

The continuation of the war also led to the cessation of maritime navigation, as the Ukrainian ports overlooking the Black Sea were closed, and maritime transport movement stopped. The war also caused the destruction of Ukraine's productive capacity, the deterioration of foreign trade, and the general collapse of the financial conditions in the country, as the ability to collect revenues diminished. Taxes, high prices of food commodities, energy, minerals, and economic contraction². The Russian Ukrainian war had a negative impact on European countries in general, in terms of slowing economic growth, and because of the impact of Western sanctions on Russia on trade relations, the volume of trade exchange between Russia and the EU countries decreased, as Moscow was the fifth largest trading partner of the European Union. The effects of the war also extended to threatening European investments and assets in Russia and the risk of confiscation and nationalization as Russia's reaction to Western sanctions. Since Russia is considered the largest energy supplier in the European Union, European energy security is destabilized and exposed to partial collapse³. Food security is also considered one of the most important foundations affected by the Russian Ukrainian war, as Russia is the largest exporter of wheat in the world, and Russia and Ukraine provide more than a third of global grain exports. Because of the war, the prices of food commodities in Europe have inflated, especially commodities based on wheat and corn. The Ukrainian refugee crisis has worsened. Since the beginning of the war, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are currently around 6 million Ukrainian refugees in Europe⁴.

The distribution of refugees has changed significantly over the past year. While in 2022 Poland was still the country with the highest number of forcibly displaced persons, Germany is now the leading destination. According to newly revised statistics, there are now over 1.1 million Ukrainian refugees on German territory. Monthly arrivals fluctuate but remain significant. Between the end of July and the end of September 2024, for example, the authorities registered some 20,000 new arrivals. The refugee situation has changed dramatically in Poland as well. Of the more than 1.6 million refugees to whom Poland granted temporary protection, only about 970,000 remain there. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians left in 2022, traveling mainly to Germany, but also to other Western European countries, as well.

Currently, the number of temporary protection holders in Poland is stable. However, it should be noted that there is a lot of movement on the Polish Ukrainian border. Circular movements in both directions amount to tens of thousands of people per day, according to the Polish border guards. The most common reason for this being the

¹ Saleh bin Mohammed Al-Khathlan, *Religion and Russian Foreign Policy: A Study of the Role of the Orthodox Church in Russian Policy Towards the Conflict in Syria*, "Center for Strategic Thought Studies", Istanbul, 2016, p. 19.

² The economic contraction has increased by between 25 and 35%, according to statistics from the International Monetary Fund

³ Issam Abdel Shafi, *The Russian-Ukrainian War and the Future of the International Order*, "Al Jazeera Center for Studies", May 3, 2022, www.studies.aljazeera.net (28.2.2025)

⁴ The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 12.01.2025, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine> (28.06.2025)

temporary returns to Ukrainians to visit family members¹. Regarding the impact of the Russian Ukrainian conflict on African countries, the effect of the Russia-Ukrainian conflict has been felt across Africa through trade disruptions, commodity price increases, and tighter financial conditions.

One of the important legal implications of the Russian Ukrainian conflict is that it revealed a clear weakness in the current international system, especially in the Security Council, as it became clear after this conflict that the veto in the Security Council constitutes a major obstacle to international peace and weakens the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. For example, in the current conflict, we see that the Russian veto in the Security Council makes the imposition of sanctions subject to the solidarity of those who wish, unless Article 27 is amended, by activating the opinion of the majority representing two-thirds of the member states to override the effect of the veto, as in our case under discussion. Western threats to strip Russia of its permanent membership in the Security Council, although achieving this faces difficulty, except by preventing Russia from voting on the Security Council resolution related to its war on Ukraine.

The International Rules Being Violated in the Russian Ukrainian Conflict

This segment addresses the most important rules that were violated in this conflict, those that were used to give legitimacy to the invasion from Russian side. Russia's violation of the principle of non-interference: The principle of non-interference is one of the most important rules of contemporary international law, as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, and the most affirmed principle in international relations, and international reality has proven that it is the most violated principle of international law. There is no doubt that one of the most important characteristics of a state in accordance with the rules of international law is non-interference in its internal affairs, which is the most important manifestation of exercising its sovereignty in its external aspect, regardless of whether this interference is from a state or an international organization.

Internationally prohibited interference is the subjection of a state or international organization to interference in its internal or external affairs, without this subjection having a legal basis, for any reason, such as by obligating the intervening state in its affairs to follow a certain approach, or to refrain from a certain behavior, or a certain ideology. That is considered a restriction of the state's freedom and an attack on its sovereignty and independence². Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter prohibits the use of force in international relations. It also calls on all UN members to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of other states. Some exceptions to Article 2(4). Self-defense, as noted in Article 5. Actions taken by the UN Security Council to ensure international peace, as noted in Article 42.

Paragraph seven of the same article also stipulates that "nothing in this Charter authorizes the United Nations to interfere in affairs that are fundamental to the internal jurisdiction of a state". As stated in the Declaration of Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on October 24, 1970 "No state or group of states has the right to interfere directly or indirectly, for any reason, in the internal or external affairs of another state." As a result, not only military intervention, but also all types of interference or threats directed against the personality of the state or against its political, economic, or cultural components, is in violation of international law....³. By examining the previous texts, reviewing the case in question, and within the framework of searching for the extent of violation of the principle of intervention as one of the fundamental principles of international law, which includes non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and this appears, for example, in not exercising any pressure or coercion from a country on persons or institutions of another state, nor to engage in any kind of interference in the relations of this state with its nationals. This is because, according to this principle, every state has complete freedom to choose its political, economic and social system, and to establish whatever laws it wishes for this purpose, if it does not resort to systems of genocide of the population or racial discrimination against some of them.

This principle also includes refraining from any encouragement, support, or harboring harmful activities in other countries, such as, for example, refraining from recruiting or supporting mercenaries, and refraining from

¹ *Ukrainian Refugee Crisis: The Current Situation*, <https://www.peopleinneed.net/the-ukrainian-refugee-crisis-current-situation-953> (28.06.2025)

² Mansour Milad, *Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Nasser University Press, Nasser, Iraq, 1991, p.185

³ *Idem*

interfering in civil wars in another country and assisting rebels there¹. This interference, which is prohibited by international law and stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, may be political, military, economic, cultural, ideological, or financial interference. Its form may be direct or indirect, and it may be an individual intervention carried out by one country, or it may be a collective intervention carried out by a group of countries or an international organization.

Despite its prohibition and illegality, many countries have violated it based on other principles of international law, such as the principle of legitimate defense, or to protect human rights, or protect state nationals. The practice of interfering in the Russian Ukrainian situation was not the first time and will not be the last in international reality. Other countries have practiced it to achieve their goals and interests. Violating the principle of prohibiting the use of military force: the principle of prohibiting, the use of force or the threat thereof is one of the fundamental principles affecting international relations.

The principle of prohibiting the use of force or the threat of it is one of the fundamental principles affecting international relations, as contemporary international law was founded on coordinating relations between the components of the international community in a way that ensures a minimum level of stability. This principle was introduced for the first time in the text of Article Two, paragraph three and four of the United Nations Charter, where the text came clearly in the third paragraph that: States must settle their international disputes peacefully. This must be done in a way that does not endanger international peace, security, or justice. The fourth paragraph states: states must not threaten or use force against the political independence or territorial integrity of other states. This includes any actions that are inconsistent with the United Nations' purposes. In addition, it was addressed by Resolution No. 2625 regarding the Declaration of the Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, by stipulating that:

- States should not use force or coercion against other states.
- States should settle disputes peacefully.
- States should not intervene in other states' affairs.
- States should not acquire territory through force.

From the above texts, we conclude that the use of force in international relations, or even the threat thereof, is considered an internationally criminal act in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law, which makes the Russian position controversial and criminalized, as Ukraine is a sovereign state, and it is not permissible to use force against it, attack it, or threatening it. Russia has relied on Article 51 of the Charter relating to legitimate defense. It has relied on an illegitimate justification, which makes its behavior itself illegitimate in general, as the text of Article 51 has been clear and specific in this regard. Violation of the principle of sovereign equality: This principle has witnessed a great difference in interpretation and understanding among many international legal jurisprudential trends. It is not problematic on the theoretical level, but its application in international reality raises a set of practical difficulties, and this is due to the disagreement over the dimensions and limits of sovereignty². The principle of sovereign equality is a structural principle of the international legal system. It is recognized in numerous international legal instruments, including Article 2.1 of the United Nations Charter of 1945 and General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV) of 1970. It is also enshrined in international custom and as a general principle of international law. This principle encompasses the right of the State to its territorial integrity as well as its political independence. Both are included in the various international legal sources that enunciate the principle of sovereign equality. A summary is as follows:

Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations³:

General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, the annex to which includes the "Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations"⁴. At the European regional level, in 1975, the Final Act of the

¹ Mansour Milad, *Op. cit.*, p. 187

² Mohamed Nasser, *Sovereignty Equality in the United Nations Charter*, "Journal of Legal Sciences", No. 15, January 2017, p. 3

³ By stating the obligation to refrain from "the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State".

⁴ "Every State has the duty to refrain in its international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State (...)" • "All States enjoy sovereign equality (...). In particular, sovereign

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) or Helsinki Conference transversally enunciated the principle of territorial integrity in various points of its Decalogue¹. In 1990, the principle of territorial integrity was reiterated in the Charter of Paris for a new Europe². In the Millennium Declaration of the General Assembly of the year 2000, the principle of territorial integrity is mentioned again in the initial list of fundamental principles set out in the Declaration³. Pondering over the previous texts, we note without a doubt that the intended equality is legal equality, which entails that any state cannot exercise a policy of pressure or coercion towards another state, and this is done by not interfering in the internal affairs of states.

That is, states, within the framework of their international relations, are subject to the provisions of international law in their obligations and their implementation in good faith and respect for the rights of others. This is the same principle that states must respect when any dispute arises between parties, given that those states enjoy full legal personality and are equal to others in sovereignty. This goes beyond the difference between large and small countries, rich and poor countries, and this principle is confirmed by countries' resort to international judiciary. All countries are equal in terms of legal status, as it is not permissible to resort to judiciary except with the consent of the parties, and it is not permissible to resort to the judiciary except with the consent of the parties. The dispute can only be settled by agreement of the parties, regardless of the type of countries involved in the dispute. This is the true image of the principle of sovereign equality, which in another way criminalizes a state's violation of other states under any circumstances.

With reference to the text of Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations, permanent member states enjoy the exercise of the right of veto, a right that some part of international law jurisprudence sees as inconsistent with the principle of sovereign equality, and that recognizing this right for those states constitutes a waste of the rights of other states, and makes the principle of equality relatively dominant. On the other hand, it gives those

equality includes the following elements: (...) c) each State has the duty to respect the personality of other States; d) the territorial integrity and political independence of the State are inviolable"; • "No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly and for whatever reason, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. Therefore, not only armed intervention, but also any other form of interference or threat to the personality of the State, or to the political, economic and cultural elements that constitute it, are violations of international law. (...)". Territorial integrity is understood to be included within the notion of the «personality of the State» and its «political elements»; • By delimiting the principle of self-determination of peoples, the territorial integrity of States is protected (see below)

¹ At the beginning of: "Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent to sovereignty. The participating States shall respect the sovereign equality and individuality of each of them, as well as all the rights inherent to and included in their sovereignty, including the right to freedom of expression and expression of opinion, as well as ... of every State to legal equality, territorial integrity and freedom and political independence. (...). They consider that their borders may be modified, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement". • In Principle II: "Refraining from resorting to the threat or use of force The participating States shall refrain in their mutual relations, as well as in their international relations in general, to resort to the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or any other in a manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations and with this Declaration". • In principle III: "Inviolability of borders. The participating States mutually consider all their borders to be inviolable, as well as the borders of all States in Europe and will consequently refrain now and in the future from attacking these borders. Accordingly, they shall also refrain from any demand, or any act aimed at seizing and usurping all or part of the territory of any participating State." • In principle IV: "Territorial integrity of the States. The participating States shall respect the territorial integrity of each of the participating States. They will therefore refrain from any action incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, against the territorial integrity, political independence or unity of any participating State, and from any such action which constitutes a threat or use of force. The participating States shall also refrain from making the territory of any of them the object of military occupation or other direct or indirect measures of force contrary to international law, or the object of acquisition through such measures or the threat thereof. No such occupation or acquisition shall be recognized as legal."

² To "uphold and promote democracy, peace and unity in Europe, we solemnly reaffirm our full commitment to the Ten Principles of the Helsinki Final Act. (...) We reaffirm the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant rules of international law, including those concerning the territorial integrity of States".

³ "We reaffirm our determination to support all efforts aimed at ensuring respect for the sovereign equality of all States, respect for their territorial integrity and political independence (...)" (*United Nations, General Assembly, Res. 55/2, Millennium Declaration*, 13 September 2000).

countries a right to do so, in that the major countries possess money, equipment, and weapons, which makes them capable of defending the provisions of the Charter, while other backward countries are unable even to solve their problems. In addition, the major countries were the reason for the suppression of World War II, which gives it an important place in the Charter¹. From a neutral point of view, we see that the course of events in the Russian Ukrainian war makes the principle of equality of sovereignty a violation and conflicts with the explicit text in international law. Hegemony and power, even if it is just a political event, by accepting it for a period of time and not protesting it internationally makes it stable internationally, and that the text of the Charter needs to be amended in line with the rapid development in international relations.

The Position of Intergovernmental Bodies on the Russian Ukrainian conflict

The United Nations, as the global body specialized in coordinating the interests of parties to international relations through its organs, specifically in those types of conflicts that threaten international peace and security and for which the Security Council is the body charged with settling them in terms of imposing sanctions or authorizing the use of force to maintain international peace and security or restore them². The General Assembly discussed the No. of the Security Council's inability to carry out its responsibilities, which was described as a serious challenge threatening international peace and security not only in Europe but also in the entire world, as the Secretary-General pronounced on the day of the invasion, 24 February 2022, "It is wrong. It is against the Charter. It is unacceptable". He noted that it was "not irreversible" and appealed to President Putin to "Stop the military operation. Bring the troops back to Russia". He stressed the commitment of the UN and its humanitarian partners "to staying and delivering, to support people in Ukraine in their time of need... working on both sides of the contact line, always guided by the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, humanity, and independence"³. Here it must be noted that in many cases decisive decisions cannot be taken, due to the permanent members having the right of veto, as they resort to using this right against any draft resolution that conflicts with their interests, except in the case of a permanent member abstaining from voting⁴.

The real importance of the veto appears when the state holding the veto is a party in the dispute presented for voting, as in our case under study. It is crucial to mention here that to restrict the veto, France and Mexico proposed in 2020 to regulate the use of the veto. Among the Security Council's reactions to what is happening internationally in the Russian Ukrainian arena, on February 25, 2022, the council called for a procedural vote on a draft resolution calling for an extraordinary session of the General Assembly regarding Ukraine. To pass this resolution, the council needed a positive vote from nine countries. Eleven countries supported the resolution, three abstained, and the resolution was rejected using Russia's veto right. On March 2, 2022 the General Assembly held an emergency session where the overwhelming majority (141-5) voted on a resolution condemning the invasion and calling on Moscow to withdraw its military forces. This was the first condemnation resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly since the beginning of the war, with fourteen countries voting in favor and one against.

In the context of the impact of the permanent membership of the Security Council on the Council's authority to No. resolutions, recent events have recorded the Security Council's failure to pass the resolution titled "Illegal Referendums in Ukraine" which was presented by the United States and Albania to condemn the Russian referendums in the territories occupied by Russia in Ukraine, as most UN member states voted for it. That was after seven months, on October 12, 2022, when 143 UN members voted in favor of this resolution that condemns the Russian aggression against Ukraine, expresses their deep concern over the deteriorating situation in Ukraine, emphasizes the necessity of respecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the need to adhere to the UN Charter and the principles enshrined in international law. On Monday, March 7, 2022, the first sessions of the International Court of Justice were held at Ukraine's request in light of its invasion by Russia. However, Russia boycotted the sessions from the beginning, and the Ukrainian delegation found itself facing empty seats when presenting its case.

¹ Mohamed Nasser, *Op. cit.*, p. 24

² According to the UN Charter, Article 23, "The Security Council shall consist of fifteen Members of the United Nations".

³ United Nations, *Security Council resolution S/RES/2623*, 2022, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/271/32/PDF/N2227132.pdf?OpenElement> (17.01.2025)

⁴ *International Protection of Human Rights within the Framework of the United Nations and Specialized International Agencies*, Second Edition, Dar Al Nahda Al Arabiya, Cairo, 2005, p. 100

We note here that the decisions of the International Court of Justice, which are issued in the form of binding judicial rulings, put us in a clear international violation if their rulings are not implemented, and a blatant violation of international law, which triggers international responsibility. This decision was issued based on the first paragraph of Article 41 of the Court's Statute regarding (provisional measures), which does not mean that the Court has ruled in favor of Ukraine but rather indicates that the case is still under consideration and no final judgment has been issued. The adoption of these measures is merely to preserve the rights of the parties involved in the case. Here, we should not overlook the lack of executive power or international police force behind the International Court of Justice's decision, making it unenforceable despite its binding nature, which frees Russia from complying with it. In this case, the party in whose favor the judgment was issued according to Article 94 of the United Nations Charter has no option but to submit its complaint to the Security Council to take action against the state that refrained from execution. In our case under discussion, we will return to the same deadlock represented by the Russian veto, which will confront Ukraine's approach of submitting its complaint to the Security Council.

The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced just a few days after the invasion that he would conduct investigations into the crimes committed in the Russian Ukrainian war and that he seeks to obtain a mandate to open an investigation as soon as possible. Although Ukraine is not a member of the court, it accepted the court's jurisdiction in 2014. At the same time, Russia withdrew from the International Criminal Court, which may pose an obstacle to the court's access to Russian citizens unless they are detained on the territory of a state that recognizes the court's jurisdiction or there is a referral from the Security Council, as stated in Article 13 of the Rome Statute. This is unlikely to happen due to the control of the three major powers that have not joined the court and intervene in who is referred to the court first. Additionally, the International Criminal Court cannot prosecute Russia for the crime of aggression, which involves one state attacking another, because it is not a party to the Rome Statute.

Regarding the termination of Russia's membership in the Security Council, there have recently been threats to expel it from the Security Council, including statements from the British Prime Minister that the British government is open to expelling Russia from the United Nations Security Council. Here we refer to Articles 5 and 6 of Chapter Two of the Charter, concerning the membership of member states and its conditions, and the possibility of depriving a state of its rights as a member, including voting in the General Assembly. The case presented in the research confirms that this requires a decision from the Security Council. Here, reality shocks us again with the veto right that Russia can use. Even in the best-case scenario where Russia cannot use this right, China would be another door for its survival.

Upon reviewing the mentioned texts, we find that they include the inability of the General Assembly to suspend any member against whom the Security Council has taken precautionary or prohibitory measures regarding the exercise of their membership rights and privileges, and that this can only be done based on a recommendation from the Security Council. Here, the Security Council has the authority to restore this membership. Here we must mention the Montreux Convention of 1963 regarding the regulation of the passage of warships and commercial vessels through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits, under which Turkey enjoys the authority to regulate maritime traffic between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. This is precisely what Turkey did on March 29, 2022, when it closed its maritime straits to warships from both Black Sea and non-Black Sea countries, in a legal attempt to mitigate the intensity of the conflict and overcome the double standards with both parties to the dispute.

According to Article 2 of the United Nations Charter regarding the non-use of force or the threat thereof in international relations, and the 2001 International Responsibility Rules, considering Russia's attack on a sovereign state as an internationally criminal act, it entails international responsibility for Russia, which imposes on it the obligation to restore the situation in Ukraine to what it was and to compensate for the damage caused to Ukraine. Based on Article 3 of the International Responsibility Law, the seriousness of the situation requires that countries cooperate to put an end to this conflict and prevent any attempts to provide support to either party to prolong the duration of the conflict.

Unraveling the Russia-Ukraine conflict: Exploring Solutions Through International Law Mechanisms **Mechanisms of International Law: A Path to a Solution**

International law mechanisms provide a crucial path to resolving disputes between states, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict is no exception. In such complex and volatile situations, where diplomatic negotiations often reach

an impasse, international law provides a framework for finding workable solutions that uphold justice and sustain peace.

One of the primary mechanisms for addressing such disputes is international courts. These institutions, such as the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court, provide a platform for states to submit their cases, present evidence, and engage in legal arguments. By referring to the dispute to an impartial judicial body, both parties can have their grievances heard and obtain a fair ruling based on the principles of international law and the treaties they have ratified.

Another important mechanism of international law is arbitration, where arbitration offers a more flexible and less formal process, where the parties agree to refer their dispute to a neutral arbitrator or panel of arbitrators. This method allows a more detailed approach to resolving the conflict, considering the specific circumstances of the Russian Ukrainian conflict.

Moreover, mediation and negotiation play vital roles in the mechanisms of international law. These processes involve two tracks of third parties who help disputing parties reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Mediators help create an atmosphere of trust and encourage open dialogue between parties, with the aim of finding common ground and developing compromises that can lead to a solution.

International law also provides a framework for states to engage in diplomatic negotiations, as provided in various treaties and conventions. These agreements establish rules and principles that guide states in their interactions and peaceful resolution of disputes. By adhering to these international legal obligations, states can build trust, enhance cooperation, and work to resolve disputes through diplomatic means. It is necessary to realize that international law mechanisms alone are unable to guarantee an immediate solution to complex conflicts such as the Russian Ukrainian conflict. However, it provides a structured and principled approach that allows for a peaceful and just solution. By engaging in these mechanisms, both parties can demonstrate their commitment to upholding international standards and their willingness to find a way forward that respects the rights and interests of all concerned¹.

The Role of Diplomacy in Solving Conflict

Diplomacy plays a crucial role in resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict, providing a platform for dialogue. Negotiation is between the parties concerned. In such complex and sensitive conflicts, where political tensions rise and interests' conflict, diplomatic efforts serve as a means of finding common ground and seeking peaceful solutions. Diplomacy allows direct communication between conflicting parties, facilitating the exchange of ideas, concerns, and grievances. Through diplomatic channels, countries can express their views, express their demands, and work to understand each other's concerns. This open dialogue creates opportunities to find common interests and identify areas of potential compromise². Furthermore, diplomacy provides a way to engage third-party mediators or facilitators. These neutral international bodies, such as the United Nations or regional organizations, can play an important role in bridging the gap between conflicting parties. They can provide expertise, suggest frameworks for negotiation, and help facilitate discussions on controversial issues. Their participation adds legitimacy and credibility to the negotiation process, enhances confidence, and increases the chances of reaching a solution acceptable to both parties³.

Diplomatic efforts also extend beyond bilateral negotiations to include multilateral forums and platforms. International conferences and summits provide opportunities for high-level discussions and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. In these environments, countries can build coalitions, mobilize support for their positions, and explore collective approaches to addressing conflict. These multilateral engagements can contribute to forming consensus and developing joint initiatives aimed at resolving the No. at hand.

In addition, diplomacy includes more than just formal negotiations and discussions. It involves building relationships, establishing communication channels, and enhancing trust between countries. Through diplomatic engagements, countries can promote mutual understanding, dispel misconceptions, and humanize the "other" in conflict. These interpersonal bonds create a basis for long-term cooperation and can help reduce the animosity and

¹ Michael Schmitt, *The Ukraine Crisis, Self-Determination, and International Law: An Opportunity for the OSCE*, "Harvard International Law Journal", Vol. 56, No. 2, 2015, p 40

² Ahmed Mahmoud, *Diplomacy and its Role in Resolving International Conflicts*, "Harvard International Law Journal", Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 32

³ *Idem*

hostility that often underlie such conflicts. Therefore, it can be said that the role of diplomacy in resolving the Russian Ukrainian conflict cannot be overestimated, as it serves as a vital tool for promoting dialogue, finding common ground, and searching for peaceful solutions. Through diplomatic efforts, countries can engage in constructive negotiations, engage neutral mediators, leverage multilateral platforms, and build relationships that pave the way for a sustainable solution. While the path to peace may be difficult, diplomacy offers hope and the possibility of a brighter future for both countries involved¹.

International Courts and Tribunals: Seeking Justice and Accountability

During the ongoing Russian Ukrainian conflict, the pursuit of justice and accountability has become paramount in finding resolution, with international courts playing an important role in addressing violations of international law committed by both parties involved. These legal mechanisms serve as a platform through which grievances can be heard, evidence can be presented, and judgments can be made.

One of these courts is the International Court of Justice, which is the main judicial organ of the United Nations. The ICJ has the power to settle legal disputes between countries and provides a forum for Ukraine to present its case against Russia. Through this avenue, Ukraine can seek justice for alleged violations of its territorial integrity and sovereignty, including the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Another relevant avenue for seeking justice is the International Criminal Court. The ICC focuses on prosecuting individuals responsible for the most serious crimes of international concern, such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. If credible evidence of such crimes emerges during the conflict, the ICC will likely investigate and hold those responsible to account, regardless of their nationality.

Furthermore, other international courts, such as the European Court of Human Rights, can provide a means for individuals affected by conflict to obtain redress. The European Court of Human Rights has jurisdiction over cases in which violations of the European Convention on Human Rights are alleged, to which both Russia and Ukraine are parties. This court plays a vital role in ensuring that human rights are protected and upheld amidst unrest². However, it is important to recognize that the effectiveness of these international law mechanisms depends on the cooperation of the parties involved. Both Russia and Ukraine must be prepared to accept the jurisdiction of these courts and tribunals, abide by their rulings, engage in negotiations in good faith to find a lasting solution. In conclusion, seeking justice and accountability through international courts and tribunals is an essential step in resolving the Russian Ukrainian conflict, as these mechanisms provide an opportunity to address grievances, present evidence, and No. judgments. Through these legal means, the international community can strive to reach a peaceful solution and ensure respect for the principles of international law³.

Peace Treaties and Mediation: Facilitating Negotiations

Peace treaties and mediation play a crucial role in facilitating negotiations and conflict resolution, especially in complex geopolitical conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict. These short messages provide a structured framework for interested parties to engage in dialogue, find common ground and work towards a peaceful solution. A prominent example of this is the Minsk Agreements, which were signed in 2014 and 2015 with the aim of ending the conflict in eastern Ukraine. These agreements, facilitated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, brought together representatives from Ukraine, Russia and breakaway regions to negotiate a ceasefire, withdraw heavy weapons, and undertake political reforms⁴. Mediation, often led by neutral third parties or international organizations, can help create an environment conducive to negotiations by providing a platform where all parties feel heard and respected. Mediators can help identify common interests, explore potential compromises, and bridge gaps between disputing parties.

¹ Mitchell A. Orentlein, *The Limits of Diplomacy: Ukraine's Experience with the West*, "Journal of Democracy", Vol. 26 o. 4, 2015, p. 11

² Muhammad Aziz, *The International Criminal Court and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict*, "Journal of International Politics", No. 204, 2018, p. 42

³ Hamad Abdel-Al Al Nuaimi, *ICC Criminal Investigations into Russia's War Crimes in Ukraine*, "Journal of Sharia and Legal Sciences", Vol.15, No. 2, 2018, p. 13

⁴ Nour Ghanem, *Peace Treaties and Mediation in Resolving the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, "Journal of Politics and State", 2019, p. 31

However, it is important to recognize that peace treaties and mediation alone may not guarantee a lasting solution. It is just one part of a comprehensive approach that should address the root causes of the conflict, promote reconciliation, and ensure the implementation of agreed measures. Sustainable peace requires commitment and a genuine desire on the part of all parties concerned to work towards a common goal. In general, peace treaties and mediation provide essential tools to facilitate negotiations and resolve conflicts. By creating an inclusive and orderly environment, these mechanisms can help the parties find common ground and work toward a peaceful solution. However, it is necessary to complement these efforts with a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying issues and promotes long-term peace and stability.

Economic Sanctions: Pressure on the Parties to Search for a Solution

Economic sanctions have become a widely used tool in international relations, especially in situations of conflict and political tension. In the context of the Russian Ukrainian conflict, economic sanctions were imposed by many countries and international organizations as a means of pressuring the parties concerned to reach a peaceful solution. These sanctions typically include restrictions on trade, investment, financial transactions, and other economic activities with the target country or its associated entities. The idea behind such measures is to create economic difficulties and disrupt the normal functioning of the target state's economy, thus forcing its leadership to reconsider its actions and engage in negotiations, for example, Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the US, UK and EU, along with countries including Australia, Canada and Japan, have imposed more than 16,500 sanctions on Russia. Their main target has been Russia's money. Foreign currency reserves worth \$350bn (£276bn) - about half its total reserves - were frozen. About 70% of the assets of Russian banks were also frozen, the EU says, and some were excluded from Swift, a high-speed messaging service for financial institutions. Western nations have also: banned exports of technology Russia might use for making weapons; banned imports of gold and diamonds from Russia; banned flights from Russia; sanctioned oligarchs - the wealthy businesspeople linked with the Kremlin - and impounded their yachts; Russia's oil industry has been another major target; The US and UK banned Russian oil and natural gas. The EU has banned seaborne crude imports; The G7 - an organization of the world's seven largest "advanced" economies - has imposed a maximum price of \$60 (£47) a barrel on Russian crude oil, to try to reduce its earnings¹.

However, the impact of economic sanctions is a topic of debate. Proponents believe that they can effectively deter aggressive actions and push the parties toward diplomatic solutions. They believe that economic pressures caused by sanctions could lead to internal discord and pressure the leadership to seek compromises. Critics, on the other hand, highlight the potential negative consequences of sanctions on the civilian population, as they often bear the brunt of economic hardship. They claim that sanctions could further escalate tensions and entrench the parties' positions, making a solution more difficult to reach². However, economic sanctions remain a prominent tool in the arsenal of international law mechanisms for addressing conflicts. The effectiveness of these measures ultimately depends on a range of factors, including the nature of the conflict, the resilience of the targeted state, and the willingness of the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue³. In the case of the Russian Ukrainian conflict, economic sanctions have put great pressure on Russia. They influenced the dynamics of the conflict, shaping the incentives and calculations of the parties involved. However, a comprehensive solution to the conflict will require a multifaceted approach that goes beyond economic pressures, and includes diplomatic negotiations, international mediation, and adherence to international legal principles. While the international community continues to grapple with the complexities of the Russian Ukrainian conflict, exploring and using various international law mechanisms, including economic sanctions, remains crucial in seeking a lasting and peaceful solution⁴.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659> (17.01.2025)

² Laila Khaled, *The Role of Economic Sanctions in Resolving International Crises*, Unpublished Master's thesis, Cairo University, Department of Political Science, 2021, p. 256

³ Sarah Green, *The Role of Economic Sanctions in Resolving International Crises*, Unpublished Master thesis, Oxford University, Department of Political Science 2022, p. 380

⁴ Adam Johnson, *The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Russia following the Ukrainian Invasion*, "Journal of Economic Studies", Vol. 45, No. 2, 2022

Conclusions

In conclusion, adopting a legal perspective is crucial in addressing the complex and ongoing Russian Ukrainian conflict. While political and diplomatic efforts have been made to resolve the issues at hand, the legal framework provides a solid foundation for justice, accountability and long-term stability. Furthermore, a legal perspective helps ensure that any potential solution to a conflict is grounded in the principles of fairness, justice, and respect for human rights. It provides a framework to address grievances on both sides, protect the rights of affected populations, and promote reconciliation and healing.

However, it is important to acknowledge that legal mechanisms alone cannot resolve the complex issues that lie at the heart of the Russian Ukrainian conflict. Political will, dialogue and compromise are equally essential to finding a sustainable and peaceful solution. Nevertheless, a strong legal foundation can play an important role in shaping the path forward, and as the conflict continues to evolve, it is essential that the international community, including governments, organizations and legal experts, remain committed to applying a legal perspective to the situation. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict, facilitate the pursuit of justice, and ultimately pave the way for a brighter future for the people of Russia and Ukraine.

The international community must also remain actively engaged in mediating the conflict and encouraging dialogue between the parties concerned. This includes supporting initiatives such as peace negotiations, diplomatic talks and international forums aimed at promoting dialogue and understanding. It is important to realize that the solution to this conflict goes beyond the borders of Russia and Ukraine. The repercussions of this conflict extend to regional stability, global security, and the principles of international law. Therefore, it is in the interest of all countries to contribute to the solution process.

Moreover, it is necessary to prioritize the well-being and rights of affected populations in both Russia and Ukraine. The conflict has led to great human suffering, displacement and human rights violations. Efforts must be made to provide humanitarian assistance, promote reconciliation and facilitate the return of displaced people.

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RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S SPEECH THAT TRIGGERED THE INVASION OF UKRAINE, FEBRUARY 24, 2022

Abstract:	<i>This research study aims to analyze the speech of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, who launched the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. One of the research objectives is to examine how he constructs his speech around the issue, the arguments he uses, and the position he adopts at the beginning of the conflict. The research question we are trying to answer is the following: "How does leader Vladimir Putin construct his speech that launched the invasion of Ukraine?".</i> <i>The purpose of the research is to observe how President Putin's speech influenced the launch of the invasion of Ukraine and the following events. The data collection method is the speech he gave on February 24, 2022, on the Russian television channeln Russia-2 (Россия-2), while the data analysis method is discourse analysis. At the end of the work, we are surprised by the fact that leader Vladimir Putin constructs and delivers his speech before the invasion of Ukraine using a series of elements of propaganda, disinformation, and strategic influence communication.</i>
Keywords:	Special military operation; Russian propaganda; disinformation; political psychology
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Introduction

Political science represents a collection of factors starting from the policies themselves, government, governance, leaders, the state-citizen relationship, and all these elements and processes are strongly influenced by political psychology. Knowing the environment, the people we meet over time, or even reflecting on our own person represent cognitive processes. Whether we are talking about studying behaviors, knowing the lower or higher processes of cognition, a person's attitudes, emotions or affectivity, all of these represent interpersonal and intrapersonal bridges¹. These can also be extrapolated to the level of governance, in addition to the social spectrum of citizenship, because they represent desiderata that capture the social contract between the citizen-state and the emotions/values that each of the parties promotes².

This research study aims to analyze the speech of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who launched the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. His arguments regarding the launch of the "Russian military operation" highlight the protection of civilians in eastern Ukraine against whom, he claims, a genocide was committed³. In

¹John Tooby, Leda Cosmides, Jerome Barkow, *The adapted mind, Evolutionary psychology and the generation of culture*, Oxford, 1992, pp. 40-45

²Bruce Bridgeman, *Psychology and evolution: The origins of mind*, Sage, 2003, pp. 90-100

³Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

this context, the main objectives of the research are to identify how he builds his speech around this issue, how he builds the rest of the arguments, what are the elements of propaganda and disinformation mechanisms. In addition to this general objective, we stipulate a specific objective, namely the analysis of non-verbal and paraverbal language, regarding gestures, mimicry, voice rhythm or body position. The research question that we try to answer during the analysis is the following: “How does leader Vladimir Putin build his speech that launched the invasion of Ukraine?”. First, the purpose of the research is to observe how discourse influenced the initiation of the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent events. In addition, we aim to capture a series of traits of the leader, using the “Myers-Briggs Type Indicator” method, to highlight how certain character traits are reflected and influence a series of decisions and beliefs of a person, in this case the leader in the Kremlin.

The first part of the research paper is aimed at the “Theoretical Chapter” and highlights the theoretical framework, the theories that have been developed throughout the history of social and political sciences and the concepts used. The review of the specialized literature captures what other authors have written about the research topic, the dynamics surrounding the concepts, the processes they go through and the activation, in particular. The second chapter of the work is the “Methodological” one, surprising the selection of cases, why Vladimir Putin's speech was chosen as the case study. The data collection method is represented by the Russian leader's speech, from February 24, 2022, of the invasion of Ukraine while the data analysis method is discourse analysis. These contribute to a better understanding of the way in which the data collection process took place, of their analysis and how the connection between the theoretical and empirical parts of the study is created. “Analysis” represents the last chapter of the work, addressing the way of constructing the discourse, but also the formulation of some perceptions about the behavior/temperament of the leader in relation to those stated. This is done based on the presentation of the data, the results and their interpretation. In addition to these delimited sections, at the end of the work there are the emerging “Conclusions”, the limits of the research and future research directions, as well as the related “Bibliography” which represents the critical apparatus in conducting the research.

Theoretical chapter

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The research focuses on concepts and fields related to the study, namely: analyzing the behaviors of the masses, politicians, and other mechanisms in the field of political psychosociology. At the same time, also through the study of psychology, propaganda is defined as “the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviors in order to obtain a response that corresponds to the interests of the propagandist”¹.

Behaviorist theory refers to the study of behaviors, “without analyzing the cerebral mechanisms of consciousness, internal mental processes” or higher or primary cognitive processes². The behaviorist model promoted a linear unidirectional stimulus-response connection between a communicator invested with an implicit, special power over a homogeneous, unstructured and totally under his control audience. In this type of communication, an exclusively persuasive action is carried out, the emphasis being placed on the way in which messages are transmitted, the accompanying text, the intonation used, the desire to manipulate and create a monologue, in most cases. “A central premise in the development of this perspective is represented by the promotion of the idea of mass society...”³. This mass society met certain conditions, as follows: the relationship between individuals was quite cold, being in a psychological isolation lacking empathy or emotional intelligence; impersonal dialogues, and the degree of freedom regarding social obligations was low⁴.

The interaction between a person and a situation is the most important context for understanding the personality and behavior of the former⁵. Personality presents a series of defining characteristics within the interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships of a person, these metamorphosing him into a unique entity. At the

¹G.S., Jowett, V. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*. Newbury Park etc., Sage, 1992, pp. 100-103

²John, B. Watson, *Behaviorism*, Routledge, 2017, pp. 5-6

³S.J., Ball-Rokeach, DeFleur, M.L., *A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects*, “Sage Journals”, 1975, pp. 164, 20 January 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009365027600300101> (20.02.2025)

⁴*Ibidem*, pp. 164-165

⁵Kurt Lewin, *Psycho-sociological problems of a minority group*, *Character&Personality*, “A Quarterly for Psychodiagnostic&Allied Studies”, 1935, pp. 34-35

same time, Temperament is the way people react in certain situations when they come into contact with new things in the environment¹. In order to create an easier understanding of the terminology mentioned above, we will propose the analysis of a case study that has Vladimir Putin as its main subject. The personality of leader Putin stands out as versatile, but predictable in most of his public appearances. In terms of cognitive and thinking process, it can be said that it is a pragmatic typology, with a well-developed strategic and logical sense of events.

The easiest example in this context would be the preparation of the plan for the invasion of Ukraine, the movement of troops, territorial representation, movement in the field and the well-prepared speech to impress citizens by fighting for the territories belonging to Russia and the reunification of Great Russia. At the same time, as stated earlier, it relies on the sentimental side, appeals to emotions in speeches addressed to the Russian people to awaken patriotism, nationalism and justify your actions. Last but not least, leader Putin presents a side that highlights judgment through chronology and the story of the historical past. His thinking is strongly rooted in the nationalist-populist culture, and Eurosceptic, anti-Western speeches, the promotion of Russian traditions and values to the detriment of others, with the help of ethnocentrism, represent the necessary levers in the complexity of defining the personality of leader Vladimir Putin. The gap identified in the specialized literature leads to the following research question: "How does leader Putin construct and deliver his speech before the invasion of Ukraine?"

Methodology

Case selection

Referring, from a methodological point of view, to Vladimir Putin's speech of February 24, 2022, it can be stated that it is a representative case for the leader's personality and historical past.

Data collection and analysis method

"Discourse analysis is often used when working with language and linguistics and is popular in many social sciences, including sociology and political science"². It examines how language works and how it creates meaning in various social contexts. It can be applied to both written and verbal documents (audio, video). It captures verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication: tone, inflections, gestures. It emphasizes contextual aspects of language. In particular, discourse analysis "emphasizes the importance of language and the perspective that highlights the importance of context and structure"³.

Regarding the level of vocabulary communication that captures the degree of formality, values, metaphors from the perspective of what is being analyzed. Another index is the use of grammar that conveys information about active/passive diathesis, the use of imperatives, verbal tense⁴. The structure of a discourse highlights the systematization of information, what is emphasized, verbs used, mood, time and dynamics. At the same time, non-verbal communication analyzes the tone of voice, pauses, gestures, sounds, while conversational codes capture the interaction, whether they give priority, interruptions or the way the parties involved listen⁵. "The package contains, firstly, philosophical premises (ontological and epistemological) regarding the role of language in the social construction of the world, secondly, theoretical models, thirdly, methodological guides for approaching a field of research and fourthly, specific techniques for analysis"⁶. Within this framework, three different approaches to social constructionist discourse analysis can be identified – the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, critical discourse analysis, and discursive psychology⁷.

"Discourse analysis is only one of several social constructionist approaches, but it is one of the most widely used approaches within social constructionism"⁸. Discourse psychology is an approach to social psychology that has developed a type of discourse analysis to explore the ways in which people's selves, thoughts, and emotions are

¹C. Robert, Cloninger, *Temperament and Personality*, "Current Opinion in Neurobiology", Vol 4, No. 2, 1004, pp. 266–73

²James Paul, Gee, *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*, Routledge, 2014, pp. 100-101

³S. Gherghina, *Data Availability in Political Science Journals*, "European Political Science", Vol. 12, 2013, pp. 333-349

⁴*Ibidem*, pp. 333-349

⁵*Idem*

⁶V. Burr, *An introduction to social construction*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 10-15

⁷*Idem*

⁸Kenneth J., Gergen, *Social constructionist inquiry: Context and implications, The social construction of the person*, Springer, New York, 1985, pp. 3-18

formed and transformed through social interaction and to shed light on the role of these processes in the social domain¹. Transposing ideas beyond what we want to convey will be felt through gestures, mimicry, gesticulation, and will create modalities through which others can characterize us².

Analysis

“Special Military Operation”

In his speech on February 24, 2022, at 05:30 in the morning, Russian time, he conveyed that the Donbas People's Republic appealed to Russia for help regarding the situation of ethnic Russians in that area. In this regard, “in accordance with Art. 51 Part 7 of the Sanctions Charter of the Council of the Russian Federation, ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 21, in honor of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic”³, leader Putin launches a special military operation. “Our plans do not include the occupation of Ukrainian territories. We will not impose anything on anyone by force”⁴. He states that the purpose of the operation is to protect people who have been subjected to harassment and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years and in no case to occupy territories, so “The circumstances require us to take decisive and immediate action”⁵.

In the following, we will use the “Myers-Briggs Type Indicator” method, which is an introspective self-report questionnaire that reveals how people position themselves at certain times, what their values are, and what factors guide their decisions⁶. In order to visualize how Vladimir Putin perceives the world and what are the reasons behind his actions, an analysis of strategic influence communication carried out with accuracy is needed. First of all, identifying an extroverted side is obvious, and the most appropriate example in this context is the public speech he makes through television. The totality of the statements made is exacerbated by the gestures of superiority they present, corroborated with elements of threat and intimidation: “Anyone who tries to stop us, especially to create threats against our country or our people, should know that Russia's response will be immediate and will lead you to consequences that you have never had before in your history”⁷.

On the other hand, it cannot be said that he is an extrovert par excellence, because the introvert side cannot be neglected. He presents some difficulties in managing emotions, one of the most visible moments being the pauses in speech, but also the fact that he chose to give the speech from the office, in a sitting position, with his legs not visible. It is known that there is a problem in controlling them in the case of other speeches or meetings. The meeting with Donald Trump in Helsinki, at their first bilateral summit, organized with the aim of improving relations between Moscow and the USA, where the body position conveyed a lack of trust, the excessive movement/tremor of the leg emanated agitation, perhaps even a slight state of anxiety, and the communication was quite simplistic and superficial, being one of the examples.

Russian propaganda and disinformation, notorious elements in the discourse

In his speech, one can identify Russian propaganda that manifests itself through pro-Kremlin narratives, misleading statements, disinformation and emotional themes aimed at sensitizing the audience. He argues that with

¹Idem

² Kenneth J., Gergen, *Social constructionist inquiry: Context and implications, The social construction of the person*, Springer, New York, 1985, pp. 20-23

³International Court of Justice, *Preliminary objections of the Russian Federation*, 2022, <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/202996> (20.02.2025)

⁴ Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

⁵Idem

⁶M.L., Goetz, A. Jones-Bitton, J. Hewson, J., Khosa, D., Pearl, D., Bakker, et.al., *An examination of Myers-Briggs type indicator personality, gender, and career interests of Ontario veterinary college students*, Journal of Veterinary Medical Education”, Vol. 47, No. 4, 2020, pp. 430-444

⁷Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

NATO's expansion to the east, the situation for Russia has become worse and more dangerous year by year¹. Moreover, NATO leadership has always specified in its statements that it must accelerate and intensify its efforts to bring the alliance's infrastructure closer to Russia's borders. "It is a reality that over the past 30 years we have patiently tried to reach an agreement with the main NATO countries on the principles of equal and indivisible security in Europe"². He emphasizes that a policy of isolation is being exercised against Russia that represents a real threat not only to the interests of the state, but to its very existence and sovereignty. The ideology he uses highlights currents such as Populism, Nationalism, Euroscepticism, and Conservatism, while also taking advantage of the unfavorable context in which the citizens of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions found themselves.

Another important phrase that stands out in the Kremlin leader's speech is the following: "Tectonic change of the world order, he who sows the wind, reaps the storm, Western states will finally be forced to discuss "on equal terms" with Russia and the rest of the world about "a common future"³. In this context, we are surprised that he maintains his position, induces a sense of security in future actions, shows his conviction that he will not give in, but Western states will be forced to make compromises and accept the "negotiations" stipulated by him. Using the tactic of manipulation, Vladimir Putin states the following: "The West is not able to rule the world, but it tries desperately, and the majority of the peoples of the world will not accept it"⁴. In this sense, he joins some states that he does not mention, uses the term "majority" to induce a large number of actors and create disillusionment in the audience. Another statement from the speech surprises the audience: "Both in nature and in society there is a development, a peak, a disappearance. Russia has not reached its peak. We are on the march, on the march of development. The country went through the most difficult trials in its history in the 1990s and early 2000s, but it is on the march of development. There are a lot of problems, but, unlike other old or rapidly aging nations, we are still on the rise"⁵. He wants to highlight Russia's capabilities, its supremacy, the way in which it can reach the heights thanks to endurance and supreme will, a positive thing for the nation, but negative because of the unreality it achieves by lying by omission about economic declines, political collapses or social division regarding the political system.

The leader's thinking, according to the theory invoked, is pragmatic, strategic and logical. The striking example that supports this is the plan for the invasion of Ukraine, the movement of troops, territorial representation, movement in the field, the speech, a positive thing considering the anticipation of events, the preparation of the plan, but negative from an ethical and moral point of view. "I urge you to immediately lay down your weapons and go home. I will explain to all personnel of the Ukrainian army that those who will fulfill this requirement will be able to freely leave the combat zone and return to their families"⁶. Leader Putin claims that he is ready for any outcome, being sure that the soldiers and officers of the Russian army are loyal to their country and will fulfill their duty with professionalism and courage"⁷. "Dear comrades! Your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents did not fight with the Nazis and defended our homeland, so that today's neo-Nazis could take power in Ukraine"⁸. In this context, he appeals to emotions in his speeches addressed to the Russian people in order to awaken patriotism, nationalism and justify his actions. Vladimir Putin states that the "special military operation" does not stem from the desire to violate the interests of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, but is related to the protection of Russia against those who have taken Ukraine hostage and are trying to use it against the country and the Russian people. Its target group is represented by Russian citizens, but also the rest of the Russophile citizens, uninformed and vulnerable

¹Andrew, Osborn, Nikolskaya, Polina, *Russia's Putin Authorises "special Military Operation against Ukraine*, Reuters, section Europe, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-putin-authorises-military-operations-donbass-domestic-media-2022-02-24/> (20.02.2025)

² *Idem*

³ *Idem*

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ *Idem*

⁶ Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

⁷ *Idem*

⁸Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

people, who do not have a culture of security, civic education, history. At the same time, the dissemination of conspiracy theories to people strongly rooted in their own vision/beliefs, especially those raised and educated in authoritarian regimes, with a nationalist, Euro-spectric, anti-Western spirit, represent elements that can affect the emotional security of citizens¹.

Conclusions

If we were to summarize the research thread, one of the preliminary conclusions we reached concerns the fact that Vladimir Putin constructs and delivers his speech before the invasion of Ukraine using a series of elements of propaganda, disinformation, and strategic influence communication, achieving a corroboration between the means and the goals that he had set even then. Following his decision to recognize the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic on February 21, 2022, and the signing of mutual cooperation agreements between Russia and the two separatist regions, his declaration on the morning of February 24, 2022 is the one that triggers the invasion of Ukraine. Most of the time, the person of leader Vladimir Putin is an extremely controversial one in the public space, in terms of attitude, temperament and the impact that his decisions have had on citizens, relations with other actors and the international agenda. Leader Putin's temperament is not very difficult to define, being a direct person, who does not shy away from saying what he thinks and what bothers him.

He focuses on the task at hand, he does not deviate from the initial plan and the rules he has drawn. The analytical sense is strongly rooted, the details are never overlooked, and the logic and chronology behind the events are not lacking, precisely for this reason he has a great ability to develop strategies. Following this brief description, it can be clearly seen that the temperament of leader Putin is choleric, the preparation of the plan for the invasion of Ukraine, the movement of troops, the territorial representation, the movement in the field and the well-prepared speech to impress citizens by fighting for the territories he belongs to supporting all of this.

Research limitations

Following the conclusions stated above, I identify a series of limitations of the work that I noticed during the research and that refer to the elements that I was unable to analyze extensively. These occurred perhaps due to the subjectivism identified in the writings of some authors, the level of knowledge that I assimilated regarding this subject, the significant volume of information, but also the dynamics of the events that occurred in a short period of time.

Future research directions

All the gaps identified above determine the resumption of the data collection and analysis processes on a larger scale, on niche case studies through which the analysis of several discussions that leader Putin authored during the invasion of Ukraine can be highlighted as future research directions. The ultimate goal is to empirically observe the way in which the process of metamorphoses took place and the actors involved, in terms of states, international organizations or individual actors.

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SECURITY GUARANTEES PROVIDED BY INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND THE ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: A REALIST–LIBERAL ANALYSIS

Abstract	<i>This article examines the structural limitations—such as unequal strategic interests, lack of enforcement mechanisms, and asymmetries in military capabilities—that constrain the effectiveness of security guarantees provided by international treaties. It focuses on how intelligence services, through covert informational mechanisms (e.g., espionage, disinformation, and clandestine influence), shape the credibility (i.e., perceived reliability and deterrent strength) and functionality (i.e., operational capacity to mobilize allies and respond collectively to threats) of collective defense commitments. Grounded in a comparative framework between liberalism and realism, this article analyzes how national interest, power dynamics, institutional trust, and intelligence cooperation intersect to either support or erode treaty-based security mechanisms. To empirically illustrate these dynamics, the article applies its theoretical lens to the case of the “drôle de guerre” (1939–1940), where the failure of France and the United Kingdom to intervene militarily in defense of Poland highlights how strategic restraint and intelligence considerations can undermine formal obligations—even in multilateral settings.</i> <i>The article also engages constructivist theory to reflect on how norms, identities, and collective perceptions influence the interpretation and credibility of security guarantees. Furthermore, it assesses the normative and operational need for democratic oversight of intelligence activities within alliances, proposing concrete mechanisms for aligning intelligence services with alliance commitments. Ultimately, the article argues that successful security guarantees rest on a synthesis of power, institutional design, and normative cohesion. By combining structural and ideational explanations, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of why some treaties hold under stress while others collapse. The findings carry significant implications for the design of future security arrangements in a fragmented and increasingly contested international order.</i>
Keywords	Collective security; alliances; international treaties; intelligence; realism; liberalism; constructivism; strategic cooperation
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Introduction

International treaties that contain collective defense clauses or security guarantees are designed to offer signatory states protection against external threats. However, historical experience has shown that such guarantees are not always honored in practice. This raises a fundamental question: under what conditions do international security commitments become both credible and effective? That is, when can states reasonably rely on alliance obligations to deter aggression and ensure the timely mobilization of allies?

The academic literature in international relations provides contrasting answers to this question. On one side, liberal-institutionalist theories such as those advanced by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye¹ argue that

¹ R.O. Keohane, J.S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Little, Brown, 1977, p. 243

international norms, institutions, and transparency foster cooperation and mutual trust, thereby reducing the risks of defection and increasing the likelihood that treaty-based commitments will be upheld¹. On the other side, realist scholars—including Hans Morgenthau² and Kenneth Waltz³ contend that, in an anarchic international system lacking an overarching enforcement authority, states primarily act according to their own strategic interests and will only comply with alliance obligations when doing so aligns with calculations of power and national security⁴. This foundational divide reflects a broader tension between the ideal of collective security and the reality of strategic self-help in global politics.

This dilemma becomes even more complex when considering the role of intelligence services unseen actors that can both bolster security (through early warning and counterintelligence) and potentially undermine commitments (through espionage, covert influence, and strategic misinformation). Intelligence agencies operate through covert informational mechanisms, meaning secret channels of information gathering, influence, and action (e.g. espionage, signal interceptions, clandestine operations). Structural limitations are another factor: these refer to the inherent constraints posed by the anarchic nature of the international system and the unequal distribution of power among states conditions under which no higher authority exists to enforce treaty compliance. In this context, two key criteria emerge: credibility, understood as the perceived reliability and deterrent strength of the commitment, and functionality, defined as the practical ability to coordinate and act effectively. These are further complicated by covert informational mechanisms, meaning intelligence-driven, secret tools of influence such as espionage, signal interception, or covert action—that can either reinforce an alliance by providing early warning and fostering mutual confidence, or weaken it by generating mistrust and subversive behavior. As both theory and historical evidence suggest, intelligence cooperation becomes effective only when it is institutionalized, transparent among allies, and bounded by rules of accountability.

The purpose of this article is to explore how intelligence services influence the effectiveness of security guarantees provided by international treaties, analyzing this issue through the lens of realist and liberal paradigms in international relations. The article combines theoretical analysis with historical case studies to highlight both the potential of intelligence cooperation in supporting collective security and the risks that power dynamics and clandestine actions pose to the observance of international commitments.

The working hypothesis starts from the premise that security guarantees provided through international treaties or multilateral alliances are credible and functional only under clearly defined political and strategic conditions. From a realist perspective, the credibility of these guarantees primarily depends on the alignment of strategic interests among the main actors within the alliance. As Glenn H. Snyder noted, “the credibility of alliance commitments tends to be high, but under extreme conditions—such as the risk of nuclear destruction the commitment may appear less credible to a potential aggressor”⁵. Thus, when a great power perceives its own security as directly tied to the defense of its ally, it is far more likely that formal commitments will be honored. Conversely, in the absence of such converging interests, these commitments remain nominal and vulnerable to abandonment in the face of significant political or military costs.

On the other hand, liberal-institutionalist literature emphasizes the importance of mutual trust, institutionalized norms, and transparency among allies to ensure the stability of commitments. In this logic, effective intelligence cooperation becomes a critical element: the continuous exchange of data, risk assessments, and early warnings contributes not only to the enhancement of joint operational capabilities, but also to the reduction of uncertainty regarding allies' intentions. As Michael Herman states, “intelligence has become a form of international diplomacy in its own right, with permanent networks of cooperation among states”⁶. Intelligence services thus become instruments for strengthening strategic cohesion, if they operate within institutionalized

¹ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984; M. Doyle, *Liberalism and World Politics*, “American Political Science Review”, Vol. 80, No. 4, 1986, pp. 1151–1169

² Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1978, p. 121

³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley, 1979, p. 70

⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2001

⁵ Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2015, p. 12

⁶ Michael Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. p. 273

frameworks with clear rules and communication channels. We therefore propose a compound hypothesis with two interdependent components:

1. Security guarantees are credible only when there is real strategic convergence among the key actors (realist condition);

2. Effective intelligence cooperation, conducted regularly and on a mutually beneficial basis, reinforces this convergence and supports the credibility of the alliance, functioning as a bridge between power-based reasoning and institutional logic.

This approach proposes a partial reconciliation between realism and liberalism, in the sense that the institutional dimension (intelligence sharing) can, under certain conditions, compensate for the complete absence of trust and help sustain commitments even in fluid strategic contexts. James Walsh confirms this subtle relationship by stating that “international intelligence exchange depends on the degree of mutual trust and institutional similarity among partners”¹. When it comes to security, a fundamental part of national interest, it is essential to understand how and within what limits security guarantees can function.

Since this issue pertains to international relations, it is essential to highlight that understanding the idea mentioned above namely, defining the limits and mechanisms under which treaty-based guarantees function depends largely on the theoretical perspective adopted within the field of international relations.

While there are multiple frameworks for analyzing international relations including multilateralism, the English School, and constructivism this analysis will primarily focus on two dominant paradigms: liberalism and realism. Nevertheless, a dedicated subsection will also address constructivism, to highlight its distinct contributions and contrast them with the assumptions of the two main approaches.

Theoretical Framework: Realist vs. Liberal Perspectives

Liberal-Institutionalist Paradigm: Cooperation, Norms, and Transparency

Liberal and institutional theories offer a more optimistic view, arguing that institutions and shared norms can mitigate the security dilemma and reinforce alliance commitments. From this vantage, *credibility* is not only a function of power, but also of trust, regular communication, and the predictability that institutions provide. Robert Keohane² and other neoliberal institutionalists maintain that international institutions (including formal alliances and defense organizations) facilitate cooperation by establishing rules, norms, and forums for information exchange that reduce uncertainty among allies. When states expect long-term interaction and reciprocity, they are more likely to keep their commitments because the shadow of the future makes cheating or defection costly. Transparency is crucial in this view if allies openly share intelligence and assessments about threats, they can reassure each other of their intentions and capabilities, making collective defense arrangements more *functional* in practice.

The liberal perspective starts from the premise that “liberal states appear to have discovered a way to interact among themselves that does not involve military conflict...and brings mutual benefits”³. This outlook can be traced back, at least, to modern times and the ideas of Immanuel Kant, who emphasized that “for the purpose of promoting security and the development of liberalism, such states should be provided shelter under a liberal security umbrella”⁴.

Liberal theory⁵ holds that international institutions, norms, and economic interdependence can foster trust and cooperation, even in an anarchic system⁶. Security guarantees can become effective if they are supported by mutual trust, transparency, and verifiability—core liberal values. Ideologically, liberalism emphasizes the protection of rights and the limitation of state coercion. As James Walsh also notes: “Statists believe that liberty is about quality of life. They believe in a strong central government that provides its citizens with a good life. Libertarians

¹ James I. Walsh, *The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2010, p. 4

² Robert O. Keohane, *Op. cit.*, p. 234

³ Mark D. Gissomdi, *Ethics Liberalism and Realism in International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 22

⁴ John MacMillan, *Immanuel Kant and the Democratic Peace in Classical Theory in International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 65

⁵ R.O. Keohane, J.S. Nye, *Op.cit.*

⁶ M. Doyle, *Liberalism and World Politics*, “American Political Science Review”, Vol. 80, No. 4, 1986, pp. 1151–1169

(...) believe in fundamental rights and limiting the coercive power of the state”¹. Even in times of threat, the state must remain in service of fundamental liberties.

However, intelligence services add an additional dimension to this duality. According to Michael Herman, intelligence is simultaneously an instrument of early warning and a source of suspicion among states. Within alliances, intelligence sharing becomes a test of trust and a key factor for strategic cohesion. As Herman states: “The increase in international cooperation has generated a mix of ad-hoc exchanges and permanent links. (...) Intelligence has become a form of international diplomacy, with permanent networks of cooperation among states”². He observes that intelligence cooperation has evolved from occasional exchanges to stable liaison networks, with their own rules and parallel diplomacy. James Walsh emphasizes that the politics of international intelligence exchange are shaped by mutual trust, institutional similarity, and shared risks³.

These informational networks help allies develop common threat perceptions and coordinate responses, thereby buttressing the alliance’s overall cohesion. For example, through institutions like NATO’s intelligence-sharing frameworks, member states exchange data on potential adversaries, which reduces misperceptions and the likelihood of nasty surprises. Such practices enhance the *functionality* of a treaty by improving allies’ capacity to mobilize together effectively when a threat arises. They also enhance *credibility* by signaling unity and preparedness to outsiders; an adversary is less likely to test an alliance if it sees the allies actively cooperating and sharing information in peacetime.

Liberal theorists also highlight the power of norms and legal frameworks. If states internalize norms of collective defense (e.g. the norm that an attack on one is an attack on all, as in Article 5 of the NATO Treaty), then honoring alliance commitments becomes a matter of identity and reputation in addition to interest. Domestic politics and interdependence further bolster cooperation: democracies bound by alliance treaties may face public and political pressure to assist allies, and dense economic or security interdependence raises the costs of letting an ally down.

In sum, the liberal paradigm suggests that with the right institutional design including clear consultation mechanisms, joint military planning, and intelligence cooperation security guarantees can deter aggression and prevent conflict by presenting a unified front. This vision of cooperation is not only strategic but also deeply normative. An exemplary figure today for this way of thinking is John Rawls, with his famous eight principles by which liberal peoples should be guided. His theory of *The Law of Peoples* articulates how mutual respect, transparency, and adherence to just institutions can ground credible and enduring international commitments. In this sense, mutual confidence, fostered by transparency and rule-based interaction, makes collective defense commitments both believable and operationally feasible. The Law of Peoples:

- People are free and independent, and their freedom and independence must be respected.
- People are to observe treaties and undertakings.
- People are equal and are parties to the agreements that bind them.
- People are to observe a duty of non-intervention (except in cases of grave violations of human rights).
- People have the right of self-defense but no right to instigate war for reasons other than self-defense.
- People are to honor human rights.
- People are to observe certain specified restrictions in the conduct of war.
- People have a duty to assist other peoples living under unfavorable conditions that prevent them from having a just or decent political and social regime⁴.

These *eight principles* outlined by John Rawls in *The Law of Peoples* encapsulate the moral aspirations of liberal internationalism: a vision in which states (or “people”) relate to each other not merely through strategic calculation, but based on mutual respect, legal commitments, and solidarity. Yet not all approaches to international relations share this optimism. To better understand the limits of institutional and normative cooperation, we now turn to the realist paradigm, which offers a more skeptical lens on the dynamics of power, interests, and security

¹ James Walsh, *Liberty in Troubled Times: A Libertarian Guide to Laws, Politics and Society in a Terrorized World*, Silver Lake Publishing, Aberdeen, WA, 2004, p. 3

² Michael Herman, *Op.cit.* p. 203

³ James Walsh, *Op.cit.*, p. 143

⁴ John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Ma., 1999, p. 37

commitments. While liberalism emphasizes international cooperation and norms, realism offers an alternative perspective, focusing on national interests and the balance of power, as we will demonstrate below.

Realist Paradigm: Power and Interests over Promises

Realist theory contends that the effectiveness of international security commitments is ultimately constrained by states' pursuit of national interest and power. In the classic realist view (from Hans Morgenthau onward), states are primarily concerned with survival and relative power; if honoring an alliance becomes too costly or threatens a state's own security, it will be abandoned. Kenneth Waltz's structural realism famously argues that, because the international system is anarchic, states must rely on "self-help" for their security and cannot depend on external authorities to enforce agreements. Alliances are thus seen as temporary marriages of convenience, entered for as long as they serve the major partners' strategic interests. Realists emphasize power dynamics: a security guarantee will be credible only if the key state(s) in an alliance calculate that fulfilling their promise aligns with—or at least does not undermine their own strategic position. Realist scholars from Kenneth Waltz to John Mearsheimer have consistently argued that international commitments are only as strong as the material power and self-interest that underpin them¹. The realism argues that "in the absence of an overarching authority to enforce rules and guarantee security, mistrust and self-help are the dominant characteristics of the international system"². With its view of the global system as one dominated by anarchy—in which state actors are guided by their own interest in power and dominance, and where moments of balance are only the result of a balance of power—realism finds its philosophical roots in Hobbes's conception of the state of nature as *bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all).

A key representative of this position is Hans Morgenthau, who argued that "the hope of taming international politics through disarmament and the creation of international parliamentary bodies is naïve"³. Following the debates sparked by his most important work, *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau formulated a systematic outline of realism in six principles. This systematization was later published as the first part of subsequent editions of the book.

These principles are:

- Political realism maintains that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.
- The most important guiding concept of political realism in the sphere of international politics is the notion of interest defined in terms of power.
- The concept of interest defined as power is an objective category that is universally valid, although its specific meaning may vary depending on the political and historical context.
- Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action... (but) it holds that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in the abstract.
- Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.
- The difference between political realism and other schools of thought is real and profound: the realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere⁴.

From a theoretical point of view, a careful analysis of these principles reveals that, in all honesty, they are practically incompatible. Put simply, this incompatibility lies in the moral commitment of the liberal to human rights versus the realist's assertion of the autonomy of the political sphere, regardless of other considerations, including moral ones. As Aristotle noted, for something to be truly contradictory, it must be predicated on the same subject, at the same time, and in the same respect as its contradiction. For example, to say that John is both white and black at the same time and in the same respect such as the color of his skin is a contradiction. However, if one says that he is white-skinned but black with rage, there is no contradiction.

¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley, 1979, p. 143

² Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p.12

³ Martin Griffiths, Steven C. Roach, M. Scott Solomon, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 51

⁴ Hans Morgenthau, *Op.cit.*, p. 4-15

In the realm of international relations, both realism and liberalism refer to the same subject in the same respect: they are both interpretive theories (post hoc) and predictive frameworks for action (ante hoc). Nonetheless, the two theories can be applied at different moments in time. One might apply liberalism during negotiations but turn to realism when a crucial decision must be made. Contemporary international relations are marked by the global presence of high-stakes issues, which has led to the emergence of historical and cultural contexts seeking to explain these prevailing interests. Therefore, it is not surprising that a diverse range of intellectual traditions and global visions has developed. Among these perspectives, the most widespread and frequently encountered, at least up to now, are realism and liberalism.

The realist school places states and the international system at the center of its theoretical framework. For realists, international relations are understood as “relations between political units, each claiming the right to administer justice on its own and to be the sole judge in deciding whether to fight or not to fight”¹. The international system, in the realist view, is anarchic. This structure arises primarily from the competition for power because the actor at the top of the hierarchy is the least vulnerable. The main actor, from the realist perspective, is the state viewed as a rational actor whose primary motivation is the maximization of its own interests. The central concern of realism is national security. On this basis, Edward Hallett Carr stated that the principal error of the League of Nations was rooted in an erroneous assumption: that all the great powers of that era were content with the territorial and political status quo².

Liberalism, by contrast, conducts its analysis not only at the international level as realism does, where international relations are separated from domestic politics but also at subnational, national, and international levels. This reflects all the layers that shape global society and interstate relations. Thus, from the liberal perspective, the primary actor on the international stage is not limited to states, as in the realist framework, but also includes international and transnational organizations. This is due to the increasing global interconnectivity, which makes it difficult for states to independently control activities within and beyond their borders. For this reason, addressing a wide range of transnational issues requires cooperation not only among states but also with non-state actors. As a result of globalization, state borders have become increasingly blurred, and power and influence are now distributed among multiple actors—of which the state is only one.

It is worth noting that, in the daily conduct of international relations, both perspectives often intersect. When action is necessary, the initiating state might attempt to involve certain actors or secure the neutrality of others. To this end, it may employ liberal tools, such as the use of multilateral institutions. However, if a state's national interest requires it, and it has the capacity in terms of power, it may ultimately discard the liberal approach and act in a purely realist manner. While the interplay between liberalism and realism continues to shape much of international relations theory and practice, neither paradigm fully accounts for the social dimensions of state behavior. To address this limitation, the following section introduces a third major approach—constructivism—which focuses on the role of norms, identities, and shared meanings in global politics. This note explores how constructivist scholars reinterpret core concepts such as security, alliances, and international obligations, offering a valuable complement (or even challenge) to realist and liberal assumptions.

A Note on Constructivist and Alternative Perspectives

Constructivism as an Alternative Lens. Constructivism emerged in the late 20th century as a challenge to the dominant realist and liberal paradigms in international relations. Unlike realism's emphasis on material power and anarchy or liberalism's focus on institutions and interdependence, constructivism directs attention to the role of norms, identities, and shared meanings in shaping state behavior. As Alexander Wendt famously argued, “anarchy is what states make of it” – the international environment's effects depend on how states interpret and construct it, rather than on an immutable logic of self-help³. In his seminal *Social Theory of International Politics*⁴, Wendt developed a “cultural theory” of international relations, showing that whether states view each other as enemies, rivals, or friends is a fundamental determinant of their interaction. These relational roles form what he called

¹ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War. A Theory of International Relations*, Routledge, New York, 2017, p. 8

² E.H. Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016

³ Alexander Wendt, *Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, “International Organization”, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, pp. 391–425

⁴ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 89

different “cultures of anarchy” essentially shared ideas about international norms – which shape state interests and even capabilities. In short, identities are the basis of interests in the constructivist view; states do not possess interests independently of the social context and meanings that define their identity. This perspective stands in contrast to rationalist theories that assume states’ interests as given or material.

Core Ideas from Constructivist Scholars. The intellectual roots of constructivism can be traced to scholars like Nicholas Onuf, who coined the term “*constructivism*” in international relations. Onuf’s *World of Our Making* advanced the idea that the international system is socially constructed through *rules* and *language*. He argues that language does not merely describe reality but plays a constitutive role: “by speaking, we make the world what it is”¹. In this view, people and states create their social reality through ongoing interaction – *co-constituting* agents and structures such that “society is what it does” and agents and their worlds mutually constitute each other. This means norms and shared understandings are not epiphenomenal; they are fundamental to how international politics functions. Martha Finnemore’s work further solidified constructivism by empirically demonstrating the power of global norms. In *National Interests in International Society*, Finnemore showed that what states want – their purported “national interests” – is shaped by international society and its norms. “The fact that we live in an international society means that what we want and, in some ways, who we are, are shaped by social norms, rules, understandings, and relationships we have with others”² Finnemore explains these *social realities* are as influential as material factors, for they *endow material realities with meaning and purpose*. For example, states adopted the Geneva Conventions and humanitarian rules *not* because of immediate material gain, but as an expression of shared values about acceptable behavior³. Such norms were *constitutive*: they redefined what it meant to be a “civilized” state, even when they did not confer direct strategic advantage⁴. Similarly, Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink note how some norms become so internalized that actors take them for granted as “inherent” a caution that what seems like unchanging structure may simply be deeply embedded social rules⁵.

Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore extended constructivist analysis to the realm of international organizations, viewing them as global bureaucracies that wield power through norms and knowledge. In *Rules for the World*, they argue that international organizations are far from neutral tools of states – they are autonomous actors that help construct the social reality of international politics. Bureaucratic organizations have the power to *classify the world, fix meanings, and diffuse norms*. In Barnett and Finnemore’s words, IOs “(1) classify the world, creating categories of actors and action; (2) fix meanings in the social world; and (3) articulate and diffuse new norms and principles”⁶. For instance, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) not only assists refugees but also shaped the very definition of who counts as a “refugee” and what obligations states have toward them. This perspective highlights that even concepts like “security,” “development,” or “threat” are influenced by the categorizations and shared understandings promoted by international institutions. Constructivist scholars thus illuminate how normative and ideational structures ingrained in language, rules, and institutions can shape state behavior in profound ways that neither realism nor liberalism fully capture.

Alliances, Threats, and Security Commitments through a Constructivist Lens. Constructivism offers distinct interpretations of key security concepts such as alliances and threats. Rather than seeing alliances as purely strategic responses to material power (as realists do) or as the institutionalization of common interests (as liberals do), constructivists emphasize the role of collective identity and shared norms in alliance formation and persistence. Alliances are not only contracts of convenience; they can become communities of fate. For example, the North

¹ Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*, University of South Carolina Press, 1989

²² Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 134

³ *Idem*

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ David Frederick Lemmons, *Alliances, Shared Identity, and Continued Cooperation*, Appalachian State University, May 2012, Department of Government and Justice Studies, https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/asu/f/Lemmons,%20David_2012_Thesis.pdf (05.05.2025)

⁶ Michael N. Barnett, Martha Finnemore, *The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations in International Organization*, The MIT Press, Autumn, 1999, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 699-732 in <https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mahajan/files/barnettfinnemore1999.pdf#:~:text=Organizations%20scholar,diffuse%20new%20norms%2C%20principles> (05.05.2025)

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) can be understood as a security community knitted together by a shared identity and values. Thomas Risse-Kappen argued that NATO's post-Cold War cohesion owes much to a common "North Atlantic" identity among its members – a sense of a transatlantic liberal-democratic community that did not exist before the alliance was formed¹. This shared identity helped NATO to persist and find new purpose even after its original adversary (the Soviet Union) disappeared. A constructivist would note that members saw each other as friends committed to common democratic norms, which powerfully supplemented the material interests in keeping the alliance. Similarly, constructivist research shows that threats are perceived, not automatic. How a state perceives another – as a friend, rival, or enemy – will determine whether that other's military capabilities are seen as menacing. Wendt illustrates this with the oft-cited observation that 500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons, *because* of the friendship and shared understandings the U.S. has with Britain (and the enmity with North Korea). In 1939, France's behavior at the onset of World War II can also be reinterpreted with attention to norms and identity. Realist logic would emphasize France's material hesitancy to launch an offensive against Germany despite its alliance with Poland, citing military calculations. A constructivist, however, might point to France's internalized norms and collective memories after the trauma of World War I – French leaders and society were deeply influenced by pacifist norms and a defensive mindset, which shaped their hesitant fulfillment of alliance obligations. The French *did* honor the alliance in a formal sense (declaring war on Germany due to the norm of commitment), but their strategic paralysis (the "Phony War") reflected an identity of caution and the lingering influence of shared meanings about the horrors of the previous war. In short, concepts like "alliance" and "security commitment" are not just calculations of power or interest; they are social commitments that derive strength (or weakness) from collective understandings. Whether an alliance holds firm in a crisis depends on whether partners share a sense of trust, duty, and common purpose, as much as on tanks and treaties.

Constructivism vs. Realism and Liberalism in Explaining Security Behavior. In a comparative perspective, constructivism offers a fundamentally different explanation for international security outcomes. *Realism* explains state behavior by distribution of material power and fear – for a realist, France in 1939 faltered due to unfavorable power dynamics, and NATO only stayed intact as long as a clear external threat loomed. *Liberalism* points to institutional commitments and domestic politics – a liberal might stress that France's democratic politics constrained rash action, or that NATO endured thanks to institutional inertia and the democratic peace among its members. *Constructivism*, by contrast, shines light on how intersubjective factors drive behavior: France's resolve and restraint were conditioned by prevailing norms and identities (how the French defined their role and the legitimacy of war in 1939), while NATO's endurance is attributable to an evolved collective identity and normative commitment, not simply material interests. Constructivism thus complements and challenges other theories by revealing the often-overlooked ideational causes behind alliances and security decisions. In the realm of international security, where realism sees immutable power struggles and liberalism sees managerial institutions, constructivism sees a world of *possibilities contingent on ideas*. As Wendt put it, international politics can be transformed if states collectively reconceive their relationships – enemies can become friends, threats can be redefined, and alliances can be re-imagined – because the international arena is, ultimately, a world of our making. By emphasizing how changing norms and identities can reshape what states consider dangerous or worthwhile, constructivism provides a rich, alternative understanding that complements the insights of realism and liberalism while explaining aspects of international security behavior that those theories struggle to capture.

Transitioning from Theory to History

With these theoretical perspectives as our interpretive framework, the following section aims to test the working hypothesis through a qualitative analysis of concrete situations in recent history. We will examine illustrative cases in which international treaties containing security guarantees were subjected to significant geopolitical pressure. Whether it concerns the failure to intervene in defense of an ally, the undermining of commitments through covert operations, or the successful cooperation between allies in the face of a common threat, these examples offer an appropriate empirical framework for observing the conditions under which

¹ David Frederick Lemmons, *Op. cit.*, p. 97

commitments become effective or, conversely, remain merely symbolic. We will also assess how intelligence services through overt or covert actions influenced state decisions, either reinforcing or weakening the guarantees.

Despite the tensions of the Cold War era, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact established during that time invoked the principle of collective defense: NATO in Article 5, the Warsaw Pact in Article 4. Both stated that “states are jointly responsible for each other's physical security”¹ referencing this principle enshrined in the UN Charter. It is remarkable that two superpowers, locked in a cold conflict, invoked the same principle that was, in theory, supposed to ensure global peace, especially considering that the UN Charter was open to all states (even Germany joined in 1974). In other words, both invoked a fundamentally liberal position. Yet ultimately, “whenever two dominant powers confront each other, each is the primary threat to the other's security, and they cannot be anything but enemies; each, regardless of preferences or intentions, will balance its power against the other”². For this reason, both sought to rally allies under the banner of collective security.

In turn, smaller states attempted to benefit from the situation by securing their own safety. Such mechanisms play a key role in mutual deterrence. The fear of the other's strength encourages restraint. The problem is that any such balance is imperfect, and at any moment, moral hazard can lead to open conflict. A particularly relevant issue is the emergence of power imbalance. This is the moment when each major power reassesses its position. If it calculates that it can avoid losses by sacrificing an ally, and the consequences seem tolerable, it might well decide to do so. This is a clear realist scenario—one in which the pursuit of self-interest and power overrides any other consideration, especially in the absence of a superior authority to enforce treaties and sanction their violation. As Hugo Grotius observed long ago, international law is *sine gladio* “without a sword.” Despite later developments, such as the establishment of the International Court of Justice at The Hague or the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the core reality remains unchanged.

In summary, both realist and liberal perspectives converge on the idea that alliances remain credible only under specific conditions. Realist theory stresses that states will honor security guarantees primarily when their vital strategic interests coincide; in the absence of such convergence, these commitments may remain mere rhetoric, easily discarded under pressure. Liberal institutionalism complements this view by highlighting that institutional factor—particularly regular intelligence-sharing, mutual trust, and transparent communication—reinforce alliances by reducing uncertainty and strengthening mutual confidence. Together, these insights support our core hypothesis: that alliance credibility hinges on the alignment of strategic interests among allies and the robustness of their intelligence cooperation. To evaluate this hypothesis empirically, the next section examines a historical case study: the *Drôle de guerre* (1939–40). This episode offers an instructive example of how varying degrees of interest alignment and intelligence cooperation among alliance partners influenced the perceived reliability of their security commitments during this critical phase of World War II.

Historical Case Study: the “Drôle de guerre” (1939–1940)

To test the explanatory power of these paradigms, we now turn to a key historical episode; one of the most striking historical examples of an unfulfilled security guarantee is the episode known as the “drôle de guerre” or “Phoney War.” This term refers to the period between the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 and the spring of 1940, when a declared state of war existed among the major powers but with little actual fighting on the Western Front. The events surrounding the fall of Poland in 1939 and the ensuing inaction of its allies (France and Britain) vividly illustrate how the credibility of alliance guarantees can collapse due to strategic self-interest and covert influences.

The Alliance and the Promise: France and Poland had signed a defensive alliance treaty in March 1921, whereby each pledged to support the other in the event of external aggression. This commitment was reaffirmed throughout the 1930s in response to the rising threat of Nazi Germany and was meant to serve as a powerful deterrent against German aggression in Central Europe. By 1939, on paper, Poland had the security guarantee of two great powers, France and the United Kingdom (Britain had issued a parallel guarantee to Poland in March 1939). When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, these treaties were invoked. France (and Britain) did

¹ G.R. Berridge, Allan James, *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2003, p. 41

² Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 18

declare war on Germany on September 3, 1939, honoring the letter of their commitments. In theory, the collective security mechanism should have sprung into action to defend Poland.

The “*drôle de guerre*” unfolds: In reality, however, France’s response remained extremely limited entering history as the *drôle de guerre*, literally the strange war. For roughly eight months (September 1939 to May 1940), French forces on the Western Front remained almost completely passive behind the fortifications of the Maginot Line. No significant offensive was launched against Germany to relieve pressure on Poland. As a result, Poland fought alone and was rapidly overwhelmed, partitioned between Germany and the Soviet Union by October 1939. During this period, while German armies were fully engaged in the east, the Anglo-French allies made only minimal probes or skirmishes, missing the opportunity to strike a potentially vulnerable Germany. The grand alliance system that was supposed to check aggression failed to function as intended at this critical moment. It is also noteworthy that, in this case, it was once again the Germans who seized the initiative. At the same time, they too contributed to the *drôle de guerre* by allowing, for three weeks, the British to evacuate their troops from France via Dunkirk without launching an attack.

The most important questions concern the Anglo-French attitude. One of them was raised at the Nuremberg Trials, where General Jodl declared: “If Germany did not collapse already in 1939, it is only because the 110 British and French divisions remained completely inactive, despite facing only 25 German divisions”¹ (the rest being deployed on the Polish front). The problem is evident: why did the British and French not intervene? The same question can be asked about the German attitude at Dunkirk. Other questions arise concerning both German and British behavior, such as the case of Rudolf Hess’s flight to England in the spring of 1940 (Hess was, after all, the second most powerful man in Nazi Germany). Notably, he remained imprisoned in Spandau until his death, for a long time being its sole inmate.

For all these questions, intelligence services would likely be the only ones able to provide real answers. Yet for now, they seem more interested in obstructing access to a proper answer than facilitating it. In this “chess game” of great powers, we must not forget that two countries—Poland and Norway—had already been occupied by Germany without Anglo-French intervention, despite the commitments made through treaties. It should be noted, as some experts have stated, that “diplomats are connected to intelligence”². For example, the intelligence community gathers information on foreign targets “including reports from various agencies, diplomatic missions, and consulates abroad.”³. However, situations can be much more complex: “due to concerns that military attachés might engage in intelligence activities, Article 7 of the Vienna Convention stipulates that the receiving state may request in advance the names of such attachés”⁴. We must bear in mind that, in its simplest definition, “intelligence refers to information about a foreign entity—usually, though not always, an adversary—as well as the agencies responsible for gathering such information.” What is significant in this definition is the adjective foreign a general qualifier for states, but in the broadest sense, it refers to any entity that might obstruct an intelligent actor from achieving its objectives. This means that even in the era of globalization and integrated markets, national intelligence goals continue to exist; they will be reconfigured but not rendered obsolete.

In this context, we must recognize that just like economic prosperity, military power, effective governance, social cohesion, and competent intelligence services, the evolution of diplomacy impacts a country’s foreign policy. Realist Explanations – Interests and Power Calculations: From a realist standpoint, France’s behavior can be explained by cold strategic calculus. Simply put, French leaders did not perceive it to be in France’s immediate national interest to launch a full-scale attack on Germany in defense of Poland, especially not in 1939 when France was not fully mobilized for a major offensive. The French high command feared a repeat of World War I’s devastating offensives and were wary of engaging the formidable German Wehrmacht without adequate preparation. France’s overall war strategy at that time favored delay – waiting behind strong defenses in hopes that economic blockade, diplomatic efforts, or perhaps German hesitation might fracture Hitler’s resolve or redirect the conflict. In realist terms, France lacked a vital interest in Poland’s survival that outweighed the risks to itself. The alliance commitment, while formally agreed, conflicted with France’s immediate security priorities. This is a

¹ Arrigo Petocco, *La strana Guerra*, Mondadori, Milano, 2008, p. 6

² Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 4

³ G.R. Beeridge, Allen James, *Op. cit.* p.7

⁴ Yehuda Z. Blum, *Diplomatic Agents and Mission in Encyclopedia of Public of International Law*, North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1986, p. 91

textbook example of what Snyder described: “alliance commitments are credible only to the extent that fulfilling them does not exceed the strategic interest perceived by the guarantor power”¹.

Additionally, France in 1939 faced the grim reality of its own military limitations. French and British forces were numerically strong but not yet fully integrated or deployed for a large offensive; their strategic doctrine was largely defensive. The German Army, meanwhile, had demonstrated terrifying effectiveness in Poland. Realists would argue that power capabilities were misaligned with the treaty’s ambitious promise. A collective defense commitment can deter or defeat aggression only if backed by genuine military strength and resolve at the critical time. In the case of the Franco-Polish alliance, the structural limitation was that France and Britain, though formally obliged to aid Poland, were not able to mount a decisive intervention quickly. The treaty guarantee was, in effect, stronger on paper than on the ground.

Liberal and Internal Factors – The Role of Politics and Intelligence: Beyond pure power calculations, France’s domestic political context further compromised the alliance’s functionality. The late 1930s French government (led by Édouard Daladier) was politically fragmented and war weary. Public opinion in France was deeply scarred by World War I and fearful of another bloodbath. There were also divisions within the French leadership about the greater threat—some politicians viewed the Soviet Union and communism as an equal or greater danger than Nazi Germany, which muddled strategic priorities. It is here that intelligence and covert influences enter the story. Historians have noted that certain members of the French government had dubious loyalties or conflicting ideological leanings. One controversial figure was Pierre Cot, the Air Minister, known for his leftist and pro-Soviet sympathies. Cot had publicly denounced the Munich agreement in 1938 and opposed Nazi aggression, but he was also suspected by some of being under the influence of Soviet intelligence. In fact, later accounts (including intelligence histories) suggest that Cot had been in contact with the Soviet intelligence apparatus prior to 1939. According to research by Richard Trahair and Robert Miller, Cot who “had been in contact with Soviet intelligence apparatus prior to 1939”², may have used his position to discourage aggressive French action against Germany at the outset of the war. His reasoning (if the allegations are true) would have been that a strong Germany focused on fighting in the East might indirectly serve Soviet interests, or that a war between Germany and the Western Allies should be postponed.

Whether or not Cot’s influence was decisive, this hypothesis underscores how intelligence agencies and ideological alignments can undermine alliance commitments. Covert informational mechanisms were at play: French and British intelligence in 1939 provided assessments that perhaps overestimated German strength and underestimated the prospects of a quick victory, feeding caution. Meanwhile, behind-the-scenes lobbying and espionage – such as purported Soviet influence via figures like Cot – introduced informational noise and skewed decision-making. Rather than sharing a unified, transparent view of the threat (as liberal theory would prescribe), the Allies were plagued by mistrust and mixed signals internally. It is telling that the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park and French intelligence had not yet come fully into their own; the allies lacked clear, shared intelligence that might have given them confidence to act. In liberal terms, intelligence, cooperation and trust among the Allies were insufficient to overcome their hesitation. The result was a paralysis that Nazi Germany exploited.

Outcome and Analysis: In the end, the Franco-Polish alliance of 1921 functioned more as a symbolic guarantee than a real one when tested by war. Poland was left to fend for itself despite treaties promising aid. The *drôle de guerre* demonstrates that even in a multilateral setting (France and Britain both allied to Poland and to each other), formal commitments can fail if key conditions are not met. Realist factors – the lack of convergent vital interests and the imbalance of military readiness – largely explain the outcome. Liberal factors (or the absence thereof) also mattered: there was little in the way of effective allied consultation or transparency in strategy; the allies did not fully coordinate their war plans or share a joint vision on how to honor the guarantee. Furthermore, intelligence services did not sufficiently facilitate alliance cohesion at this stage – indeed, covert influences might have worked in the opposite direction, encouraging inaction.

In retrospect, the *drôle de guerre* underscores the importance of both power and information in alliance dynamics. Had France and Britain been more unified, better informed, and resolute (liberal factors), and had their

¹ Glenn H. Snyder, *Op. cit.*, p. 12

² Richard C. S. Trahair, Robert L. Miller, *Encyclopedia of Cold War Espionage*, Enigma Books, New York, 2009, p. 67

leadership perceived their own survival to be directly tied to Poland's (realist interest factor), the response might have been very different. This case thus vividly illustrates the interplay of realist and liberal elements in determining whether a security treaty's guarantees hold firm or falter in crisis. Having examined how strategic interests, institutional coordination, and information sharing affect the credibility of alliance guarantees, it is equally important to consider the internal mechanisms that govern intelligence activities. The following section addresses the normative and operational need for democratic oversight of intelligence services within alliances—an essential yet often underexplored dimension of collective security arrangements.

Democratic Oversight of Intelligence Services

Only by ensuring a genuine balance between security and liberty, guaranteed through institutional transparency, can democracies overcome the false dilemma of “freedom or security.” Real, lasting security cannot be built outside the framework of democratic principles—because a society without freedom can never be truly secure or stable. As Loch K. Johnson observed, “the existence of secret agencies in an open society is a contradiction and a dilemma for liberal democracies”.¹ For this very reason, any sustainable balance must include clear mechanisms for democratic oversight of intelligence.

Societies progress when they reject binary traps like “do you want freedom or security?” Security without liberty is a hollow promise; even slaves had no real security. Intelligence services, while vital to national defense and alliance cohesion, can undermine democratic legitimacy if left unchecked. Therefore, the architecture of international alliances must also include the oversight infrastructure to keep intelligence power aligned with collective values and commitments. A key insight from this article is the double-edged role of intelligence services in collective security. Intelligence cooperation can be a glue that holds alliances together, but unchecked clandestine operations or competing intelligence agendas can also undermine alliances from within. To maximize the positive contributions of intelligence while minimizing the risks, democratic oversight of intelligence services is crucial. In practical terms, this means implementing concrete mechanisms to monitor and guide intelligence activities in line with alliance commitments and international norms:

- **Parliamentary Committees:** Democracies should empower specialized legislative committees to review intelligence agencies' operations, budgets, and strategies. Such committees (e.g. the U.S. Congressional intelligence committees or the UK's Intelligence and Security Committee) can ensure that secret activities do not stray into undermining allied trust or violating treaty obligations. Regular hearings and reports increase accountability.
- **External Audits and Reviews:** Independent oversight bodies or inspectors general can conduct audits of intelligence programs, checking for abuse or mission drift. For example, an external review panel might assess whether intelligence-sharing with alliance partners is being conducted robustly and securely, or whether agencies are engaging in unauthorized surveillance of allies (which can seriously erode trust if it comes to light).
- **Joint Intelligence Coordination Centers:** Within alliances like NATO, members have established coordination units (for instance, the NATO Intelligence Fusion Center and similar bodies) to facilitate sharing. This article recommends expanding such structures and subjecting them to governance by member states collectively. Allies could agree on joint oversight arrangements for any multilateral intelligence-sharing initiatives, ensuring that no single state's intelligence service can covertly hijack the agenda.
- **Selective Transparency:** While intelligence work is by nature secretive, a degree of transparency can be injected to build public and inter-allied confidence. This might include declassifying and sharing information about past intelligence cooperation successes, or establishing protocols where allies inform each other (at least in general terms) about covert operations that could affect the alliance. For instance, allies might agree to notify one another about any clandestine political influence operations in allied territories, to prevent mutual suspicion. Such selective transparency respects necessary secrecy but avoids destructive surprises.

By instituting these mechanisms, democracies can better align their intelligence services with their diplomatic commitments. Democratic oversight helps ensure that intelligence agencies serve the collective interest (enhancing early warning, countering common threats) rather than narrow or rogue agendas. It also maintains the normative legitimacy of alliances: part of what makes a collective defense pact like NATO strong is the shared belief in

¹ Johnson Loch K. *Handbook of Intelligence Studies*, Routledge, London, 2007, p. 12

common values and rule of law. Oversight and accountability in the realm of intelligence uphold those values and prevent the erosion of trust that scandals or unchecked espionage can cause¹.

Building on the normative arguments for democratic oversight, it is now essential to translate these insights into concrete recommendations for current and future security arrangements. The following section outlines key policy implications and institutional lessons derived from the preceding analysis, with particular attention to how alliances can enhance their credibility and adaptability in a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment.

Implications for Contemporary Alliances and Future Treaties

The findings of this analysis have important implications for present and future security arrangements. Modern alliances such as NATO, the European Union's mutual defense clause (Article 42.7 of the EU Treaty²), or regional defense pacts in Asia-Pacific (e.g. U.S. alliances with Japan or South Korea) all wrestle with the balance of credibility vs. flexibility. To apply the lessons learned:

Aligning Interests and Capabilities. Alliance planners must continually assess whether member states' strategic interests remain aligned. When divergences emerge, diplomatic effort is needed to reforge consensus. For example, within NATO, differences in threat perception (say, between eastern members focused on Russia and southern members focused on terrorism) require active management so that the alliance's guarantees remain credible to deter adversaries on all fronts. Future treaties should include provisions for regular strategic reviews, ensuring that all parties still agree on the definition of threats and the required responses.

Institutionalize Intelligence Sharing. Building on liberal insights, treaties should formalize intelligence-sharing mechanisms among signatories. A modern collective security treaty might mandate the creation of a joint intelligence task force or a secure communication network for the exchange of sensitive information. This would operationalize the notion that "information is power" shared information is shared power for the alliance. It also helps prevent failures of coordination. For instance, had there been a formal Allied intelligence committee in 1939 assessing German movements, France and Britain might have devised a timelier joint military strategy. Contemporary frameworks like the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance among Anglophone countries show how deep intelligence collaboration can underpin broader strategic trust.

Explicit Conditionality and Triggers. Treaties could be designed with clearer triggers for collective action and predefined responses, reducing ambiguity when crises erupt. One reason the Poland guarantee failed was the vagueness about how and when aid would be rendered. Modern agreements might specify that upon a certain threshold of aggression (e.g. an invasion), allies will within days initiate specific measures (joint air deployments, emergency NATO council meetings, etc.). While some flexibility is always needed, too much ambiguity undermines credibility. Well-defined commitments, perhaps backed by joint contingency plans, improve both the perception and reality of alliance reliability.

Integrate Military Commands and Exercises. Following NATO's model, future multilateral defense treaties should seek some degree of integrated command structure or regular joint exercises. Practical cooperation builds the functionality of the alliance – allies who train together and have interoperable forces can react faster and more cohesively when a threat arises. This also deters adversaries by showing that the alliance is not a mere political statement but a living operational partnership³.

Address Internal Threats and Subversion. Alliances must also acknowledge the risk of internal subversion or divergent agendas exposed by the *drôle de guerre* case. Modern adversaries may attempt to undermine alliances from within (for example, through disinformation campaigns or by cultivating sympathetic political figures in member states). Treaties and alliance charters should explicitly encourage members to resist such subversive influences and perhaps even coordinate counter-intelligence efforts. A clause promoting the integrity of the alliance decision-making could be included – committing members to transparency with each other about any external pressures or infiltration attempts they face. This way, allies can confront the problem collectively rather than falling victim to "divide and conquer" tactics.

¹Johnson K. Loch, *Secret Agencies: U.S. Intelligence in a Hostile World*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996

²European External Action Service, *Article 42(7) TEU – The EU's Mutual Assistance Clause*, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Article%2042\(7\)%20TEU%20-The%20EU's%20mutual%20assistance%20clause.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Article%2042(7)%20TEU%20-The%20EU's%20mutual%20assistance%20clause.pdf) (05.05.2025)

³ NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre, *Our Mission NATO*, <https://web.ifc.bices.org/about-us> (03.05.2025)

Finally, it is worth noting the importance of political will and public support. No treaty is self-executing; the leaders and citizens of allied nations must believe in the cause and be willing to bear costs for the common security. This speaks to a constructivist understanding – the alliance must form part of the members' national identities or grand strategies. Therefore, maintaining the credibility of an alliance is not just a matter for diplomats and generals, but for societies. Clear communication, solidarity in values, and occasional demonstrations of unity (for instance, humanitarian missions or peacekeeping operations conducted jointly) can solidify the sense that the security guarantee is real and worth upholding.

In summary, international security guarantees can provide great reassurance – but they come with no automatic guarantee of success. Realist forces of power and interest will always set the bounds of possibility; within those bounds, liberal mechanisms of cooperation and oversight can make the difference between an alliance that deters war and one that collapses when tested. The role of intelligence services exemplifies this duality: they are force-multipliers for security when guided by common goals and proper oversight, but sources of intrigue and discord when operating in the shadows without constraint. Future treaty designers and alliance managers would do well to heed these lessons. By ensuring robust democratic control of intelligence, aligning strategic interests, and investing in the institutions that build trust, states can improve the odds that their collective defense pacts will truly function as promised when the moment of truth arrives.

Conclusions

Having explored both historical evidence and theoretical models, we can now draw broader conclusions about what determines the success or failure of treaty-based security guarantees. The analysis of treaty-based security guarantees through both realist and liberal lenses, supported by the historical case of the *drôle de guerre*, yields several important conclusions. First, realist constraints are very real: no security guarantee can be credible if the fundamental interests and capabilities of the allies do not support it. States will not sacrifice themselves on the altar of an alliance; therefore, aligning mutual interests and maintaining sufficient military power is essential. Second, liberal factors can significantly enhance the credibility and functionality of alliances: institutions that promote transparency, joint planning, and information-sharing can prevent misunderstandings and create incentives for states to stick together even under stress. In essence, power provides the hard skeleton of security guarantees, but cooperation and trust are the ligaments that make the skeleton flexible and strong.

Bridging these perspectives, one finds that successful alliances often require a balance of both: a congruence of strategic interests (realism) and a dense network of communication and norms (liberalism). For instance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the Cold War worked in large part because the member states shared a profound common interest in deterring the Soviet Union and developed institutionalized military command structures and intelligence-sharing agreements that bound them together. Credibility in NATO's Article 5 (collective defense clause) came from the presence of substantial American and allied forces in Europe (a tangible commitment of power) as well as from continuous political consultation and joint exercises which signaled unity¹. Even today, NATO's credibility hinges on both the strategic calculus of its leading powers and the strength of its institutional cohesion.

This article contributes to scholarly literature by linking alliance theory with intelligence studies, showing that both the alignment of strategic interests and the institutionalized sharing of intelligence are necessary for credible treaties. Comparative or quantitative studies of other alliance episodes (for example, from the Cold War period or within contemporary security pacts) could better assess the broader relevance of the interest-alignment and intelligence-cooperation hypothesis. In-depth investigations of intelligence-sharing processes, possibly through archival research or interviews—could also clarify how and when such cooperation effectively supports alliance commitments. By extending the analysis beyond a single case, researchers can further refine the understanding of the conditions under which security guarantees success or failure.

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FORGING A BLIND DIPLOMACY: THE UNITED STATES AND THE RUSSIAN CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS OF 1993

Abstract:	<i>When he assumed the presidency in January 1993, Bill Clinton made Russia a top priority on his foreign policy agenda. Considering that a successful democratic transition in post-Soviet Russia was in the national security interest of the United States, Clinton tried to strike a strategic alliance with the Russian reform. As the leader of the reform process, Boris Yeltsin received the unconditional support of the U.S., regardless of whether the Russian President exceeded his constitutional bounds. This paper aims to analyse the American perceptions towards the Russian constitutional crisis of 1993. It seeks to find how the American officials evaluated the events that unfolded in the months leading to the 3-4 October bloodshed on the streets of Moscow and how they interpreted Yeltsin's decisions. Drawing on declassified documents from the National Security Archive and Clinton Digital Library, the article argues that the American administration, influenced by how the Russian President portrayed Moscow's political dynamic, preferred to avoid questioning the legality of Yeltsin's actions and continued to view him as the only alternative for ensuring America's strategic interests.</i>
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Introduction

Since he became President of the United States in January 1993, Bill Clinton emphasised the importance of helping the Russian reform of democracy and market economy. In Clinton's view, the success of Russia's democratic renewal would contribute significantly to global freedom. Supporting the Russian reform and the reformers led by Boris Yeltsin was a wise investment in enhancing the security and prosperity of the United States¹. As Moscow mired into a political stand-off between the legislative and executive powers, the Clinton administration continued to highlight the importance of supporting the reform process and its leader. Even though Yeltsin started to exceed his constitutional bounds and created a democratic ambiguity in Russia's post-Soviet regime, President Clinton never doubted his endorsement of Russia's first democratically elected President.

This paper aims to analyse the American perceptions towards the Russian constitutional crisis of 1993. It seeks to find how the American officials evaluated the events that unfolded in the months leading to the 3-4 October bloodshed on the streets of Moscow and how they interpreted Yeltsin's decisions. Although President Clinton was determined from the very beginning to express his public support for the Russian leader in his fight with the Congress of People's Deputies, some other members of the administration, such as Ambassador-at-Large Strobe Talbott, were uneasy about the possible outcome. The article examines the factors that influenced American

¹ The American Presidency Project, *Remarks to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Annapolis, April 01, 1993*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-american-society-newspaper-editors-annapolis> (25.03.2025)

decision-making during a turning point in post-Soviet Russia's democratic development and how the U.S. reacted to the policies adopted by Yeltsin.

Using qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis, the research is based upon memoranda of conversations and cables from the National Security Archive's briefing books and collections, public speeches from the Clinton Digital Library and The American Presidency Project, as well as memoir material. The documents reveal the strategic thinking behind the Clinton administration's policy towards Russia, the personal relationship between Clinton and Yeltsin, and the views expressed by the officials regarding the Russian constitutional crisis and its long-term impact.

The Russian constitutional crisis of 1993 has been a subject of intense debate in the context of Russia's rise to authoritarianism. Prominent historians and political scientists have explored in their studies the causes that led to the political deadlock and the outbreaks of violence. Michael McFaul¹, Daniel Treisman², Lilia Shevtsova³, Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski⁴ focus in their works on the tumultuous history of post-Soviet Russia and the challenges it faced in designing a new political system. Other experts, such as Josephine Andrews⁵ and Cindy Skach⁶, explore the rules and legal elements of adopting the new Russian Constitution.

Little was studied about the American perceptions of the Russian constitutional crisis. The most extensive work on the American role and its point of view is the volume written by James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia after the Cold War* (2003)⁷. The two authors trace the evolution of Russian American relations in the post-Cold War era and how the president and his top advisers in the executive branch formulated and carried out America's Russia policy.

The research is relevant for understanding the process of foreign policy decision-making in a time when the U.S. tried to integrate Russia into the Western world and assist it in democratic reform. Analysing the perceptions of the Clinton Administration during the constitutional crisis could offer a clear view of the main elements that impacted the design of the U.S. national security policy and the role that the American President played in developing the post-Cold War era diplomacy.

The present paper proceeds in four sections. First, it explores how President George H.W. Bush created the broad framework for the American post-Cold War strategy towards Russia, which would continue in the years ahead. Next, the article discusses how the Clinton administration perceived the first crises that threatened Yeltsin's political survival and how it tried to boost the Russian leader's domestic standing. In the third section, it examines the American reactions to the October events and why the presidential administration insisted on supporting Yeltsin. Finally, it concludes by looking at the implications the crisis had for the future of Russian American relations.

Building a Democratic Partnership

The final collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 secured the United States' global position and the international order's unipolarity, which had already taken shape during the last years of the Cold War. American dominance was evident in the military, economic, diplomatic, and ideological realms.⁸ With no strategic or ideological rival, the U.S. was at the pinnacle of power on the world scene. But, like any victor in a great war, Washington confronted choices of how to use its unparalleled power.

¹ Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political change from Gorbachev to Putin*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2001

² Daniel Treisman, *The Return: Russia's Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev*, Free Press, New York, 2012

³ Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, New York, 1999

⁴ Peter Reddaway, Dmitri Glinski, *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism against Democracy*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington D.C., 2001

⁵ Josephine T. Andrews, *When Majorities Fail: The Russian Parliament, 1990–1993*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006

⁶ Cindy Skach, *Russia's Constitutional Dictatorship: A Brief History*, in "University of Miami International and Comparative Law Review", Vol. 29, Issue 1, 2021, <https://repository.law.miami.edu/umiclr/vol29/iss1/6> (25.03.2025)

⁷ James Goldgeier, Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia after the Cold War*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., 2003

⁸ Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2016, p. 334

For the American decision-makers of the George H.W. Bush administration, the unprecedented position in which the U.S. stood presented both opportunity and responsibility. According to the national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, this exceptional moment gave America the rarest opportunity to shape the world and the deepest responsibility to do so wisely for the benefit of most, not just the U.S., but all nations. In the same vein, President Bush considered that as a leading democracy and beacon of liberty, and given the freedom, resources and geography, the U.S. had a disproportionate responsibility to use that power in pursuit of a common good. These unique advantages obliged the U.S. to lead the world affairs and not revert to isolationism¹.

Guided by this vision, the American administration put forward a post-Cold War strategy in foreign policy. The main elements of it were announced in the public speeches given by the President and in the strategic documents. In the first State of the Union Address since the dissolution of the USSR, President Bush laid out some of the ideas on existing opportunities and threats and the role the U.S. should play in this new context. Thus, standing before the joint session of Congress on January 28, the American leader proclaimed the new mission of the U.S.: to lead in support of freedom everywhere². Refusing the calls to a more restrained foreign policy that started to take hold once America's decades-long adversary vanished, Bush highlighted the importance of a continued American global role. His strategy seemed to be influenced not only by the victory of Western values in the Cold War but also by the American political culture. Since the founding of the United States, the exceptionalism of the American nation and the universality of its values have influenced the aspirations of its leaders. Regardless of the type of exceptionalism applied throughout history, exemplary or missionary exceptionalism, the United States has believed that it has a special role and a moral obligation to spread the benefits of its experiment.³ Convinced that the US was facing a new opportunity to export its successful democratic model, the Bush administration outlined a post-Cold War strategy that would have as its central element the American leadership and the expansion of the community of democracies.

The most comprehensive document about the new American strategic thinking was the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG). The document caused controversy when excerpts of it were made public by the New York Times in March 1992 because of its apparent attempt to make unipolarity a permanent feature of the international environment⁴. Written by then-Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz, DPG's main reason was to address the fundamentally new situation that had been created by the collapse of the Soviet Union and to set the direction of the American nation in the next century.⁵ The principal strategic goals, as presented in the document, were to deter and defeat attacks against the U.S., strengthen and extend the system of defense arrangements, preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to American interests, and to reduce sources of regional instability by encouraging the spread and consolidation of democratic governments and open economic systems⁶. Reflecting the complex relationship between power politics and political ideals, the strategy was meant to respond to the new challenges that the U.S. was facing.

One of the major challenges to the peace and security of the new international order was the fate of the former Soviet republics, especially the successor state of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation. Amid a democratic transition, Russia was confronted with real political and economic turmoil at the beginning of 1992. However, its geographical size, natural resources, the presence of a nuclear arsenal, and its veto power in the United Nations' Security Council still made Russia an important actor on the global stage. For the U.S., Russia's transition

¹ George H.W. Bush; Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, Vintage Books, New York, 1999, pp. 754-757

² The American Presidency Project, *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 28, 1992*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-0> (26.03.2025)

³ Hilde Eliassen Restad, *Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism*, in "American Political Thought", Vol. 1, No. 1, May 2012, p. 56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/664586> (12.03.2025)

⁴ National Security Archive, The George Washington University, *FY 94-99 Defense Planning Guidance Sections for Comments-Excerpts leaked to the New York Times*, 18 February 1992, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb245/doc03_extract_nytedit.pdf (12.03.2025)

⁵ National Security Archive, The George Washington University, *Defense Planning Guidance. FY 1994-1999, 4/16/92*, p. 1, <https://www.archives.gov/files/declassification/isca/pdf/2008-003-docs1-12.pdf> (12.03.2025)

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 1-2

to democracy and market economy had implications for national security and its overall goal of extending the democratic zone of peace. As a result, the DPG stated that the American goal should be to bring a democratic Russia and the other new democracies into the defense community of democratic nations, so that they can become a force for peace not only in Europe but also in other critical regions of the world¹.

The Bush administration's measures to encourage the democratic process in Moscow and integrate Russia into the Western world focused on prudent economic assistance, arms control and support for Russia's first democratically elected leader, Boris Yeltsin. Member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1961 to July 1990, Boris Yeltsin won the first democratic presidential elections for Russia on June 12, 1991, when he won 57 per cent of the popular vote.² An assessment of the U.S. Embassy to Moscow, written in January 1992, emphasised how Yeltsin, although he continued to struggle with the results of the imperial breakup he helped bring about and with the garrison state he inherited, would remain the key leadership figure in the reform process in Russia. No credible substitute was waiting in the wings³. The economic hardships created by the reforms his government applied did not affect his popularity among Russians. Moreover, according to the cable, by background and temperament, Yeltsin seemed curiously unsuited for the job of leading an autocratic society towards a democratic future, but he seemed determined that the job be done and be done by none other than himself⁴.

During his meeting with President Bush at Camp David in February 1992, Yeltsin positioned himself and his government as the only forces capable of leading Russia towards democracy. He underscored the importance of continued reform in Russia and the threats that loomed large in the case of a failed process of democratization. Painting a grim picture, the Russian leader told his American counterpart that if reform failed, the forces in power would be replaced by conservative forces, hawks, who would reject the principles of democracy and market economy. He appealed to the American support and cooperation⁵.

In the joint press conference after the meeting, Bush hailed that, for the first time, an American President and the democratically elected President of an independent Russia had met. He declared that Moscow and Washington had started to chart a new relationship based on trust, a commitment to economic and political freedom, and a strong hope for a true partnership⁶. The meeting inaugurated the dawn of the new era in which the two states no longer viewed each other as adversaries.

The following months saw an increase in the American effort to help Moscow and the other republics of the former Soviet Union. President Bush unveiled, alongside the Western Allies, a \$24 billion aid package to bolster Russia's struggling economy⁷. In addition, he proposed to the American Congress a comprehensive bill, the FREEDOM Support Act. Persuading the public to support his aid agenda to the former adversary was not an easy task. 1992 was an election year, the U.S. was struggling with its own economic problems, and President Bush was criticised for paying too much attention to foreign affairs. To soothe all the concerns, Bush indicated how the democratic revolution in the former USSR was a defining moment in history with profound consequences for America's own national interests. If this democratic revolution was defeated, Bush considered, it could plunge

¹ *Ibidem*, p.5

² Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive, *Yeltsin, Boris, 1931-2007, Biography*, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/people/yeltsin-boris> (27.03.2025)

³ National Security Archive, *Cable from U.S. Embassy Moscow to Secretary of State. Subject: Boris Nikolayevich Yel'tsin: A Mid-Range Political Assessment, January 30, 1992*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/29669-document-7-cable-us-embassy-moscow-secretary-state-subject-boris-nikolayevich> (25.03.2025)

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ National Security Archive, *Memorandum of Conversation. Subject: Meeting with Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia, February 1, 1992*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/29670-document-8-memorandum-conversation-subject-meeting-boris-yeltsin-president-russia> (27.03.2025)

⁶ George H.W. Presidential Library & Museum (GHWBPL)– Public Papers, *The President's News Conference With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, 1992-02-01*, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/3898> (27.03.2025)

⁷ James Gerstenzang, Tamara Jones, *U.S., Allies Unveil \$24-Billion Aid Plan for Struggling Russia: Economics: The American share is \$5 billion. Bush presents the program as a step to avoid a return to totalitarianism. He cites the 'high stakes'*, in "Los Angeles Times", April 2, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-04-02-mn-207-story.html> (27.03.2025)

America into a world more dangerous in some respects than the dark years of the Cold War¹. Furthermore, in a speech given to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Bush advanced Washington's new "mission" towards Moscow, stating that securing and building a democratic peace in Europe and the former USSR would guarantee a lasting peace for the U.S.².

But winning democratic peace needed more than just political idealism. American policy included a heavy dose of political realism as a hedge against any reversal in Russia's reform³. After the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan inherited much of the vast Soviet nuclear arsenal. The U.S. had a vital interest in ensuring that only one nuclear power emerged from the breakup of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Bush administration tried, as soon as possible, to convince the three former Soviet republics to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), bring all the weapons under Russia's control and then sign an arms control agreement with Moscow that would further reduce its nuclear forces. Until June, when Bush and Yeltsin met in Washington, the American administration had successfully finalised its power politics' goal. The newly independent states signed the Lisbon Protocol, and the leaders of the U.S. and Russia agreed to the most significant arms reductions of the nuclear age through the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II (START II).

With a vision that featured ideals as much as power politics, President Bush developed a strategy that would serve as a guide for the next American administration. Trying to advance the national security interests of the U.S., Bush found that supporting the reform process and integrating Russia into the system of Western democracies were the best guarantees for maintaining international peace and security.

Clinton Administration and the First Crises of Post-Soviet Russia

The American Presidential elections of November 1992 resulted in the victory of the Democratic Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton. Since the first months of the presidential campaign, Clinton set out his vision regarding America's role in international affairs and the relations between Washington and Moscow. Influenced by the same thinking on American leadership and democratic peace principles as his predecessor, Clinton affirmed in December 1991, at Georgetown University, that the U.S. must build a safer, more prosperous and more democratic world. Convinced that democracies would not go to war with each other, Clinton imagined a global democracy that would be in the best interest of all nations⁴. He emphasised the importance of regarding the funding for democratic assistance as a legitimate part of the American national security budget⁵.

As one of the greatest security challenges of the post-Cold War era, the process of Russia's democratic reform was a major concern for Clinton once he took office as the U.S. President in January 1993. Throughout the electoral campaign, he had criticized President Bush for not doing enough to support the democratic revolution and being reluctant to offer Yeltsin a helping hand⁶. Clinton was an admirer of Boris Yeltsin since he opposed the coup attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev in August 1991. He thought that Yeltsin was the right man to lead post-Soviet Russia⁷. Just three days after the presidential inauguration on January 20, Clinton called Yeltsin to assure him that Russia would be a top priority for U.S. foreign policy during his administration and that he was determined to create, alongside the Russian leader, the closest U.S.–Russia partnership. Also, the American leader pointed up that Washington would do whatever it could to help Russia's democratic reforms succeed⁸.

¹ GHWBPL – Public Papers, *The President's News Conference on Aid to the States of the Former Soviet Union*, 1992-04-01, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/4125> (27.03.2025)

² GHWBPL – Public Papers, *Remarks to the American Society of Newspaper Editors*, 1992-04-09, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/4167> (27.03.2025)

³ James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War&Peace*, 1989-1992, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1995, p. 654

⁴ Internet Archive, *A New Covenant for American Security*, *Remarks to Students at Georgetown University*, December 12, 1991, <http://web.archive.org/web/20030525033427/http://www.ndol.org/print.cfm?contentid=250537> (31.03.2025)

⁵ *Idem*

⁶ The American Presidency Project, *Excerpts of Remarks in Milwaukee*, October 02, 1992, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/excerpts-remarks-milwaukee> (31.03.2025)

⁷ Bill Clinton, *My Life*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2004, p. 496

⁸ National Security Archive, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation*, Subject: Telcon with President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, January 23, 1993, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/29754-document-2-memorandum-telephone-conversation-subject-telcon-president-boris-yeltsin> (31.03.2025)

In February 1993, in the Presidential Review Directive related to the U.S. policy towards Russia and Ukraine, the Clinton administration indicated that the survival of democracy and reform governments in Russia and Ukraine is one of the most critical foreign policy issues facing the U.S. and the world. The success of these and other reform governments in the former Soviet Union would enhance America's long-term national security and global stability¹. The Review Directive stated the vision of President Clinton, who believed that the U.S. must devote considerable energy, resources and creativity to assist in the promotion of the spread of democracy and market economic reforms in the former Soviet Union.

By the time the Clinton administration took office, however, post-Soviet Russia appeared to be sinking deeper into a political and economic crisis as the Russian parliament turned against the measures taken by Yeltsin. His government's programme of economic shock therapy for turning the Soviet centralized economy into a market one led to soaring prices and high inflation. In December 1992, the Congress of People's Deputies forced Yeltsin to dismiss Yegor Gaidar, the architect and symbol of Russia's economic change, and replaced him with Viktor Chernomyrdin as prime minister, an experienced Soviet apparatchik².

Although Russia was in a democratic transition, constituent elements of the old Soviet system remained in place. The state continued to be governed by the Brezhnev-era Constitution of 1978, and the Congress of People's Deputies benefited from the electoral mandate obtained in March 1990 during the regime of Mikhail Gorbachev. Disagreements over economic reform evolved into a constitutional debate concerning the structure and organization of the Russian political system. Discontented Yeltsin was conducting the internal affairs, the Congress curtailed the president's power to rule by decree, an assignment given initially by the legislature at the beginning of the reform process and passed several constitutional amendments that further limited the president's power. It seemed like these changes were major victories for the Russian Congress and a progress towards greater parliamentary authority in governing the country³. Yeltsin rejected the actions of the Congress and, on March 20, announced a referendum through which Russian citizens would express their support for his leadership, a new constitution drafted under his direction and a law to elect a new Parliament. Moreover, until the referendum scheduled for April 25, Yeltsin would govern by special decree, which deprived the legislative branch of authority⁴.

Inside the Clinton administration, the Russian leader's decision created uncertainties about what kind of leader Yeltsin was and how much he should have been supported by the U.S. According to Strobe Talbott, Ambassador-at-Large and Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the New Independent States, Yeltsin's reliance on the referendum had the virtue of taking the issue to the people, but his invocation of special rule had the look of martial law⁵. Despite that, President Clinton favoured issuing statements strongly supporting Yeltsin because he was the only democratically elected national leader in Russia and at the helm of the reform process. In the first statement after Yeltsin's announcement, the administration stressed that the Russian President has the American support, as does his reform government, and all reformers throughout the Russian Federation. By his actions, the statement asserted, President Yeltsin proposes to break the political impasse in Russia by letting the Russian people decide their future⁶.

The American President was hardly alone in considering that Yeltsin was the only viable alternative in Russia for a democratic future. The Western allies had the same vision of the Russian leader. In a joint press conference with President Clinton, British Prime Minister John Major declared that Yeltsin was the best hope for the Russians

¹ Federation of American Scientists, *Presidential Review Directive/NSC – 3, Subject: U.S. Policy Toward Russia and Ukraine, February 4, 1993*, <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/prd/prd-3.pdf> (31.03.2025)

² Kristina Spohr, *Post-Wall, Post Square: Rebuilding the World after 1990*, William Collins, London, 2019, p. 484

³ Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political change from Gorbachev to Putin*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2001, p. 186

⁴ Richard Boudreaux, *Yeltsin Moves to Rule by Decree: Russia: The besieged president defies lawmakers and orders an April 25 referendum. Legislature calls for emergency session today as leadership struggle hits crisis point*, "Los Angeles Times", March 21, 1993, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-03-21-mn-13722-story.html> (31.03.2025)

⁵ Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, Random House, New York, 2003, p. 72

⁶ Clinton White House, *U.S. Statement on the Yeltsin Speech*, March 20, 1993, <https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/1993/03/1993-03-20-us-statement-on-yeltsin-speech.html> (31.03.2025)

and that the reform policies were personified in the person of President Yeltsin¹. In the same vein, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl considered that there are sometimes situations in politics when one must stand by a person. In a conversation with President Clinton on 26 March, Chancellor Kohl reflected on the possible threat coming from Russia if Yeltsin was not supported. In his opinion, if the Russian leader is assisted, he might have a chance in the fight against the legislature, even though his political survival was not certain. If he were toppled, then things would be much worse and more expensive for the West, which would have to rearm². Thereby, maintaining Yeltsin as the leader of post-Soviet Russia was an idea shared not just by Clinton but also by the main European allies of the U.S.

In the following weeks until the referendum, Clinton tried to enhance Yeltsin's political position at home and unveil to the American public the administration's strategy towards Russia and the benefits of helping the former adversary. The most comprehensive speech on Moscow was given on April 1st, just before the planned summit at Vancouver, Canada, with the Russian leader. Recalling some ideas exposed during the presidential campaign about the importance of an active American engagement role in the world and the task of promoting democratic spirit and economic reforms, Clinton drew attention to the importance of keeping the former Soviet Union at the forefront of the American foreign policy agenda. He highlighted how the interest of the U.S. in security and prosperity lay with Russian reform and with Russian reformers led by Boris Yeltsin. Because supporting Russia was a wise investment, the U.S. must strike a strategic alliance with Russian reform³. Optimistic about the Russian journey towards democracy, Clinton saw the crisis unfold in Moscow as a growing pain within democracy, rather than a retreat from democracy⁴.

The Vancouver summit between the two leaders would be the right setting to provide a diplomatic boost for the Russian president. In a memorandum sent to President Clinton, the National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, detailed the importance of the high-level meeting for the domestic audience in Russia in the context of the April 25 referendum. According to Lake, the Vancouver summit would help Yeltsin in many ways. First, it would show his people and the world that things have settled down at home and he has weathered the crisis. Then, it would help him to gain in stature from being treated as an equal by the American President, a perception underscored by the fact that Clinton's first meeting abroad with a foreign leader was with the leader of Russia, and, finally, he would blunt the criticism of his foreign policy as being too pro-Western if Yeltsin would bring home tangible assistance under the mantle of mutual advantage and partnership⁵.

The memorandum specified Washington's goals in relations with Moscow and why the success of Yeltsin and his democratic reforms was so essential for the national security of the U.S. Turning to the realist components of Clinton's agenda, Lake underlined the foreign policy issues that would be an important part of the Vancouver summit that Clinton should be stressing: the implementation of START I and ratification of START II, convincing Ukraine to ratify NPT, the continued Russian presence in the Baltics and other former Soviet republics, and Moscow cooperation at the UN Security Council for resolving the principal security crisis on the global stage, such as Yugoslavia, Iraq and North Korea. Regarding Russia's reform, Lake pointed out that Russia needed American assistance, but, more than that, the U.S. needed Russian reform to succeed to have the resources and the time to reshape its own economy and cut the defence budget⁶.

Meeting in Vancouver on April 3-4, the two leaders discussed the most pressing issues from the bilateral agenda, including the referendum on support for President Boris Yeltsin and his policies. After he outlined how he

¹ The American Presidency Project, *The President's News Conference With Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom, February 24, 1993*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-prime-minister-john-major-the-united-kingdom-0> (01.04.2025)

² Clinton Digital Library, *Meeting with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, March 26, 1993, Oval Office*, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101319> (01.04.2025)

³ The American Presidency Project, *Remarks to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Annapolis, April 01, 1993*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-american-society-newspaper-editors-annapolis> (01.04.2025)

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ National Security Archive, *Memorandum from Anthony Lake to President Clinton, Subject: Meeting with President Yeltsin. Date: April 3-4, 1993. Location: Vancouver, Canada, March 31, 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/30378-document-3-memorandum-anthony-lake-president-clinton-subject-meeting-president> (01.04.2025)

⁶ *Idem*

spent a day campaigning, the Russian leader exposed the difficulties facing political life in Russia and the stark difference between him and the opposition. He asserted that people do not want the communists to come back.¹ At the joint press conference after the summit, President Clinton, as part of his own campaign of improving Yeltsin's political standing, announced the financial package of \$1.6 billion to bolster political and economic reform in Russia and reiterated how his administration was investing not only in the future of Russia but in the future of America as well.² Asked about the impact the summit would have on the result of the referendum, Yeltsin tried to downplay the summit's role and affirmed that it was up to the Russians to deal with the referendum issue. However, he insisted that a vote of no confidence would deal a major blow not only to Russia but also to the U.S. and other countries of the world. It would be a loss to democracy, a loss to freedom, a rollback to the past, a return to the Communist yokes, according to the Russian President³.

On April 25, the people of Russia went to the polls to answer four questions: "Do you trust President Yeltsin? Do you approve of the socio-economic policy conducted by the Russian president and the Russian government? Should the new presidential election be conducted earlier than scheduled? Should the new parliamentary election be conducted earlier than scheduled?"⁴. The answers and the turnout were favourable to Yeltsin. After he learned about the results, President Clinton called the Russian leader to congratulate him on the victory and give assurances that the U.S. would continue to support him. Yeltsin, on the other hand, in contrast to what he declared publicly in Vancouver, recognized that a major part of the credit went to what the American President said during the summit⁵. Reporting to the press on the conversation, Clinton welcomed the political outcome in Russia, declaring that it was a very good day, not only for the people of Russia but for the people of the United States and all the people of the world⁶.

Post-Soviet Reforms Under Siege

Far from being resolved by a long-term victory for Yeltsin, the March crisis and the referendum campaign further polarised the political forces in Moscow. In the summer of 1993, Yeltsin convened the Constitutional Conference to draft a new fundamental law. Opposition leaders left the Conference and began the efforts of designing their own draft Constitution that the Congress of People's Deputies could adopt in October. To prevent what he believed would be a law that would eliminate the president's powers, Yeltsin issued, on September 21, Presidential Decree 1400, calling for the dissolution of the Congress of People's Deputies, a popular ratification of a new Constitution and elections for a new bicameral Parliament in December 1993. Also, as a conciliatory gesture, Yeltsin stated that he would hold an early presidential election next year, in March⁷. His political move was considered unconstitutional, and the Congress approved the acting vice-president, Alexander Rutskoi, as Russia's new President.

The Constitutional crisis brought back to the debate the chances of Yeltsin's political survival. Prior to the Russian leader's decision, on September 7, President Clinton turned once again to his main European ally, Helmut Kohl, to discuss what was happening in Moscow. He asked the German Chancellor how he thought Yeltsin was doing with all the rising political controversy. From Kohl's point of view, the situation was far from being clear to assess. Things might go smoothly or very badly. But what was for sure, it was to stay in the current position, of supporting Yeltsin in his fight with the opposition. The German Chancellor expected that nobody who would come

¹ National Security Archive, *Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Working Dinner with Boris Yeltsin, Vancouver, Canada, April 3, 1993, 6:30-8:30 pm.*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/30381-document-6-memorandum-conversation-subject-working-dinner-boris-yeltsin-vancouver> (01.04.2025)

² The American Presidency Project, *The President's News Conference With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia in Vancouver, April 04, 1993*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-president-boris-yeltsin-russia-vancouver> (01.04.2025)

³ *Idem*

⁴ Michael McFaul, *Op.cit.*, p. 188

⁵ National Security Archive, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, Subject: Telephone Conversation with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, April 26, 1993, 1:50 – 1:58*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/30383-document-8-memorandum-telephone-conversation-subject-telephone-conversation-russian> (01.04.2025)

⁶ The American Presidency Project, *Remarks on the Election in Russia and an Exchange With Reporters, April 26, 1993*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-election-russia-and-exchange-with-reporters> (02.04.2025)

⁷ Michael McFaul, *Op.cit.*, p.195

after Yeltsin to be as auspicious as he. President Clinton agreed, sharing with Chancellor the opinion that if Yeltsin doesn't make it, anyone who will follow him will be worse¹. That was a strong argument for the Western leaders to stay with Yeltsin.

As was the case during the March crisis, Strobe Talbott had some doubts about how legal and democratic Yeltsin's action was. He urged President Clinton to find a way to tell Yeltsin, in the telephone conversation that was about to take place between the two leaders, that he can't destroy democracy in order to save it². Even though the Constitution was adopted in the old Soviet times, it is the only one Russia have until it adopts a new one, considered Talbott³. In the conversation that followed, President Clinton wanted to hear from Yeltsin, first, what Decree 1400 meant for his position and the reform process. The Russian leader detailed the situation that was taking place in Moscow. He justified his decision by stating that the Supreme Soviet had gotten out of control, no longer supported the reform process, and its members had become communists⁴. Clinton informed Yeltsin that his speech came at a time when the U.S. Congress was preparing to vote on a \$2.5 billion assistance package for Russia and other newly independent states. The American President avoided questioning the legality of Yeltsin's action. He instead drew attention to the importance of Russia continuing the process of reform and organizing free and fair elections⁵. The Russian leader promised that the elections would be fully carried out in a democratic way. Moreover, speaking about the unease that had started to take hold on the streets of Moscow, Yeltsin stressed that he did not want, under any circumstances, bloodshed⁶.

Encouraged by Yeltsin's commitment to democratic elections, the Clinton Administration publicly affirmed its full support for the Russian leader while trying to convince Congress to pass the aid package as soon as possible. At the end of September, the Senate voted 88 to 10 to approve the bill. It was considered a tangible sign to show Yeltsin and his supporters that the U.S. stood in their corner in the political struggle unfolding between reformers and hard-liners in Moscow⁷. The rapid action taken by Congress showed that a clear bipartisan consensus emerged for giving Yeltsin the needed support for a new victory in the long political fight with his opponents.

At odds with what the Russian leader thought would be a peaceful confrontation, the constitutional crisis turned violent in the first days of October. After Rutskoi's forces went on the offensive by attacking Moscow's mayor's office and the television station, Yeltsin ordered the armed forces to attack the Russian White House building, where his opponents were barricaded. The Clinton Administration was again confronted with taking a side in the events that increasingly looked like a civil war. According to the U.S. Ambassador to Russia Thomas Pickering, Strobe Talbott called him on October 3 to ask what the U.S. should do about Yeltsin. Pickering, like most members from the Clinton Administration, thought that Yeltsin was the only chance for creating a more benign future, less contentious and less ideological. He told Talbott that the U.S. had no alternative in that difficult situation. The fact that the Russian leader has said he would go to the elections was an extremely important basis for supporting him⁸. The ones who opened fire at the government and were entrenched in the White House had not shown any interest in what the U.S. was interested in or in the kind of future for Russia that Washington wanted to support, considered the American Ambassador⁹.

¹ Clinton Digital Library, *Telcon With Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany on September 7, 1993*, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101325> (02.04.2025)

² Strobe Talbott, *Op.cit.*, pp. 110-111

³ *Idem*

⁴ National Security Archive, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telcon with President Boris Yeltsin of Russian Federation, September 21, 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16845-document-03-memorandum-telephone-conversation> (02.04.2025)

⁵ *Idem*

⁶ *Idem*

⁷ Michael Ross, *Senate Includes \$2.5 Billion for Russia in Aid Bill: Legislation: Action comes one day after Clinton's call to help Yeltsin. Total package comes to \$12.5 billion*, "Los Angeles Times", September 24, 1993, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-09-24-mn-38503-story.html> (02.04.2025)

⁸ The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training – Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, *Interview with Ambassador Thomas Reeve Pickering, Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy, April 18, 2003*, pp. 384-385, <https://adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Pickering-Thomas-Reeve.pdf> (03.04.2025)

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 359

After this assessment came from the besieged Moscow, President Clinton described to the press the political profile of Yeltsin's opponents who started the violence, stressing that they represented the old Communist system and were people who did not want a new constitution and an election¹. He continued to highlight the importance of supporting Yeltsin because he was the person who embodied a commitment to democracy. Also, he reiterated that if the Russian leader would go forward with a new constitution, genuinely democratic elections for the Parliament and genuinely democratic elections for the President, Yeltsin would do exactly what he said he would do, and the U.S. had taken the right position in this conflict².

For President Clinton, there was no doubt that Yeltsin's opponents were trying to derail Russia from its democratic reform process. Both Alexander Rutkoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, were Yeltsin's allies during the August 1991 coup attempt. Increasingly in disagreement with the policy of economic transformation, they turned against the Russian leader. Their Soviet past, doubled by their hostility towards the only democratically elected leader in Russia and the violent attempt to seize power, led the Clinton administration to refuse any idea of opening the communication channels with them.

On October 4, the civil war between Yeltsin and Congress was over. The next day, President Clinton called the Russian leader to express his intention to continue to work on the bilateral relations and congratulate him on the way he had handled the events³. The Russian leader once again motivated his decision to use force, calling his opponents fascist, and mentioned how, with the end of the events, there were no more obstacles to Russia's transition to democracy and a market economy. Moreover, trying to predict the outcome of the upcoming elections, Yeltsin highlighted how he had no visible rivals, with his popularity rating at 90%⁴.

Despite this apparent optimism that seemed to emerge with the resolution of the constitutional crisis, a stable democratic regime was far from being established in Russia. The measures taken by Yeltsin after the end of his conflict with Congress seemed to unveil the emergence of a new balance of power in post-Soviet Russia. With his main opponents in prison, Yeltsin believed there was a new opportunity to design the elements of a system more inclined to presidential powers. This change of rules, however, started to be seen with uncertainty. In a cable sent to the American Secretary of State from the U.S. Embassy to Moscow, Chargé d'Affaires James Collins assessed the domestic political dynamics in Russia. Ahead of the first post-Soviet parliamentary elections that were about to be held in December 1993, Collins questioned both the fairness of the campaign and the viability of the new draft Constitution that gave more power to the president. According to his cable, the draft Constitution that Yeltsin was prepared to present to the Russian people failed to provide the basis for handling one of the greatest challenges facing Yeltsin's legislature and government: making the unwieldy Russian Federation work⁵.

Apart from the new Basic Law, Collins also raised concerns about the continuing ban on ten hardline nationalist and communist political organizations that would pose a key issue for the ultimate legitimacy of the new legislative body⁶. This concern was a problem that needed to be discussed with the Russian officials. Informing the Secretary of State Warren Christopher of his visit to Moscow, Collins focused on the importance that the U.S. must give to the Russian electoral campaign. He advised Christopher to make clear that Washington wanted to see a fair and democratic election in December – and thereafter – and accompanied by a free and independent media⁷.

¹ The American Presidency Project, *Remarks in a Town Meeting in Sacramento, October 03, 1993*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-town-meeting-sacramentol> (03.04.2025)

² The American Presidency Project, *Remarks to the Community and an Exchange With Reporters in San Francisco, October 04, 1993*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-community-and-exchange-with-reporters-san-francisco> (03.04.2025)

³ National Security Archive, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telcon with President Boris Yeltsin of Russian Federation, October 5, 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16847-document-05-memorandum-telephone-conversation> (05.03.2025)

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ National Security Archive, *Cable from American Embassy Moscow to Secretary of State: Secretary's Visit to Moscow: Domestic Political Dynamics, October 19, 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16849-document-07-cable-american-embassy-moscow> (05.04.2025)

⁶ *Idem*

⁷ National Security Archive, *Cable from American Embassy Moscow to Secretary of State: Your October 21-23 Visit to Moscow-Key Foreign Policy Issues, October 20, 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16850-document-08-cable-american-embassy-moscow> (05.03.2025)

In his first meetings with the Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev since the October events, the American Secretary of State made brief observations about the problems that would put at threat the democratic character of the post-Soviet Russia. He wanted to find out more about the press and political organizations that were banned or restricted, and opened the possibility of sending American observers to verify the electoral process¹. In his conversation with the Russian leader, Christopher reiterated his idea of electoral observers while praising Yeltsin for the “superb handling” of the constitutional crisis and how relieved the American administration was once it learned about Yeltsin reestablishing control². He avoided signalling out the worries about the electoral campaign or the draft Constitution. Instead, the discussion centred around Yeltsin's highly hopeful vision of the future of democracy in his country. The Russian leader asserted that the country has calmed down with the constitutional crisis over, with no strikes and no appreciable unrest on the streets. Concerning the draft Constitution, Yeltsin insisted that it would be up to the standards of the best Western democracies and would enshrine popular democracy in Russia³.

The December parliamentary elections proved to contradict a large part of Yeltsin's affirmations. The distress of the Russian people was expressed on the ballot rather than on the street. The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, headed by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who based his campaign on a nationalist and imperialist rhetoric, obtained 23% of the votes, the Communist Party 12% and Russia's Choice Party of Yegor Gaidar and Yeltsin 15%. The Liberal parties loyal to Yeltsin did not win a majority of seats in the new parliament. It was a surprise that started to create a perception that Russia's experiment with democracy resembled 1920s Weimar Germany⁴.

Despite the unexpected results, Clinton congratulated Yeltsin on the historic elections. In the conversation between the two leaders in December 1993, the American President maintained a positive view, telling Yeltsin that in his public statements, he tried to emphasise that the elections were free, fair, the Constitution was approved and that the reformers would still be by far the largest faction in the Duma.⁵ Nonetheless, all these remarks could not hide the doubts inside the Clinton Administration regarding the future of democratic reforms in Russia. Even though the Soviet Congress was replaced by a bicameral Parliament, its component was still dominated by parties that opposed Yeltsin's political programme. Being aware of this dynamic, Clinton asked the Russian leader what impact the election results would have on the economic reform and Russian foreign policy. Yeltsin attempted to alleviate the fears, stressing that in the upper house of the Parliament, 80% of the members would be democratically minded people. Alluding to Zhirinovskiy, he claimed that there is no room for extremism or fascism in the new Parliament and the President and the Constitution will guard against that⁶.

Behind the apparent downsizing of electoral results, there was a rising concern about the stability of post-Soviet Russia and its democratic trajectory. Strobe Talbott considered that even though the Duma had less power under the new Constitution than the Supreme Soviet had had under the old one, the government's political opponents could claim they had a popular mandate. As a result, according to Talbott, everything that the U.S. and Russia were trying to do together would be harder⁷.

The threats that the U.S. was trying to avoid during the constitutional crisis seemed to be looming again. But other than a menace to the Russian democracy or the national security of the U.S., the results of the parliamentary elections were a caveat for the Clinton Administration that the strategic alliance with Russian reform was more difficult to achieve than it thought at the beginning of 1993.

¹ National Security Archive, *Secretary Christopher's Meeting with Foreign Minister Kozyrev: NATO, Elections, Regional Issues, October 25, 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16851-document-09-secretary-christopher-s-meeting> (05.04.2025)

² National Security Archive, *Secretary Christopher's Meeting with President Yeltsin, 10/22/1993, Moscow, October 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16852-document-10-secretary-christopher-s-meeting1> (05.04.2025)

³ *Idem*

⁴ Michael McFaul, *Op.cit.*, p. 228

⁵ National Security Archive, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telcon with President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation, December 22, 1993*, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16853-document-11-memorandum-telephone-conversation> (07.04.2025)

⁶ *Idem*

⁷ Strobe Talbott, *Op.cit.*, p. 133

Conclusions

As the sole superpower on the international stage after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. took the responsibility of bringing its former adversary into the community of democratic nations. Considering that the transformation of Russia into a free-market democracy was in the national security interest of the U.S., the American administration of Bill Clinton designed a strategy of helping Moscow's reforms succeed and bolstering the domestic position of the first Russian elected leader, Boris Yeltsin. With the increased struggle in Russia between the legislative and executive branches, the Clinton Administration continued to follow the American initial strategy that seemed to be the only alternative for ensuring global peace.

Yeltsin's overstepping of constitutional limits did not seem to represent a serious violation for the Clinton administration. The post-Soviet Russia was still governed by the Brezhnev-era Constitution of 1978, which poorly delineated the political powers, and the Congress, elected in 1990, was dominated by hardliners and members of the former Soviet elites, including members of the Communist Party. In Washington's perception, the actions that Yeltsin took were more part of an effort to drive his country to a more democratic path and leave behind the vestiges of the old Soviet system. His actions were considered an attempt to end the stalemate that made it difficult for Russia's transition to a democracy and market economy.

The American administration little doubted that abandoning full support for the Russian leader would result in a return to a confrontational relationship between Moscow and Washington. Throughout the crisis in Moscow, the debate within the Clinton administration was in favour of offering unconditional support for Yeltsin. Even though Strobe Talbott, one of the key figures in designing the American strategy towards Russia, had considered taking a more critical view of Yeltsin's political stance, the American President's thinking to avoid any criticism regarding the Russian leader prevailed. Encouraged by Yeltsin's calls for a new Constitution and elections and influenced by the way the Russian leader portrayed his political opponents as fascists and communists, Clinton maintained his long-term personal perception that Yeltsin was the right man to lead post-Soviet Russia. His perspective was also reflected in the Congress, where, due to a bipartisan consensus, the American legislators voted for an increased aid package to Russia amidst the turmoil in Moscow.

The US's ideological and geopolitical interests rested on Yeltsin's political survival. As the most pro-Western politician from post-Soviet Russia, Yeltsin was praised in Washington as the only viable alternative for ensuring Russia's integration into the democratic zone of peace and fostering bilateral cooperation in arms control, the denuclearization of former Soviet republics and in managing regional crises. No matter how controversial his measures were, he was the only leader in Russia with a popular mandate and willing to cooperate with Washington. The imperialist and nationalist threats posed by the opposition made the choice and the rationality behind the decision much easier for the American administration.

Far from being resolved through democratic means, the Russian constitutional crisis revealed the fragility of the reform process and the failure of its transition to a full-fledged democracy. It marked the beginning of a more presidential system that would serve as a pathway to authoritarianism in the years ahead. Refusing to see the incipient elements that had already started to appear at the beginning of spring 1993, the Clinton administration preferred to forge a blind diplomacy in relations with Russia. It tried to overlook the undemocratic practices applied by Yeltsin and focus instead on the weak assurances given by the Russian leader on the resumption of reforms.

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NORWAY-RUSSIA NEGOTIATIONS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR BLACK SEA DISPUTES

Abstract:	<i>This study analyzes the maritime negotiations between Norway and the Russian Federation that culminated in the 2010 Barents Sea Treaty, with the aim of identifying patterns and strategies applicable to Romania's current maritime delimitation challenges in the Black Sea. Using Big Data content analysis, the research explores competing claims, compromising solutions, and the evolution of the negotiation process between the two Arctic neighbors.</i> <i>The findings reveal that the success of the Norway-Russia negotiations was grounded in a pragmatic approach and mutual recognition of national interests, which facilitated the establishment of clear, internationally recognized maritime boundaries. Drawing on this precedent, the study outlines potential strategies for Romania, such as the creation of a bilateral commission, the proposal of joint resource exploitation agreements, and the implementation of security mechanisms to reduce military tensions.</i> <i>It also highlights the potential role of regional states and international organizations in supporting negotiation processes. The research contributes to the academic understanding of maritime diplomacy and provides practical recommendations for addressing territorial disputes in complex geopolitical contexts.</i>
Keywords:	Maritime delimitation; Barents Sea Treaty; Norway-Russia negotiations; Black Sea; international cooperation
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Introduction

The maritime negotiations between Norway and the Russian Federation leading to the 2010 Barents Sea Treaty represent a significant example of diplomacy and international negotiation with major geopolitical implications. The Barents Sea, rich in natural resources such as oil and natural gas, was for an extended period a source of tension between Norway and the Russian Federation. The 2010 Barents Sea Treaty was essential for ensuring stability and legal clarity in the region, establishing maritime boundaries and offering a successful model for international cooperation within the Arctic region.

The path toward the 2010 Barents Sea Treaty was shaped by decades of institutional cooperation between Norway and Russia, particularly in the field of fisheries research and management. Since 1976, the Joint Norwegian Russian Fisheries Commission has overseen the shared exploitation of key species in the Barents Sea¹, establishing fixed quotas and relying on joint scientific surveys to inform policy decisions. This cooperation helped develop robust diplomatic channels and a shared vocabulary for managing disputes. Even in moments of tension, such as the Russian overfishing of cod in the late 1990s, solutions were reached through negotiation, and by 2009

¹ Peter Gullestad, et.al., *Changing attitudes 1970–2012: evolution of the Norwegian management framework to prevent overfishing and to secure long-term sustainability*, “ICES Journal of Marine Science”, Vol. 71, No. 2, 2014, pp. 173-182

the issue was officially considered resolved¹. Furthermore, the creation of the Joint Norwegian Russian Commission on Environmental Protection in 1992 fostered additional coordination², reinforcing trust and highlighting a mutual interest in preserving ecological stability. These long-standing mechanisms proved essential for facilitating the high-level dialogue that culminated in the 2010 agreement.

The relevance of this study for Romania lies in the territorial disputes with the Russian Federation concerning the delimitation and exploitation of maritime space in the Black Sea, following the 2009 ruling of the International Court of Justice. Given that the Russian Federation does not recognize this decision, especially after the annexation of Crimea, the lessons learned from Norway's negotiations with the Russian Federation may offer valuable insights for the development of an effective diplomatic approach.

The aim of this research is to identify patterns and trends in the Norway-Russia negotiations for the 2010 Barents Sea Treaty by applying Big Data content analysis. These patterns and trends will serve as the foundation for developing perspectives relevant to Romania's efforts in resolving its dispute with the Russian Federation. The anticipated outcomes of this research include the identification of key patterns and trends in the Norway-Russia negotiations, such as competing claims, compromising solutions, and the evolution of the negotiation process. Based on these findings, insights will be proposed to assist in managing current diplomatic challenges.

Structurally, the paper is divided into four chapters: theoretical framework, scientific literature review, research methodology, and research results.

Theoretical framework

The study of the negotiations between Norway and the Russian Federation for the 2010 Barents Sea Treaty is situated within a complex geopolitical context, examined through relevant international relations theories adopting a realist approach. This theoretical framework enables a clearer understanding of the dynamics and strategies employed by both actors during the negotiations.

Geopolitical theories provide an analytical framework for explaining state behavior on the international stage, particularly in relation to territorial and maritime disputes. In the case of the Norway-Russia negotiations, two theories are especially pertinent: the heartland theory proposed by Halford Mackinder and the rimland theory developed by Nicholas Spykman. Mackinder³ argues that geopolitical power is determined by control over the central regions of Eurasia, and the Barents Sea, located near the Arctic region, can be seen as an area of strategic importance for the Russian Federation, given its natural resources and access to maritime routes. Conversely, Spykman⁴ emphasizes the importance of the Eurasian periphery (*rimland*) in maintaining the balance of power. For Norway, the Barents Sea represents a critical part of this region, offering access to resources and the opportunity to expand its influence in the Arctic area.

The realist perspective in international relations focuses on the importance of power and the securitization of states, asserting that they act to maximize their national interests within an anarchic international system⁵. In the case of the negotiations between Norway and the Russian Federation, this approach explains how both states sought to protect their national interests and expand their soft power in the Arctic region. According to realist principles, states are rational actors that make decisions based on cost-benefit calculations⁶. Norway and the Russian Federation were driven by the need to secure access to the natural resources of the Barents Sea and to establish clear maritime boundaries to prevent potential future conflicts. The negotiations involved compromises, reflecting the balance of power between the two states and their shared interest in maintaining stability.

This study adopts a realist perspective, according to which national interests and the balance of power are essential factors in international negotiations. Analyzing the negotiations between Norway and the Russian

¹ Ole Misund, *Should scientists lead? To underpin policy on marine and polar ecosystems*, "ICES Journal of Marine Science" Vol. 81, No. 5, 2024, pp. 823-832

² ReesGareth Büntgen, Ulf, *Russian dilemma for global arctic science*, "Ambio", Vol. 53, 2024, pp. 1246-1250

³ Halford Mackinder, *The Geographical Pivot of History*, "The Geographical Journal", Vol. 23, No. 4, 1904, pp. 421-437

⁴ Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power*, Harcourt, Brace and Company Publishing, 1942

⁵ Gray, C.S., *The strategy bridge: Theory for practice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 25

⁶ John Doe, *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Analysis*, "International Studies Review" Vol. 25, No. 2, 2018, pp. 215-230

Federation through this lens highlights the ways in which both actors made strategic concessions to achieve their national objectives.

By examining the negotiations from the perspectives, relevant conclusions can be drawn for Romania, which faces similar challenges in the Black Sea. Following the International Court of Justice ruling in the case of Romania vs. Ukraine¹, the lessons learned from the Norway-Russia negotiations may assist in developing effective diplomatic strategies. The importance of legal clarity is evident, as the establishment of internationally recognized maritime boundaries can prevent conflicts and ensure stability. The pragmatic approach to negotiations, involving practical solutions and concessions, proves essential for reaching an agreement. In this context, the application of a rigorous content analysis is well-suited to identify relevant patterns and trends for Romania.

Scientific Literature Review

The study of international negotiations and maritime delimitation has been a major area of interest in recent scientific literature (within the past five years), with research contributing significantly to the understanding of these processes. One of the most relevant works on this topic is that of Popa². This study provides the foundation for present research, as the theoretical framework applied here is adapted from Popa's analysis. The author examines how Big Data analysis can offer new insights into Romania's foreign policy, using Norway's experience in negotiating the Barents Sea Treaty as a case study. The article is essential for understanding the applicability of lessons learned in the Arctic to the national context, emphasizing the importance of rigorous analysis in supporting informed political decision-making.

Brown and Williams³ examine the impact of climate change on maritime policies and territorial negotiations in the Arctic region. Their study demonstrates how environmental factors influence state strategies and how these changes can generate both new opportunities and challenges in international negotiations. The perspectives they propose are valuable for understanding the broader context of the negotiations between Norway and the Russian Federation and for assessing how Romania might approach similar strategic considerations.

Smith and Jones⁴ analyze international maritime negotiations using computer modeling and simulations, highlighting the importance of flexibility and concessions in reaching agreements. These findings are relevant to the study, as they emphasize the need for a context-sensitive approach. More recently, the study conducted by Harris and Lee⁵ investigates the role of emerging technologies in facilitating territorial negotiations, arguing that the use of artificial intelligence and Big Data analysis can enhance decision-making processes and reduce tensions between states. This study is relevant to the current approach, as it demonstrates the Big Data potential in scientific research.

Zhang and Wang⁶ published a study on the impact of geopolitics on maritime negotiations in the South China Sea. The authors explore how national interests shape state behavior and, consequently, the outcomes of negotiations. Their research offers valuable comparative analyses, highlighting both similarities and differences across various maritime regions and contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of international negotiations. Another relevant study is that of Andersson and Petersen⁷, which analyzes the legal impact of maritime treaties and their influence on international relations. The authors emphasize the importance of international recognition. These observations are directly applicable to the Romanian context, where the recognition of maritime delimitation is essential for resolving the regional dispute.

¹ International Court of Justice, *Maritime Delimitation in the Black Sea*, 2009, <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/132> (12.05.2025)

² Adrian-Vasile Popa, *What Romania can learn from the Norwegian Arctic: New directions in foreign policy using big data*, "Geopolitica", No. 89-90, 2021, pp. 110-123

³ Lisa Brown, Mark Williams, *The Impact of Climate Change on Maritime Policies and Territorial Negotiations in the Arctic*, "Journal of International Maritime Affairs", Vol. 11, No. 3, 2009, pp. 45-67

⁴ John Smith, Robert Jones, *Modeling International Maritime Negotiations: Flexibility and Reciprocity*, "International Negotiation Review" Vol. 15, No. 2, 2020, pp. 123-140

⁵ Michael Harris; Jane Lee, *Emerging Technologies and Maritime Negotiations: The Role of AI and Big Data*, "Journal of Geopolitical Studies", Vol. 14, No. 2, 2022, pp. 67-89

⁶ Zhang, Wei; Wang, Li, *Geopolitical Impacts on Maritime Negotiations in the South China Sea*, "Asian Journal of Maritime Studies", Vol. 12, No. 1, 2023, pp. 89-112

⁷ Lars, Andersson, Rasmus Petersen, *The Legal Impact of Maritime Treaties on International Relations*, "International Maritime Law Journal", Vol. 16, No. 1, 2024, pp. 23-45

Despite the existence of an extensive academic body of work on the subject, numerous research opportunities remain. One promising area is the investigation of negotiation processes from the perspective of the actors involved, using primary data and interviews with policymakers and negotiators. This type of research can provide clearer insight into the strategies and motivations underlying foreign policy decisions. Additionally, a more detailed exploration of the impact of regional geopolitical contexts on maritime negotiations could prove beneficial, particularly in areas marked by heightened tensions. Future research may include comparative studies across different maritime regions to identify both common and specific factors that influence the success of negotiations.

Research methodology

The research framework is guided by the following research questions:

- What were the competing claims of Norway and Russia in the negotiations for the Barents Sea Treaty?
- What patterns and trends can be identified through Big Data content analysis in the context of these negotiations?

The general objective of this research is to identify patterns and trends in the Norway-Russia negotiations for the 2010 Barents Sea Treaty. Subsequently, the study pursues two specific objectives:

- Identifying the competing claims and compromising solutions in the Norway-Russia negotiations;
- Analyzing the influence of national interests on negotiation strategies.

To address the research questions and achieve the stated objectives, Big Data content analysis will be employed as the primary research method. This approach involves the collection, filtering, and interpretation of a large volume of data to identify relevant patterns and trends. Data collection will be carried out using the Google Scholar search engine, with a focus on articles published between 2006 and 2011. This period encompasses both the lead-up to and the aftermath of the Varangerfjord Agreement of 2007 and the signing of the Barents Sea Treaty in 2010. To identify relevant studies, keywords such as “Barents Sea Treaty”, “Norway-Russia negotiations,” and “maritime boundary delimitation” will be used, followed by the application of additional filters to exclude out-of-scope articles.

The resulting data will be processed using multiple qualitative analysis software, namely NetDraw¹, Meaning Cloud², and Microsoft Power BI³, with the aim of establishing the relation between authors and central areas of interest, the frequency of key terms within the analyzed articles, and identifying research trend patterns. The identified patterns and trends will subsequently be interpreted manually to verify the accuracy and validity of the extracted data. The Big Data content analysis approach was implemented using a multi-phase process. First, academic databases such as Google Scholar and JSTOR were queried using targeted keywords. Then, metadata from selected articles (including abstracts, keywords, and bibliographic information) was extracted and categorized using Meaning Cloud’s text analytics tools, applying frequency analysis algorithms to determine the thematic emphasis of each publication. In parallel, NetDraw software enabled network visualization based on keyword co-occurrence and author connections. The selection criteria included the relevance of terms (with a threshold frequency of minimum five mentions per corpus), article recency (2006–2011), and peer-review validation.

Research results

To identify articles relevant to the research, the advanced search function of Google Scholar was employed. The search was filtered by publication date (2006–2011) and included specific expressions (“Barents Sea Treaty,” “Norway–Russia negotiations,” “maritime boundary delimitation”) to exclude articles that fall outside the scope of the study.

Period	Keywords	Number of articles retrieved
2006–2011	Barents Sea Treaty	89
2006–2011	Norway–Russia negotiations	29

¹ Borgatti, S.P., *NetDraw Software for Network Visualization*. Lexington, Analytic Technologies Publishing, 2002

² MeaningCloud, *MeaningCloud: Text Analytics for All Your Needs*, 2024, <https://www.meaningcloud.com> (12.04.2025)

³ Microsoft, *Create a data-driven culture with BI for all*, 2024, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/power-platform/products/power-bi> (12.04.2025)

Period	Keywords	Number of articles retrieved
2006–2011	Maritime boundary delimitation	167

Table 1. Results of the advanced Google Scholar search¹

Accordingly, three advanced searches were conducted (Table 1). Based on this preliminary process, a total of 285 articles were identified. Following a manual review, articles that did not directly reference the Norway-Russia negotiations for the 2010 Barents Sea Treaty were excluded, leaving 154 articles. Subsequently, articles lacking abstract or not published in peer-reviewed academic journals were also eliminated, resulting in a selection of 67 articles. From this group, studies focusing on unrelated domains, such as climate, social issues, general economics, or domestic politics, were excluded in order to focus the analysis on maritime negotiations and international relations. After applying this final filter, 33 articles were deemed valid for the research endeavor.

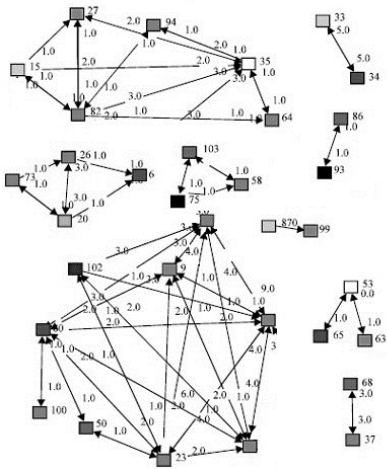


Figure 1. The relation between authors and central areas of interest²

The network graph generated using NetDraw software (Figure 1) illustrates the connections between authors and their respective areas of interest. Each node represents an article, and the resulting clusters reflect the structural similarity among the articles. The connections between articles are depicted through bidirectional arrows, which indicate shared thematic focus. These themes are coded as follows:

- Maritime delimitation (coded as 1);
- Natural resources and energy (coded as 2);
- Regional security (coded as 3);
- International cooperation (coded as 4);
- Environmental policy (coded as 5).

Maritime delimitation emerges as one of the most prominent themes, as reflected by the high number of interconnected nodes. This suggests that the legal and technical aspects related to boundary delimitation hold significant importance for both actors. The internationally recognized delimitation of maritime boundaries is crucial for preventing disputes and establishing unambiguous agreements. In the context of Norway-Russia negotiations, this subject is particularly relevant, as the clarification of boundaries constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for any subsequent cooperation or joint resource exploitation.

Natural resources and energy represent another major area of interest, as indicated by the substantial number of articles addressing this topic. The relevance of this theme stems from the fact that the contested maritime regions are rich in natural resources such as oil and natural gas. Access to these resources holds strategic importance for

¹ <https://scholar.google.ro/> (12.04.2025)

² Borgatti, S.P., *Op.cit.*, p. 131

both Norway and Russia, significantly impacting the economies of both states. The predominance of these two themes in the analyzed articles reflects the perceived strategic and economic priorities of both countries.

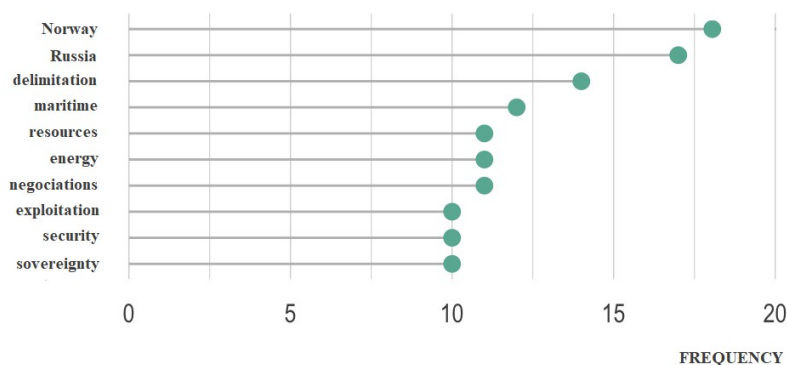


Figure 2. The ten most frequent terms in the analyzed articles¹

The frequency of central terms (Figure 2), generated using Meaning Cloud software, illustrates the most common words identified across the analyzed articles. The order and frequency of these terms reflect the main priorities and concerns of the authors in the negotiation context. The terms “Norway” and “Russia” appear most frequently, with 20 and 18 mentions respectively. This is attributable to the focus of the analyzed studies on the negotiations between the two states. The term “delimitation” is mentioned 15 times, indicating that the legal and technical aspects of maritime boundary-setting are considered essential for avoiding negative regional consequences. The term “maritime” with 12 occurrences, is closely tied to discussions concerning boundary delimitation and resource exploration, pointing to a specific thematic focus addressed by the authors. The terms “resources” and “energy,” each with 10 mentions, reflect the academic perception of shared interests between Russia and Norway. Resource exploitation thus emerges as a strategically important aspect from an economic standpoint for both states.

The term “negotiations” appearing 9 times, highlights the diplomatic efforts undertaken by Norway and Russia. Its high frequency indicates that many articles address the methods and strategies employed in the negotiation process, with some studies focusing specifically on the typology and execution of negotiations - elements that may serve as reference models for resolving similar disputes. The term “exploitation”, with 8 mentions, is associated with economic and industrial activities directly linked to the natural resources in the region. Its frequency signals academic interest in clarifying the modalities of shared use and management of resources in the Barents Sea area. The term “security”, which appears 7 times, reflects concerns related to the stability and safety of the Barents region. Its usage underlines the authors’ effort to assess potential regional effects tied to maritime instability prior to the signing of the 2010 Treaty.

Finally, the term “sovereignty”, with 7 mentions, reflects the tangible need for the delimitation of the maritime zone. Both states reasserted territorial claims over the Barents area, and instability could not be mitigated in the absence of international recognition of the boundaries – a goal achieved through diplomatic negotiations.

The frequency of the mentioned terms reflects the core concerns of the authors across the articles analyzed. The relatively low frequency of terms such as “sustainable development”, “international cooperation”, “international law”, or “regional conflicts” may indicate an academic focus on immediate legal and economic aspects, rather than on broader regional concepts. Furthermore, the absence of terms specific to international law or regional conflict could suggest that the analyzed literature tends to concentrate primarily on practical solutions, with broader international implications occupying a secondary position in the scope of research.

¹ MeaningCloud, *MeaningCloud: Text Analytics for All Your Needs*, 2024, <https://www.meaningcloud.com> (12.04.2025)

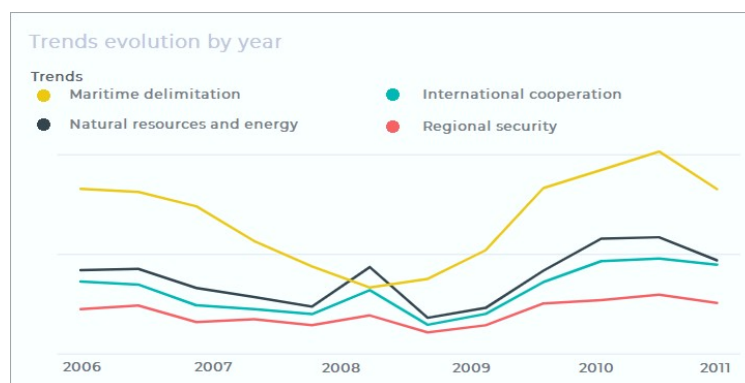


Figure 3. Analysis of research trends¹

The analysis of research trends (Figure 3), generated using Microsoft Power BI software, illustrates the evolution and temporal frequency of the main themes and topics addressed in the analyzed articles. The graph enables interpretations regarding the underlying motivations behind academic interest. Themes related to “Maritime delimitation” show a significant increase between 2009 and 2010, coinciding with the signing of the Barents Sea Treaty. This indicates a heightened concern for the legal and technical aspects of maritime boundary setting. In the preceding period, from 2006 to 2008, research frequency remained relatively stable, with a slight rise in 2008, suggesting growing academic interest in the preliminary negotiations. After 2010, a slight decline in the frequency of academic work on maritime delimitation is observed, suggesting that once the boundaries had been established, attention shifted toward the implementation of agreements and the management of natural resources.

Studies focusing on “Natural resources and energy” recorded a steady increase starting in 2007, reaching their peak in 2010. This trend reflects the growing academic interest in analyzing how the exploitation of natural resources in the Barents region was to be carried out. Moreover, developments in the 2009-2010 period suggest a higher number of academic articles centered on the regional economic impact associated with the signing of the Barents Sea Treaty.

Another major theme, “Regional security”, displays a relatively stable trend throughout the analyzed period, with a slight increase between 2009 and 2010. This indicates a consistent academic concern regarding security in the Barents Sea area. The articles include projections and extended implications of the instability during that time. The intensification of this theme between 2009 and 2010 coincides with the conclusion of negotiations and the signing of the Treaty.

The research trend focused on “International cooperation” presents moderate fluctuations, with a slight increase in the 2009–2010 period. This suggests that, in addition to bilateral discussions between Norway and Russia, scholars paid notable attention to the broader context of international cooperation in managing resources and defining maritime boundaries. The observed fluctuations align with periods of strategic bilateral cooperation that facilitated the conclusion of negotiations and the implementation of agreements.

The analysis of research trends reflects how academic concerns evolved over time, influenced by major geopolitical and economic developments. Beyond the reference period, maritime delimitation and natural resources and energy have continued to represent central themes of academic interest, highlighting the strategic and economic priorities of both Norway and Russia. Regional security has increasingly become a focal point during times of geopolitical tension, while research on international cooperation has varied in line with the dynamics of bilateral agreements and growing global environmental concerns.

Additionally, the manual verification of the collected data reveals competing claims between Norway and the Russian Federation. Norway emphasized the clear delimitation of maritime boundaries to ensure the exploitation of

¹ Microsoft, *Create a data-driven culture with BI for all*, 2024, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/power-platform/products/power-bi> (12.04.2025)

natural resources within a stable and internationally recognized legal framework¹. These elements were essential not only for economic reasons but also to guarantee security and stability in the Arctic region². At the same time, the Russian Federation stressed the strategic importance of access to Arctic maritime routes and the protection of its economic interests in the region³. Russia viewed access to these routes as crucial for its economic development, with a particular focus on the oil and gas resources in the Barents Sea⁴. The Russian Federation also reaffirmed its historical sovereignty and territorial rights, arguing that any delimitation should acknowledge its national historical claims⁵.

These competing claims created a complex negotiation framework in which both parties were compelled to make significant concessions in order to reach an agreement. The discussions focused on establishing an administrative boundary that would reflect the interests of both states, involving technical negotiations on each issue included in the agenda⁶, such as fishing zones, natural resource exploitation rights, and maritime transport routes⁷.

The data analysis revealed a series of key stages in the negotiation process. In the period preceding the Varangerfjord Agreement of 2007, discussions were marked by a series of bilateral meetings and specific diplomatic interactions, such as ministerial-level bilateral sessions and expert negotiations. During this phase, the states sought to clarify their positions and establish a preliminary framework for cooperation. The 2007 Agreement represented an important step, updating part of the maritime boundary between Norway and the Russian Federation and demonstrating a willingness to cooperate⁸.

Following the signing of this preliminary agreement, negotiations continued in a more structured format, involving technical and legal experts from both countries⁹. At this stage, the discussions became more detailed, focusing on the technical aspects of maritime boundary delimitation and the mechanisms for cooperation in the exploitation of natural resources. Both actors presented various proposals regarding the sharing of hydrocarbon resources and the implementation of environmental protection measures¹⁰. Ultimately, the Barents Sea Treaty was signed in 2010, marking the conclusion of a long and complex negotiation process. The signing of the treaty was preceded by the drafting of detailed technical reports¹¹ and textual adjustments to ensure that both states' concerns were adequately addressed¹².

Another key conclusion of the research was the achievement of a compromise between the territorial and economic claims of Norway and Russia, leading to a mutually agreed delimitation line. The solution included the sharing of certain maritime zones and cooperation in the exploitation of natural resources¹³. For instance, the two countries established an agreement for the joint exploitation of hydrocarbons in disputed areas, ensuring reciprocal economic benefits¹⁴. Another important aspect was the mutual recognition of rights and legitimate interests by both

¹ Andreas Osthagen, *High North, High Politics: Maritime Boundary Disputes in the Arctic*, "Maritime Affairs", Vol. 7, No. 2, 2011, pp. 21-39

² Sven Holtsmark, *The Barents Sea Delimitation Agreement: The Success of 'Big' Diplomacy?*, "Polar Record", Vol. 46, No. 1, 2009, pp. 25-27

³ Torbjorn Pedersen, *Debates over the Role of the Arctic Council*, "Ocean Development & International Law", Vol. 41, No. 3, 2010, pp. 298-304

⁴ Ekaterina Klimenko, *The Arctic: A New Region of Conflict? The Case of the Norwegian-Russian Border*, "Journal of Eurasian Studies" Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010, pp. 30-35

⁵ Thomas Nilsen, *Barents Treaty: A Breakthrough for Arctic Cooperation*, "Barents Observer", September 15, 2010

⁶ Arild Moe, *The Northern Sea Route: Smooth Sailing Ahead?*, "Strategic Analysis", Vol. 35, No. 4, 2011, pp. 584-588

⁷ Olav Stokke, *Environmental Security in the Arctic: The Case for Multilevel Governance*, "International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law" Vol. 26, No. 2, 2011, pp. 371-395

⁸ Sven Holtsmark, *Op.cit.*, pp. 25-27

⁹ Ekaterina Klimenko, *Op.cit.*, pp. 30-35

¹⁰ Olav Stokke, *Op.cit.*, pp. 371-395

¹¹ Pedersen Torbjorn, *Op.cit.*, pp. 298-304

¹² Arild Moe, *Op.cit.*, pp. 584-588

¹³ Andreas Osthagen, *High North, High Politics: Maritime Boundary Disputes in the Arctic*, "Maritime Affairs", Vol. 7, No. 2, 2011, pp. 21-39

¹⁴ Nilsen, Thomas, *Op.cit.*, p. 212

parts. Norway agreed to share resource-rich areas with the Russian Federation¹, while the Russian state acknowledged the need to establish clear maritime boundaries to facilitate international cooperation and attract foreign investment in the region².

The results of the analysis revealed that the negotiations were regarded as a successful model for resolving maritime disputes, receiving positive evaluations from both parties involved³. The Barents Sea Treaty has been viewed as an example of international cooperation and the effective use of diplomacy to resolve territorial conflicts⁴. This success was largely attributed to the pragmatic approach adopted by both sides, which prioritized long-term national economic benefits⁵. Additionally, the international perception of the final treaty was favorable, with the agreement considered a significant precedent for the resolution of similar disputes. This aspect holds considerable relevance for Romania, which may draw on the functional elements of the technical negotiations as a foundation for formulating its own strategic communication strategies in the Black Sea context.

The issue of maritime delimitation between Romania and the Russian Federation in the Black Sea represents a significant challenge, given the complex geopolitical context and the uncertain relations between the two states. Following the favorable 2009 ruling for Romania in the Romania vs. Ukraine case at the International Court of Justice⁶, the Russian Federation has contested this decision, particularly considering the 2014 annexation of Crimea, which has further complicated the legal and political situation in the region. Current tensions include disputes over the rights to exploit natural resources in the Black Sea, as well as military actions and political instability in the area. The Russian Federation has strengthened its military presence in Crimea and taken control over adjacent waters, thereby increasing tensions with neighboring states, including Romania. These actions have raised security concerns for Romania and complicated diplomatic prospects⁷.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict significantly complicates Romania's efforts to resolve its maritime delimitation dispute with the Russian Federation in the Black Sea. The escalation of the conflict, along with the international sanctions imposed on Russia, has considerably narrowed the scope for diplomatic maneuvering. Any attempt at mediation or negotiation must consider Russia's assertive stance in the region and the geopolitical sensitivities. Within this context, a range of potential solutions and perspectives emerges for Romania in addressing these challenges:

A first solution could involve the establishment of a permanent Romania-Russia bilateral commission tasked with managing and mediating any disputes related to maritime delimitation and the exploitation of natural resources. This commission could include technical, legal, and diplomatic experts from both countries to ensure a balanced and technically grounded approach to the issue. In addition, the proposal of specific agreements for the joint exploitation of energy resources in disputed areas may serve as a practical solution. Such agreements could include provisions for cooperation in extraction technologies. An initial arrangement could create an economic incentive for sustained cooperation.

The creation of joint resource exploitation agreements could follow the precedent set by the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Development Area (JDA) in the Gulf of Thailand⁸, where both states agreed to jointly manage and profit from offshore hydrocarbon resources despite unresolved sovereignty claims. Another relevant model is the Frigg gas field agreement between the UK and Norway in the North Sea, where shared extraction infrastructure and revenues were coordinated under a bilateral treaty.

Equally essential is the establishment of security agreements that include measures aimed at reducing military tensions in the Black Sea. These measures might involve the creation of demilitarized zones and communication mechanisms designed to prevent unintentional military incidents.

¹ Klimenko, Ekaterina, *Op.cit.*, pp. 30-35

² Sven Holtsmark, *Op.cit.*, pp. 25-27

³ James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, Chatham House Report, 2013

⁴ Olav Stokke, *Op.cit.*, pp. 371-395

⁵ Thomas Nilsen, *Op.cit.*, p. 37

⁶ International Court of Justice, <https://www.icj-cij.org/home> (21.04.2025)

⁷ Jakub Grygiel, *The Return of Europe's Nation-States: The Upside to the EU's Crisis*, "Foreign Affairs" Vol. 95. No. 5, 2016, pp. 94-101

⁸ Jusoh, Sufian, *Malaysia-Thailand Joint Development Agreement*, "Chinese Journal of International Law", Vol. 22. No. 1, 2023, pp. 167-176

A precedent in this regard is the 1992 Incidents at Sea Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, which established communication protocols and procedures to prevent escalations during naval encounters. Similarly, the Greek-Turkish bilateral military deconfliction mechanism established under NATO auspices in 2020¹ created a hotline and rules of engagement aimed at reducing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. Another successful model in this regard is the 2023 demilitarization agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which included the establishment of a direct line of communication between the central military commands of the two states to reduce the risk of incidents².

In addition, the involvement of other states³ and international organizations⁴ from the Black Sea region in negotiation and mediation processes could bring new perspectives and generate diplomatic pressure on the Russian side.

Given Romania's status as a member of the European Union, EU institutions could play an instrumental role in supporting and legitimizing a potential negotiation framework. The European External Action Service (EEAS) could act as a facilitator or guarantor of procedural transparency, especially in initiatives related to maritime resource governance or de-escalation protocols. Additionally, EU financial and technical assistance programs, such as those under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), could be mobilized to support capacity-building measures, expert exchanges, or the establishment of joint monitoring mechanisms in the Black Sea. This multilevel involvement would increase Romania's leverage while anchoring any future bilateral process within broader European normative and institutional structures.

Conclusions

The research findings indicate that the success of the Norway-Russia negotiations was the result of a pragmatic approach and mutually beneficial compromises, based on the reciprocal recognition of rights and legitimate interests, with the goal of establishing internationally recognized maritime boundaries.

For Romania, the current geopolitical context complicates the resolution of maritime disputes with the Russian Federation. To enable an effective negotiation process, Romania could explore resource-sharing options and consider the establishment of a permanent bilateral commission to manage the maritime territorial dispute. Furthermore, the involvement of other Black Sea regional states and international organizations could provide benefits.

However, applying the Norway–Russia negotiation model to the Black Sea context requires a critical examination of both similarities and divergences. While both cases involve disputes over resource-rich maritime areas and the need for legal clarity, the strategic environments differ substantially. Norway and Russia operated within a relatively stable institutional framework, with existing bilateral commissions and uninterrupted scientific dialogue. Moreover, while Norway engaged with a single negotiation partner, Romania must consider the interests of multiple actors, including Turkey, which exerts significant influence over Black Sea dynamics.

Therefore, the proposed measures should be designed with flexible institutional architecture. This would allow for the integration of multilateral consultations and observer mechanisms involving Ukraine, Turkey, and potentially NATO. Moreover, such measures could serve as *de facto* confidence-building tools, offering limited yet strategic avenues for re-engagement with the Russian Federation, without undermining Romania's Euro-Atlantic commitments.

¹ NATO, *Military de-confliction mechanism between Greece and Turkey established at NATO*, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178523.htm (14.05.2025)

² John Smith Robert Jones, *Recent Developments in Conflict Resolution: The Armenia-Azerbaijan Demilitarization Agreement*, "International Journal of Peace Studies", Vol. 30, No. 2, 2023, pp. 112-130

³ Such actors may include Turkey and Bulgaria-whose involvement can be justified by their shared interests in maintaining regional stability and ensuring secure access to maritime resources. Turkey, as a major regional power and NATO member, has a strategic interest in safeguarding the Black Sea. Bulgaria, as a member of both the European Union and NATO, may play an important role in promoting adherence to international norms

⁴ International organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) can provide neutral platforms for negotiation and resources for mediation, thereby contributing to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the resolution process.

Future research perspectives include the use of focus groups with Romanian policymakers to validate the findings of this study. This initiative could assess the objectivity and accuracy of national perceptions and of the potential solutions for resolving the dispute with Russia. By verifying the outcomes through focus group consultations, the feasibility of the proposed solutions can be evaluated, and new approaches for reducing tensions and fostering cooperation may be identified.

Thus, the lessons learned from the Norway-Russia experience can offer Romania valuable courses of action in addressing current challenges in the Black Sea. The adoption of strategies validated through consultation with experts and political decision-makers may facilitate the identification of durable solutions, contributing to regional stability and security.

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THE END OF KARABAKH AND THE CHANGE OF GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE TRANSCAUCASUS

Abstract:	<i>This paper observes “defrosting” of Azeri – Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh region in September 2023 which resulted in Azerbaijan’s complete victory and reinstalment of its control over this breakway region. Result of this rivalry significantly changed the complete geopolitical and security circumstances in the Transcaucasus and led to a new balance of power between local, regional and big powers in this region. After the detailed presentation of the course of conflict in early autumn of 2023 and its outcomes, the paper provides a brief overview of the history of geopolitics of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia and the long-term rivalry of Armenians and Azeris that led to Karabakh conflict.</i> <i>Central part of the paper observes post-Cold War competition in Transcaucasia between main geopolitical players in the region - Russia, Turkey, Iran and the West and their relations with local small states. Final part of the Paper is reserved for the current geostrategic changes in Transcaucasia after the 2023 conflict, that is, the newly established balance of power in the region and, in concluding remarks, gives the predictions of its durability and sustainability.</i>
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Introduction

In the shadow of the great confrontation between Russia and the West in Ukraine, another post-Soviet region experienced a new “defrosting” of the conflict which resulted in significant changes in the overall geopolitical and strategic-security conditions in this area. This is, of course, the finale of the decade-long Armenian Azeri conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh and its consequences for the overall situation in Transcaucasia. The framework for the analysis of this change is the theory of neoclassical realism applied to classical geopolitics. It considers “the influences of geography on international relations that are located within the Mackinder-Spikeman tradition, but with a creative refinement that takes into account the changed social, economic, political and cultural factors”¹. The approach of neoclassical realism will be more noticeable in understanding the foreign policies of observed international actors that equally consider domestic variables and the constructivist concept of “perception”, especially those concerning the relative power in the perceived geopolitical environment/space². On September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan launched what it calls an “anti-terrorist military operation” against Nagorno-Karabakh. It is a breakaway enclave with about 120,000 Armenians, on whose territory the Republic of Artsakh, supported by

¹ Nick Megoran, *Neoclassical geopolitics*, “Political Geography”, Vol. 29, Newcastle University, Newcastle, 2010, pp. 187

² Gideon Rose, *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy*, “World Politics”, Vol. 51, No. 1, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998, pp. 14

neighboring Armenia, operated for more than three decades even though this territory is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan.

The secession of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan began in 1988, on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union and led to the Armenian Azerbaijani war. The conflict ended in 1994 with an agreement mediated by the “Minsk Group” (co-chaired by Russia, the USA and France) established by the OSCE¹. Based on the “Protocol of Bishkek”² the agreement froze the conflict, leaving all the territorial gains achieved through military operations in the hands of the Armenians. The agreement also established a “contact line” in Nagorno-Karabakh that separated the warring parties along which OSCE/Minsk Group observers monitored the implementation of the ceasefire and sought a way to find a peaceful solution to the dispute while at the same time imposing an arms embargo for both sides and facilitating the decrease of violence in the entire region. At the end of the “First Karabakh War”, Armenian forces controlled the entire territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven more regions extending from Karabakh to the internationally recognized Armenian-Azerbaijan border. The established peace was fragile: after a series of smaller conflicts and skirmishes, in September 2020, a new large-scale conflict (the so-called “Second Karabakh War”) broke out over the entire disputed territory. After six weeks of heavy fighting, which claimed nearly six thousand lives and drove about thirty thousand Armenians from Karabakh into exile, a peace agreement was reached on November 10th with the help of Russia, which halted military operations³. Since the Armenian side experienced a series of defeats and the loss of a large part of its territory, a new “freezing” of the conflict followed the situation on the ground. With the deployment of 2,000 Russian peacekeepers along the newly established demarcation line, the ceasefire meant not only the return of seven districts and a significant part of Nagorno-Karabakh itself to Azerbaijani control, but also enabling the survival of the remaining part of Karabakh by preserving its only land connection to Armenia – Lachin Corridor.

Although the conflict ended, the agreement of November 2020 failed to establish more stable conditions for lasting peace. Occasional skirmishes between Armenians and Azeris continued daily, in front of the eyes of Russian peacekeepers. Official Baku continued to insist on the complete disarmament of what it called “illegal Armenian troops” in Nagorno-Karabakh, accusing them of occasional shelling and detonation on a part of the territory that, according to the agreement, belonged to the Azerbaijani side. Armenia (but also Russia) retaliated with counteraccusations, alleging that Azerbaijan is violating the ceasefire, shelling and occupying new territories, including those inside Armenia. Both sides have accused the other of numerous war crimes committed over a long period, especially those related to ethnic cleansing.

From the very beginning of the implementation of the agreement, it was visible that the problems surrounding the observance of the transportation route along the Lachin corridor - the only physical connection between Armenia and the enclave in Nagorno-Karabakh that was secured by Russian patrols - were increasing. Azerbaijanis, according to the agreement, undertook to guarantee free passage in both directions, for civilians as well as for vehicles and transport of the goods⁴. In the late 2022, Azerbaijani activists completely blocked the corridor preventing the transport of food, medical equipment and all humanitarian convoys to Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the movement of civilians between it and Armenia. The reason for the blockade was found in the alleged illegal mining of natural treasures in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian side accused the government in Baku of being behind these civil protests and expressed dissatisfaction that Russian peacekeepers failed to break this blockade⁵. On the other hand, Azerbaijan retaliated with counteraccusations that did not only concern illegal mining, but also the use of the corridor for the transport of military equipment, especially mine-explosives, which, allegedly, the Armenians use to mine the areas that were returned to their control of Baku according to the

¹ Cornell Svante, *The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict*, Report No. 46, Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, 1999

² <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Bishkek%20Protocol.pdf> (16.05.2025)

³ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384> (16.05.2025)

⁴ Hrant Michaelian, Jeronim Perović, *Geopolitical Echoes of the Karabakh Conflict*, “CCS Analyses in Security Policy”, No. 334, December 2023, Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zürich, 2023, pp. 1-4

⁵ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Russian Peacekeepers find themselves sidelined in Nagorno Karabakh*, 15 December 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88651> (16.09.2025)

November 2020 agreement¹. In April 2023, a few days after the Armenian Prime Minister publicly recognized Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, the authorities from Baku established their checkpoints along the Lachin Corridor, thus strengthening the blockade that had lasted for months, while Russian peacekeepers remained passive.

A new culmination of hostilities around Nagorno-Karabakh took place on September 19, 2023. The government in Baku found the reason for the start of the “anti-terrorist operation” in two incidents in which several civilians and soldiers died when their vehicles ran into mines, allegedly planted by Armenian troops. The declared goals of the Azerbaijani side in this operation concerned “suppressing major provocations in the economic region of Karabakh, disarming and ensuring the withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from our territories, neutralizing their military infrastructure, ensuring the safety of the civilian population returned to the territories freed from occupation and, then, the civilians involved in the construction and restoration works and our military personnel, and, finally, the restoration of the constitutional order of the Republic of Azerbaijan”². In this sense, humanitarian corridors were established for the evacuation of civilians from the area of military operations. The Armenians, on the other hand, claimed that the whole operation was staged and started to round off Azerbaijan's policy of ethnic cleansing, targeting civilian settlements under the pretext of eliminating military targets, while at the same time denying that Armenian military personnel and equipment were deployed in Nagorno Karabakh.

Although international factors, primarily Russia, the USA and the EU, immediately requested an end to hostilities and an extension of the peace talks between the government in Baku and the authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Azerbaijani army continued its operation. Twenty-four hours later, the authorities in Karabakh accepted the ceasefire proposed by the command of the Russian peacekeepers deployed in the field while the authorities in Baku declared a military victory. During this short conflict about 200 people died, while about 400 people were injured. The agreement of September 20, 2023, itself included several provisions: 1) laying down the arms of the Armenian military forces and other illegal armed groups and their withdrawal from combat positions and complete disarmament; 2) surrender of all ammunition and military equipment; 3) implementation and coordination of these measures by the Russian peacekeeping contingent deployed in the region³. The government in Yerevan again denied the presence of its military forces in the Karabakh area and announced that it was not involved in the latest negotiations on the ceasefire agreement.

The implementation of the ceasefire agreement, along with the disarmament of the Armenian forces in Karabakh, opened, however, the issue of amnesty for their fighters. They doubted the security guarantees that must be issued before handing over the weapons, since official Baku expressed views that amnesty will not cover all Armenian fighters, that is, it will not apply to those who are suspected of war crimes in the conflicts of the early 1990s as well as in 2020. Azerbaijani forces have established a series of checkpoints for people moving through the Lachin Corridor in the direction of Armenia. There are numerous testimonies of people who were arrested and taken away, including some of the former Armenian leaders from Karabakh⁴. As for the Russian peacekeepers, they are expected to remain present on the ground until the expiration of the 2020 agreement, i.e. until the end of 2025, to monitor the withdrawal of Armenian troops.

After the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, all of Nagorno-Karabakh came under the full control of the military forces of Azerbaijan while negotiations began for its full reintegration into the constitutional order of Azerbaijan. After such development, it is logical to expect the conclusion of a general peace agreement that would be acceptable to all parties. This is exactly what was discussed in the telephone conversation of Azerbaijani President Aliyev with Vladimir Putin on September 21, 2023, when the agreed measures were intensification of

1 Gabriel Gavin, Supplies begin to run low as Nagorno-Karabakh blockade continues, Eurasianet, December 19, 2022, <https://eurasianet.org/supplies-begin-to-run-low-as-nagorno-karabakh-blockade-continues> (16.05.2025)

2 Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Press release, 22 August 2022, <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/uchdik-girkgiz-saribaba-high-grounds-are-cleared-of-armenian-mines-video-41519.html> (17.05.2025)

3 Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Press release, 20 September 2023, <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/colonel-anar-cyvazov-an-agreement-has-been-reached-to-suspend-local-anti-terror-measures-video-49446.html> (17.05.2025)

4 Arab News, Azerbaijan seeks ‘war crime’ suspects in sea of Karabakh refugees, 26 September 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2380781/world> (17.05.2025)

trilateral talks on the restoration of transport links, the demarcation of the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the drafting of a peace agreement between the two countries¹.

On September 28, the Armenian leader in Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, Samvel Shahramanyan, issued a statement on the dissolution of the institutions of this republic until January 1, 2024. During the first week after the end of the fighting half of the Armenian population left the territory of Karabakh. By the end of the year, almost the entire Armenian population was evacuated to the mother country - Armenia. Because of these tendencies Western partners have insisted that Azerbaijan guarantee the rights and security of the Armenian population of Karabakh as well as the immediate provision of humanitarian aid, to which the government in Baku responded positively. However, the degree of mistrust and hostility was so great that soon the entire Armenian population experienced an exodus. Because of this epilogue, the Armenian capital Yerevan was rocked by riots in which the resignation of Prime Minister Pashinyan was demanded because of the fate that befell the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh.

Geopolitics of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia and the Historical Rivalry of Armenians and Azeris

The dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, like the entire Caucasus region, is steeped in historical and geopolitical rivalries. This region stretches between the Black and Caspian seas and consists of the territories of the states of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as the border areas of Russia, Iran and Turkey. The Great Caucasus - a mountain range that separates Europe from Asia - divides the North Caucasus, which is part of the Russian Federation, from the South Caucasus, which consists of the three mentioned independent states that, from the Russian perspective, occupy the area of the Transcaucasia (*Zakavkáz'je* in Russian). The area of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia, in geopolitical terms, represents the border area between the Middle Eastern state formations in the Rimland and the areas of the center of the Eurasian continent - the Heartland, since ancient times. Herodotus still saw the area of the Caucasus and the southern rim of the Caspian Sea as a barrier between despotic Persia and vast Scythia, from where attacks, counterattacks and sudden migrations of the population start. "The Transcaucasia is an area where the interests of Great powers have clashed for centuries, and complex geopolitical games and exhausting wars have been fought between them. In the old century, these were the Roman Empire and the Old Persian Empire (Achaemenid state), in the Middle Ages - Byzantium and the New Persian Empire (Sasanid state), the Seljuk Empire and the Arab Caliphate, in the new century - Turkey and Persia (the Safavid state), and, from the 18-th century, the Russian Empire. Today, the interests of the superpowers collide there - primarily the Russian Federation and the USA, and, among the first-class subjects from the region - Turkey and Iran"².

In this region, considering the strength of the state power of the forces in the depth of the land and its Middle Eastern rim, the direction of the boundary function of the Caucasus-Priscaspian is the only thing that changed. "When the power in Rimland was stronger, the Caucasus represented a fortress aimed at defense against the southern Russian steppes. This was the most common historical case: during the time of Achaemenid Persia, during the peak of Byzantine power, during the rise of the Ottomans... When the balance of power was reversed, the Caucasus was the station from which the campaign from the depths of the continent towards Rimland started. This was the case at the time of the Indo-European Hittite invasion of Asia Minor and the Middle East at the beginning of the Iron Age; then, at the time of the Kipchak creation of Genghis Khanids who used the Caucasus as a springboard to fly across Anatolia to Syria to deal with the Egyptian Mamelukes. The third most obvious examples are the Caucasus during Russian expansion in period of the wars with Turkey in 1829, the Crimean War (1853-56), and the First World War. At the time of equal strength of the states from the Heartland and the Rimland, the Caucasus-Priscaspian border area was the scene of geopolitical rivalry for mastering more favorable positions for the protection of the "hinterland" (e.g. during the Khazar wars with Sassanid Persia, and later with the Arab Caliphate)"³.

¹ *President of Russia, Telephone conversation with President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, 21 September 2023, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72312> (17.05.2025)*

² Драган Петровић, Драгомир Анђелковић, Горан Николић, *Геополитика Закавказја*, ИМПП; Београд, 2010, р. 47, Dragan Petrovic, Dragomir Andjelkovic, Goran Nikolic, *Geopolitic of Transcaucasia*, IMPP, Belgrad, 2010, p. 47

³ Александар Гајић, *Нова велика игра*, "Нова српска политичка мисао", Београд, 2009, р. 28, Aleksandar Gajić, *The New Big Game*, "New Serb Political Thinking", Belgrad, 2009, p. 28

Geopolitical reasons were decisive, which is why the state creations in the Caucasus could rarely maintain independence, even a vassal position, except in times of the balance between the powers (such as during the peace between Rome and the Parthian state). But even that was rare. Not long after one of the powers felt that the balance of power was beginning to prevail in favor of someone else, it would start a preventive offensive in order to strategically occupy this border area and use its geographical advantages to protect its "main" areas (cases of Khazarian offensive towards Persia, Turkish Caucasian retaliation according to Persia, later also Russia...) from possible dangers. Until the migration of the Ogus Turkic tribes (whose descendants are today's Turks and Azeris) to the "Caucasian partition" and the Transcaucasia, the thousand-year-old ethnic communities living there belonged to the Caucasian Indo-European peoples who built many state structures in this rough area. The longest-living among them are the Armenians, whose continuity in the Caucasus and the eastern part of Asia Minor (the "Armenian Plateau") can be traced back over 3,500 years¹ since the state formations of Mitany, the tribal alliance with the Nairi people (around Lake Van) and the powerful state of Urartu in whose later period the ruling dynasty was undoubtedly Armenian². From the sixth century before Christ, the Armenian state entered the historical stage which was mentioned in the documents of the Persian emperor Darius (549-485) as a vassal state of Media, and then as part of the Persian Empire and Alexander's Macedonian Empire. As an independent state, "great Armenia" under the Artasheid dynasty survived between the Roman Empire and the Parthian Empire. From time to time, falling under the influence of one of these two great powers, Armenia turned into a vassal, "buffer" state. In the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, Armenia was the scene of conflict between Byzantium and Sassanid Persia, and, later, for the penetration of the Arab Caliphate, the Seljuk Turks, and the Mongols into Byzantine Anatolia. With the weakening and retreat of Byzantium, the "Armenian Plateau" will become an area of competition between the Turkish states in Asia Minor, until they are all defeated by the westernmost one - the Ottoman state. However, there will be no lasting peace in these areas. The conflicts between the Ottomans and Safavid Persia will only repeat the imperial contests of the past. The price of the war was paid by the Armenians, whose lands were devastated and whose population was seriously thinned. The border was constantly changing, although in general it can be said that, when the guns fell silent, from the middle of the 16th century, Turkey controlled the western part and Persia the eastern. The Armenian lands were economically backward, and their national structure was fundamentally changed. In the former Armenian ethnic area, members of that nation became a minority. Ever since the time of the Oghuz invasion in the 11th century, Turkish tribes have settled in these areas, from which today's Turks, Azeris and Kurds will be born. They were settled here not only by Turkish, but also by Persian authorities. After the approach of the Russian Empire to Transcaucasia, Armenians rose up in revolt several times. The more famous Armenian uprising was that of David Beck during the time of the Russian emperor Peter the Great who led wars with the Turks and Persians.

After the Beck's Uprising - during which many Armenian-inhabited territories were briefly liberated by the insurgents - the only free territory that survived was Nagorno-Karabakh, thanks to its inaccessibility. "Where there were five small principalities even before the great Armenian movement, the heirs of the former Hatchin state were united into a state known as Hams. The wave of feudal anarchy, which swept over the Persian Empire at the beginning of the 18th century, eased their position, i.e. temporarily weakened the restraints that constantly threatened to destroy them (...) In the Transcaucasia, the Azerbaijani aristocracy, which played an important military-political role in Persia, began to create its own states"³. Under the leadership of Ali Khan, an Azeri magnate, Karabakh was conquered in 1747. After annexing Georgia and establishing vassalage over the North

¹ There is a hypothesis that the proto-Armenian tribes represent a branch of the Phrygians who moved to the eastern part of Asia Minor from Balakan, from Macedonia at the time when the Hellenic tribes began to descend towards present-day Greece.

² The Azeris, to match the Armenian indigenous status in the Karabakh area, promoted their version of the historical settlement of this area to position themselves as indigenous people, where they see themselves as the heirs of the Caucasian Albanians, who, since the spread of Islam, mixed first with the Arabs, and later with the Turks. Svante Cornell, *The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict, Report no. 46*, Department of East European Studies, Uppsala University, 1999, p. 4; Golden Peter, *The Turkic Peoples and Caucasia*, in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.) *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996 (revised edition), pp. 45-46

³ Драган Петровић, Драгомир Анђелковић, Горан Николић, *Геополитика Закавказја*, ИМПП; Београд, 2010, pp. 137, Dragan Petrovic, Dragomir Andjelkovic, Goran Nikolic, *Geopolitic of Transcaucazia*, IMPP, Belgrad, 2010, p. 137

Caucasian principalities at the beginning of the 19th century, Russia entered war with Persia (1804-1813) in which feudal chaos reigned again. During the war, Eastern Armenia was liberated. Thus, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh entered the Russian orbit in 1805. Due to Napoleon's attack, however, in 1813, Russia was forced to make peace with Persia and withdraw from these areas, but not for long. Already in the next conflict with Persia, in 1828, the Yerevan and Nakichevan Khanates (ruled by the Azeris in the name of Persia) were annexed to the Russian Empire. The Ottomans also had to admit that after the defeat they suffered in the war with Russia in 1828-1829. Then, in 1846, Karabakh was included in the Baku province, where it remained until the end of the Russian Empire.

During World War I - due to the Armenian support for Russian penetration into the depths of Asia Minor - Turks, Kurds and Azeris committed genocide against the Armenian population. Thus, the population of Karabakh was physically cut off from the core of the Armenian ethnic territory. Throughout the turbulent revolutionary days, these areas were first occupied by Turkey and then, became part of the Transcaucasian Federative Democratic Republic (which by May 1918 had split into Georgian, Armenian and Azeri parts). "At the same time, the Armenians - who were literally threatened with physical destruction by the Turks and Azeris - managed to stop the Turkish offensive. Istanbul, pressured by the British forces in the Middle East, in such circumstances accepted to recognize the independent Armenian state defended by the Armenian forces"¹. Transcaucasia was temporarily occupied by the Entente forces from where the White forces were helped in the fight with Bolsheviks. The Armenians, then, tried for the second time to liberate their western territories during the conflict between Kemal's Turkey and Greece, while the British and the French withdrew from these areas and left them alone in the conflict with the Turks. The Greeks and the Armenians suffered a heavy defeat. To avoid destruction, the Armenians turned for help to the Bolsheviks, who, in the meantime, had triumphed in the civil war in Russia. Occupying the entire area of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia, the Red Army, because of the Armenian agreement with the Soviet Union of December 2, 1920, occupied Armenia without resistance and brought the Armenian Bolsheviks to power.

After the October Revolution, the Soviet leadership "awarded" the pre-revolutionary genocide by placing Karabakh, then 94% Armenian, to the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic. Impoverished and devastated, the area inhabited by Armenians recovered slowly but surely. With the completion of plans for the cultivation of agricultural land after the first six years within the USSR, food production rose by 75% compared to the pre-war level. Irrigation projects were started, and road infrastructure was renewed. Overall, the Azeri regions made rapid economic progress thanks to Caspian oil, while the Armenians could peacefully, in accordance with their centuries-old tradition, engage in trade and financial affairs. The 1930s brought sudden industrialization and collectivization. Its results were indisputable: by 1931, unemployment had (at least statistically) disappeared, and the total national product in 1935 was 650% higher than eight years earlier, raising the share of industrial production in total output from 21.7% to 62.1 %². From a rural area, in the next four decades the regions inhabited by Armenians will turn into regions of the USSR with dominant service activity and industry.

Inter-ethnic relations escalated again on the eve of the collapse of the USSR, in 1988. Karabakh province (then with three quarters of Armenians, due to the high birth rate of Azeris) declared first separation, and then (in 1991) independence from Baku. "There followed, as in some previous times, a wave of pogroms against Armenians throughout Azerbaijan. The first happened in February 1988 in the city of Sumgait and in the capital of Azerbaijan, two years later ("Black January")"³. The government in Baku tried to take over the People's Front of Azerbaijan, which was counterbalanced by the KP of Azerbaijan under the leadership of Ayaz Mutalibov. Mutalibov mostly relied on Moscow all the time. By the decree of January 12, 1989, the Special Commission for Karabakh was formed, and the Russian commander Volsky, who was more on the side of the Armenians, was sent to the field.

On November 28, under pressure, Moscow abolished the special Commission for Karabakh, while 6,000 Soviet soldiers remained in the enclave to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts. In the meantime, the Azeris formed a "volunteer militia" that was preparing to dissuade the Armenian guerrillas from an offensive that would break through the corridor and territorially connect Karabakh with Armenia. Clashes started spontaneously along the border of the Nakichevan region and the Republic of Armenia. During the fall, the Azerbaijani authorities initiated a

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 150

² Graham Smith, *The Nationalities Question in Post – Soviet States*, Longman, NY, 1996, p. 252

³ Драган Петровић, Драгомир Анђелковић, Горан Николић, *Геополитика Закавказја*, ИМПП, Београд, 2010, p. 91, Dragan Petrovic, Dragomir Andjelkovic, Goran Nikolic, *Geopolitic of Transcaucasia*, IMPP, Belgrad, 2010, p. 91

blockade of all roads and cut the flow of energy to Nagorno-Karabakh, which only accelerated the decision to break through the corridor.

The Soviet authorities' attempt to pacify the feuding Azeris and Armenians experienced a complete debacle as early as September 1991, when Armenian guerrillas seized Azeri enclaves around Shusha while the federal army remained on the sidelines. "In March 1992, after a series of defeats suffered by Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh and the border regions with Armenia, under pressure from the NFA, Mutalibov resigned"¹. He was replaced by Abulfaz Elchibey, the leader of the nationalist movement, who intensified the war. "However, the defeats continued: after the fall of the city of Shusha, an Azeri stronghold in Karabakh, the Armenians managed to break through the corridor near Lachin (later also near Kelbajar) and territorially connect the Karabakh area with the mother republic. By October 1993, the Armenians occupied 20% of the total territory of Azerbaijan (all areas where they lived in the majority before the Turkish Azeri genocide) and declared their republic."² All subsequent counterattacks by the Azerbaijani army were repulsed until the spring of 1993, and their army experienced an almost complete collapse. A truce between Azerbaijan and Armenia was concluded in 1994, which froze the conflict.

Post-Cold War Geostrategic Competition in Transcaucasia

The entire conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in Transcaucasia as well as in the entire Caucasus has a strong geopolitical background. Armenia represents Russia's ally in Transcaucasia (it has been a member of the CSTO since its establishment in 2002), especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Armenia remained isolated and surrounded by hostile Muslim neighbors. The exception is Iran, which has adopted an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the Armenia in general (including the issue of Karabakh). This attitude stems from several reasons - from the creation of an Iranian alliance with Russia in order to jointly resist strategic threats³, the fear of Azeri separatism (a larger number of Azeri live in northern Iran than in Azerbaijan itself) and the influence of Turkey around the Transcaucasia.

In the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia's relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan were constantly on the verge of a low-intensity war. Although Georgia maintains good-neighborly relations with Armenia, it is not ready to do anything that would lead to deterioration of relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. However, Armenia mostly viewed the Western powers as someone who did not consider their vital interests but subordinated them to the interests of their adversaries - Azerbaijan and Turkey⁴. The geostrategic position of Azerbaijan after the lost "First Karabakh War" dictated the necessity of connecting with potential strategic allies. That is why the government in Baku has repeatedly offered some of its bases to the NATO pact. Hopes for full membership in this military alliance, however, were not likely, since the USA, after the end of the Cold War, was not ready to risk a more drastic deterioration of relations with Russia because of Azerbaijan. Seeing the real power relations in Transcaucasia at that time, the Azerbaijani side (under the leadership of first Gaidar Aliyev and then, his son Ilhan Aliyev) began the process of improving relations with Russia and Iran, while developing parallel allied relations with Turkey and, in the background, with the USA. All this was done based on the assessment that Azerbaijan needs peace to restore order in the country and ensure its unhindered development after which, under favorable circumstances, the conflict will "thaw" and the long-term goal will be realized: the return of Karabakh under the jurisdiction of Baku. Erdoğan's "neo-ottoman" Turkey also projected its "grand strategy" towards the Transcaucasia region. In real-political practice it consists of gradually pulling in newly formed states into their own sphere of interest with tendencies of strategic integration. Turkey places the entire area of the Transcaucasia in its "near abroad", which, in its foreign policy doctrine, is designated as an area of strategic priority, primarily for reasons of its own supply of energy resources and ensuring the flow of energy resources to world markets. Within

¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 93

² Александар Гајић, *Нова велика игра*, "Нова српска политичка мисао", Београд, 2009, p. 98, Aleksandar Gajić, *The New Big Game*, "New Serb Political Thinking", Belgrad, 2009, p. 98

³ Александар Гајић, *Геостратешки оквири руско-иранских односа*, "Национални интерес", Vol. 22, No. 1, 2022, Институт за политичке студије, Београд, pp. 153-171, Aleksandar Gajić, *Geostrategic Frameworks of Russian-Iranian Relations*, "National Interest", Vol. 22, No. 1, 2022, Institutul de Studii Politice, Belgrad, pp. 153-171

⁴ Александар Гајић, *Нова велика игра*, "Нова српска политичка мисао", Београд, 2009, p. 98, Aleksandar Gajić, *The New Big Game*, "New Serb Political Thinking", Belgrad, 2009, p. 98

that, Turkish foreign policy has defined its special strategic interests in this area. "In the Caucasus, Turkey's strategic interest is to maintain peace on its border with Georgia and Armenia. The relief of the Caucasian border allows the concentration of available forces on the neuralgic areas inhabited by the Kurds and helps to better secure the Iraqi and Iranian borders, beyond which the Kurds also live. Conflicts with the Kurds permanently deplete the budget and the Turkish state, which is not ready to get more seriously involved in the events of the Caucasus until the threat of Kurdish guerrillas is reduced. Apart from the diplomatic efforts and the military equipment with which it helps Azerbaijan and Georgia, Turkey has not been able to stand up to the Russian Iranian coalition, which is successfully preventing its more significant economic and political penetration into the Caucasus"¹. Turkey actively participated in the training of Azerbaijani officers and helped to modernize Azeri's army and equipment according to NATO standards. Turkey is equally persistent in its diplomatic support for Baku in the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh (although Azerbaijan does not support Turkey in the issue of Cyprus) and in connection with the agreement on the transportation of oil via the route Baku - Tbilisi - Cheyhan, as well as the gas that Baku also has for export. "Due to the outcome of the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey closed its borders with Armenia and terminated diplomatic relations with this neighbor. The new Turkish foreign policy and its more "realistic" approach opened space for the gradual normalization of relations with Armenia, while maintaining the closest, special relations with Azerbaijan. It turned out to be an extremely complex, almost impossible task for the policy of reducing the problems in relations with all neighbors to zero"². Behind the positions of local and regional geopolitical players in Transcaucasia and the Caucasus stand Russia and the USA with their global geostrategic projections. In a geopolitical sense, Russia tends not to allow the "Caucasian barrier" to turn into a hostile geopolitical "fortress" through which instability will spill over into the areas of southern Russia, but, instead, tries to (using positions and mechanisms inherited from the Soviet period) play the role of a key balancer and arbitrator who will bind all local actors to themselves economically and politically and prevent them from finding themselves in positions opposite to Russian ones. America, modifying its Cold War "policy of containment"³ in the direction of expanding and encircling Russia, is doing the exact opposite. It does this because it wants to prevent pan-continental integrative processes starting in the Eurasian "heartland" that can give birth to a supranational integrative structure that can rival the USA on a global scale. Regarding the protection of its security, the USA believes that there are no countries in this area from which a direct threat can be sent to the territory of the USA and the lives of its citizens.

For the period of the First Karabakh War and the next few decades after it, it could be said that Russia, using the legacy of the Soviet Union, managed to realize most of its security and geostrategic interests in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia, using the existing conflicts and its influence on "freeze" and "thaw" them as needed. Iran looked at it with favor, Turkey with helplessness and resentment, while the USA and Western allies only timidly sought to influence to change the *status quo* that kept this entire area partially isolated from the surroundings. Events since the end of the second decade of the 21st century have brought about several significant geostrategic changes. In the geostrategic and security sense, the Second War for Karabakh led to a significant shift in the regional balance of power: with an obvious disparity between the conflicting parties in favor of Azerbaijan, a sudden increase in the influence of Turkey as Azerbaijan's main ally was demonstrated. Almost hegemonic supremacy of Russia in solving of all the key problems in the Transcaucasia was quite clear along with the further marginalization of Iran as a regional power in this area as well as the new weakening of the role of the West, especially the OSCE and its body (the Minsk Group). OSCE remained completely sidelined in the resolution of the conflict, while the gradual emergence of Russian Turkish partnership (which does not exclude their mutual competition) regarding the future architecture of relations in this region became obvious⁴. The Minsk Group, established by the OSCE as the main multilateral framework for negotiations in the region led by representatives of

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 157

² Дарко Танасковић, *Неоосманизам-повратак Турске на Балкан*, Службени гласник, Београд, 2010, pp. 71, Darko Tanasković, *Neo-Ottomanism – Turkey's Return to the Balkans*, Official Gazette, Belgrad, 2010, pp. 71

³ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005

⁴ Siri Neset, Mustafa Aydin, Ayça Ergun, Richard Giragosian, Kornely Kakachia, Arne Strand, *Changing Geopolitics in South Caucasus After the Second Karabakh War: Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, CMI Report No. 4, September 2023, pp. 4-67

the EU not only experienced a spectacular failure to contribute to the stabilization of the situation and the resolution of the conflict in any way, but also experienced complete rejection and strong criticism from both Azerbaijan and Turkey (due to the alleged pro-Armenian attitude). The statements of the EU High Commissioner for Foreign and Security Policy, Joseph Borrell, did not go further than emphasizing the imperative cessation of hostilities and the resolution of the conflict exclusively under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, which only confirmed the weakness of the EU's position in the entire Transcaucasia. Even the efforts of certain European countries, among which that of France (as co-president of the Minsk Group) and its president Macron was the most obvious, did not materialize on the ground, where the Russian role proved to be crucial.

The end of the Second Karabakh War led to victory euphoria in Azerbaijan and a dangerous strengthening of the belief that “might makes right”, while the war itself was seen as a confirmation of armed force as the only way to resolve the Karabakh dispute. In the Azeri public opinion, the result of the conflict created an impression of the inherent weaknesses of democracy as it was seen as a victory of a stronger, more powerful and more authoritarian state over a weak, young democracy. Armenia experienced the military defeat in Karabakh as a national tragedy for which it sees its own government mostly responsible, while the rest of responsibility is assigned to the Russian alliance as well as the positions of the Western powers. In its public opinion the notion about the essential weaknesses of young democracies in the face of stronger and more powerful authoritarian regimes began to prevail. All of this will have a further negative impact on the continuation of democratization and the initiated reforms in Armenia. Russia's peacekeeping presence related to the protection of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave has increased Moscow's influence on the government in Yerevan as a completely dependent party in this partnership. This kind of relationship, which can lead to the complete subjugation of Yerevan to the interests of its patron, to the greatest extent displaces any serious influence of Western powers on Armenia. The newly emerging geostrategic situation has created new forms of concern for regional security, both due to Russia's unilateral deployment of peacekeepers to the disputed territories, as well as due to the visible return of Turkish power to Transcaucasia with the aim of occupying the position of Azerbaijan's military patron. Azerbaijan will be challenged to maintain the unstable balance between Turkey and Russia. At the same time, the inherent rivalry between Ankara and Moscow can only re-emerge, with the South Caucasus serving as an arena for a new competition between regional powers, which could provoke a response from Iran.

Therefore, Russia skilfully used the Azerbaijani victory to, after more than three decades, deploy its military troops on the territory of this country and thus become the sole guarantor of the protection of the Armenian population in the Karabakh enclave, completely ignoring and exerting excessive influence of the OSCE and its Minsk Group in this area. Its main goal was to present itself as the dominant military and security power in the region which will keep the Western powers, the USA and the EU, away from this area. With a military presence in all three Transcaucasian countries (it has its largest military base in Armenia in Gyumri), Russia, as the leading country of the CSTO, has an undeniable role in protecting Armenia's borders with Turkey and Iran and is its *de facto* patron. Turkey used the outcome of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh to make a strong political comeback and increase its military presence in Azerbaijan for the first time since the First World War. However, it shows no willingness to directly threaten Russia's hegemonic position. In addition, Turkey shows itself ready to strongly influence further processes of regional opening and new initiatives on regional cooperation. As a participant at the center for monitoring the implementation of the peace mission (led by Russia), Turkey subsequently joined the monitoring of the implementation of the agreement reached in November 2020. It is showing readiness for further cooperation with Russia to the extent of matching their regional interests. On the other hand, Turkey (as an important member of the NATO and still a candidate for EU membership) openly opposed the foreign policies of the Western powers, primarily the USA, the leading country of NATO, and France, the leading country of the EU, which they advocated regarding the action of the Minsk Group. Aligning itself unreservedly with Azerbaijan, Turkey directly encouraged a military solution to the frozen conflict without any consultation or agreement with its NATO partners. On the contrary, Turkey wholeheartedly advocated that all further peace negotiations related to Nagorno-Karabakh take place outside of the Minsk Group, as well as to obtain a safe place for herself in future peace negotiations.

Iran is the only country that has equally good relations with all Transcaucasian states. However, its influence in the region cannot be compared to either Russia's or Turkey's, nor does Iran show any ambition in this regard. Because of all this, Iran in no way participated in the war or in stopping it. Nevertheless, a partial change in

Iran's attitudes towards the immediately conflicting parties in the Karabakh conflict was noticeable: although earlier Iranian covert pro-Armenian positions during the 2020 conflict gradually turned in the direction of supporting the victorious Baku (probably due to the assessment of this outcome of the conflict), a whole series of subsequent frictions, misunderstandings and conflicts with Azerbaijan returned Iran to its original positions. Marginalized, Iran shows increasing fear of the strengthening of the Turkish-Azeri coalition, which threatens to isolate Iran from Armenia by land (by merging the Azeri enclave of Nakichevan with the main part of the territory of Azerbaijan). The negative attitude towards Azerbaijan is additionally fostered by the significant military and financial resources that Baku recently receives from Israel, Iran's main enemy in the Middle East which is increasingly politically and intelligence-wise present in Transcaucasia. The strengthening of Azeri Israeli ties led to strong condemnations of Tehran, which provoked even stronger reactions from Baku.

Current Geostrategic Changes in Transcaucasia After the 2023 Conflict

The one-day conflict in September 2023 and the victory of the Azeri Turkish coalition which brought the end of Karabakh in front of the eyes of Russian peacekeepers, led to a series of new interpretations of the changes in the balance of power in Transcaucasia. Western experts interpreted this development of events, especially the helplessness of Russian peacekeepers (although they mediated within twenty-four hours to reach a truce) mostly as an expression of the sudden weakening of Russia's influence in this entire area after 2022, i.e. since Russia started military operations in Ukraine. «On the one hand, EU sanctions against Russia have made the “central corridor” of China's Belt and Road Initiative through the South Caucasus more attractive to China and Europe; on the other hand, the arm of the “protecting power” Russia has been weakened by the war and Western sanctions. Therefore, the South Caucasus is no longer an undisputed Russian “courtyard” or “sphere” of interest” but the place of the new “Great game” of the major powers in the world”¹. According to this approach, the beginning of the “new big game” for changing the power relations between the “Great powers”, as well as the reorientation of the countries in the Transcaucasia, has begun. Along with the reduction of Russian and Iranian influence, the most noticeable is the strengthening of Turkey and Azerbaijan as its protégé. Western powers (US and EU) can now use a partial power vacuum to support the economic and political transformation of Armenia and Georgia, despite their influence still being significantly limited. “China is trying to bring Georgia and Azerbaijan together to create a trade corridor from Caspian to the Black Sea as an alternative route in the southern part of Eurasia. Nowadays, as Russia withdraws from the region, the power vacuum must be filled again”².

Although some of these tendencies are unquestionable, the situation is far more complex. Russia, strained by the war in Ukraine and hit by Western sanctions, is undoubtedly gaining a different reputation in the eyes of the countries of the Transcaucasian region, but it is still too early to talk about its influence significantly receding. A more realistic assessment would be that Russia tactically agreed to resolve the situation around Karabakh in this way less because of her own impotence and more because it did not want to be dragged into another, now mostly unnecessary conflict in its backyard, on the side that is not only weaker but increasingly unreliable for their interests. On the other hand, it would thus spoil relations with the other side, which is not only getting stronger, but whose cooperation is more necessary in the broader geopolitical view in the conditions of imposed sanctions and sudden changes in power relations in the whole world. The biggest ballast for Russia in the Transcaucasia since 2020 has been the constant attempt by the West (primarily France) to strengthen its influence in the region through the OSCE Minsk Group, usurping from Russia the commitment to protect the Armenians in Karabakh. With Azerbaijan's full control of Karabakh, this danger disappears: according to the November 2020 agreement, Russian troops are on the ground for two more years (until late 2025); Russia (and not the West) remains an important factor in the conclusion of the final peace agreement, while relations with the victorious Azerbaijan and its patron, Turkey, remain not only intact, but on the rise. On the other hand, there is no serious fear that Yerevan (which, after the “plush revolution” of 2018 and the arrival of Pashinyan as Prime minister), will start playing “The Western card” again more strongly and maneuvering between Russian protection and increasingly pro-Western aspirations. Under pressure from Azerbaijan and Turkey (whose claims revolve around the territory of Armenia, i.e., the corridor between the Azeri enclave of Nakichevan and the main part of the territory of Azerbaijan), Armenia needs the

¹ Ralph Wrobel, *The changing geopolitics in the South Caucasus during the war in Ukraine: Chances and risks for the region*, “Ordnungspolitische Diskurse”, No. 2, 2023, Ordnungspolitisches Portal (OPO), Erfurt, 2023, p. 3

² *Idem*

protection of its interstate borders. This can be done only by Russia (which is already doing this by deploying military bases in Armenia) and its regional military alliance - the CSTO. Odium in Armenia against Russia for not preventing the capitulation of Karabakh and militarily intervening (which it was not obliged to do, because, as a member of the CSTO, Russia is obliged to defend only internationally recognized borders of Armenia and not the disputed enclave) is smaller than the odium against the domestic, Pashinyan's government, which, precisely because of its double game between Russia and the West, is blamed for the collapse of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh. And this perfectly suits the Russians to - by channeling great dissatisfaction - influence the departure of this government and the arrival of a new, more cooperative and geopolitically one-sided government. Although Russia's image has been significantly weakened in the eyes of common Armenians, Russia is aware that Armenia, at least in the coming period, has no alternative to protect its vital interests other than staying together with Russia: because of all this, Russian officials unabashedly portray the events of the period 2020-2023 as a form of punishment for an increased pro-Western turn government in Yerevan, warning them that something similar could happen to them with a new threat to territorial integrity if they do not exclusively turn to their proven ally and protector.

Even the victorious Baku must not allow itself to indulge in its regional ambitions, since it is surrounded by two regional powers that look with displeasure at such a scenario - Russia and Iran. Therefore, Azerbaijan has become a complex policy of cooperation, competition and deterrence, since both of these powers possess potent political, military and hybrid instruments that can give official Baku a headache. Although dissatisfied with the Russian military presence on its territory and its protective position towards the Armenians, Baku not only continues to intensify economic cooperation with Moscow (Russia is the main supplier of weapons to Azerbaijan and a growing supplier of food products) but also continues to develop a strategic partnership in transit, logistics and energy sector. This is equally important for Moscow and Tehran to avoid sanctions and the consequent weakening that the West has inflicted on them. For Baku, it is a tempting offer to position itself as a regional hub and thus improve its position vis-à-vis powerful, threatening neighbors. "It is particularly indicative that, just two days before the start of direct Russian military engagement in Ukraine in February 2022, the presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan signed a broad military-political agreement which President Aliyev thunderously described as something that "raises mutual relations to the level of an alliance." Despite such exaggerations, there is no doubt that Azerbaijan and Russia are carefully developing their mutual relations based on common interests such as: common hostility to Western support and cooperation with Armenia including Russia's desire to punish Armenia for its pro-Western turn; and increasing cooperation on regional trade and transit routes both north-south and east-west, including in the Quartet with Turkey and Iran"¹.

Turkey has similar interests, which, in the new situation of Western sanctions against Russia and the continental expansion of Chinese transport trade routes, respond to the opening of borders within the region, the normalization of damaged relations and the construction of new infrastructure projects that would only strengthen Turkey's future positions and plans. With one foot in the Transcaucasia, along with its strategic ally Azerbaijan, Turkey certainly dreams of expanding its zone of influence further across the Caspian Sea to the Turkic-speaking Central Asian world. But Turkey is not ready to risk confrontation with Russia and Iran by creating territorial continuity under its control and thus endangering the wider, vital infrastructure projects. Iran, for its part, also supports this type of regional rapprochement and cross-border transportation (especially energy connection) but fears that the Turkish-Azeri option will territorially exclude it from these processes, especially considering the Azeri rapprochement with Israel. That is why Tehran is leading the way in advocating a 3+3 regional platform (three regional powers - Russia, Turkey and Iran and three Transcaucasian countries - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) to solve all disputed problems in the Transcaucasia. Turkey, Russia, and even Azerbaijan agrees with this in principle.

The main projects in which all regional and local players are interested are those related to the transport infrastructure. It would increase the international connection of the region with the surroundings and contribute to the increase in the volume of international trade. Certainly, both the sanctions imposed on Russia and the outcome of the war in Ukraine can have significant consequences on the scope of these transport corridors, whose degree of success will be different in different outcomes. Nevertheless, their geoeconomic and geopolitical significance is

¹ Hugo Von Essen, *Azerbaijan's Uncertain Geopolitical Rise in a South Caucasus Maelstrom*, SCEEUS Report No.17 2023, Stockholm, 1.12.2023, p. 17

unquestionable. These are the following transport corridors, railways and pipelines with energy to the world market: "1. North-South Corridor: The North-South International Transport Corridor, a projected rail route stretching from Finland through Russia to the Persian Gulf and India. 2. Middle Corridor: A route that transports goods between China, Central Asia, Turkey and the European Union via the South Caucasus. 3. East-West Corridor: A transit route conceived at the end of the Cold War, transporting energy resources as well as other goods between Europe and Central Asia, passing through the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus and Turkey, and finally connecting with China in the east and Pakistan and India in the south. 1. China's Belt and Road Initiative: Including the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor passing through the South Caucasus, although Beijing has not yet invested in significant infrastructure or transport projects 2. Zangezur Corridor (Syunik in Armenian): Connecting Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan via Armenian territory involves controversy over who will control the route. While Azerbaijan insists on having control over the route and points to the Lachin Corridor connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh via Azerbaijani territory, Armenia strongly opposes any control by Azerbaijan on its territory, allowing it to lead to further demands in the long term. 3. Araxa Rail Link: The primary rail link between Azerbaijan and Armenia, built between 1899 and 1940, but damaged and later destroyed during and after the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Azerbaijan announced in February 2021 that it had begun reconstruction of the line on its territory. The realization of this project would put the region at the center of the future railway connection Black Sea - Persian Gulf. 4. Gyumri-Kars railway: A direct connection between Armenia and Turkey would facilitate the trade between the two countries and between Nakhchivan and Turkey and would benefit Azerbaijan, Iran and Russia. 5. If the Araks rail link is realized, Iran may have to shelve its expensive project for the Astara-Resht line and instead use the existing rail network through Julfa across the Nakhichevan border to further connect with Azerbaijani and Armenian lines. 6. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Railway: A massive project that started in 2017, connecting Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan as well as Europe with Central Asia and China. 7. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline: in operation since 2006. This pipeline transports oil from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey and then across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. 1. Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) Natural gas pipelines run parallel to the BTC and carry natural gas primarily to Georgia and Turkey. It has the potential to supply Europe with Caspian gas through the planned Southern Gas Corridor, as well as to transport gas from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. 2. Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP): a section of the Southern Gas Corridor that became operational in 2020. It transports gas from the Caspian Sea via Turkey to Europe. 3. The Baku-Supsa oil pipeline runs from the Sangachal terminal near Baku to the Supsa terminal in Georgia. It transports oil from the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli field and is operated by British Petroleum (BP). The history of this pipeline has been troubled; the Russian invasion of Georgia allowed Russia to take control of a short length of pipeline, and there were several spills and thefts. Although there is potential for expansion, there are no plans to date. 4. The Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (proposed) is a gas pipeline that transports gas from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan via the Caspian Sea via an undersea pipeline. It is also known as the South Caucasus Pipeline Future Extension (SCPFKE) because of its connection with the South Caucasus Pipeline"¹.

Conclusions

In addition to the relative weakening of Russia in the Transcaucasia region and the partial loss of the hegemon's position, the dynamics of power distribution and interest projections in this area generally go in a different direction from further antagonism of both regional powers and local actors. If Russian regional military hegemony in the post-Cold War period was sufficient to keep this space more or less closed and under its control through conflict management primarily for security reasons, new tendencies in international relations require a change in the treatment of this space: in times of global overcomposition of power in the direction of a multipolar order and the need for a new interregional connection, the area of Transcaucasia is becoming more and more interesting for a whole series of large and regional powers which tend to turn this area from a closed conflict zone into an open regional transport hub. This is the vital interest of Turkey, Iran, Russia and all Transcaucian countries. That is why it is not appropriate to expect that any of them will threaten it by forcing their narrow but far-reaching geostrategic plans difficult to achieve without a great risk of conflict. It is more likely that they will put mutual

¹ Siri Neset, Mustafa Aydın, *Changed Dynamic after the Second Karabakh War*, in Neset, Mustafa Aydın, Ayça Ergun, Richard Giragosian, Kornely Kakachia, Arne Strand, *Changing Geopolitics in South Caucasus After the Second Karabakh War: Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, CMI Report No. 4, September 2023, pp. 15-17

disagreements on the back burner, and despite suspicions and occasional confrontations, in the 3+3 multilateral format, they will manage to find a common language because the benefit from the implementation of joint projects is incomparably greater than the individual gains after extremely uncertain attempts to realize particular interests that cannot be realized without the broadest confrontation.

In this regard, the most nerve-wrecking point is the so-called The Zanzegur Corridor that runs through the Armenian province of Syunik towards Iran and separates the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakichevan, with the Turkish enclave in the hinterland, from the bulk of the Azerbaijani statehood. By establishing this corridor, Armenia would be territorially isolated from Iran. Turkey, through Azeri's control of this corridor, would create territorial continuity for the direct strategic expansion of its influence towards the Caspian Sea, and beyond it, on the Turkophone post-Soviet republics of Central Asia. In other words, this scenario would be disastrous for Iran and Armenia and would further weaken Russian influence in the region.

However, it is unlikely that there will be a new crisis over Zanzegur corridor: this story served more as an analogy for the official Baku to apply pressure regarding the crisis in the Lachin Corridor; with the reintegration of Nagorno-Karabakh, the threats surrounding the Zanzegur Corridor become largely redundant. Azerbaijan's priority was the return of Karabakh under its sovereignty and not a territorial pretension to the territory of the neighboring country, Armenia, which would almost certainly have led to a strong confrontation with the already distrustful Iran and Russia with whom, only gradually and with numerous disagreements, an area of common interest was found. To destroy everything now - and not only that - but a whole series of plans for a regional communication network that benefits everyone, especially Turkey, is out of question. In addition, Russia, whose troops are stationed in bases in Armenia and are guarding its border with Turkey and Iran, has a contractual obligation as a member of the CSTO military alliance to defend Armenia from external attack. Failing to protect Armenia would incomparably harm Russia's reputation more than its neutral position in the military solution of the Karabakh problem, especially since the official Yerevan itself publicly changed its positions and recognized this area as an indisputable part of the sovereign and internationally recognized state of Azerbaijan.

Nevertheless, the triumphalist position of Baku, the continuation of threatening rhetoric and the joint Turkish-Azerbaijani border military exercises do not exclude the possibility of embarking on some irrational adventure of violent, military opening of this corridor, which would surely lead to confrontation with Russia and Iran. By acting like this, Yerevan is only pushed harder into Russia's embrace. The Russian-Iranian alliance is strengthening and the government in Yerevan is faced with losing the support of citizens, being overthrown and replaced by a government with a stronger pro-Russian orientation. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has enough reasons to refrain from opening the issue related to the Zanzegur Corridor: its importance is far less significant than the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh whose permanent status has yet to be resolved by a comprehensive peace agreement. By opening up a new issue, Baku would only miss out on consolidating its gains on the ground and worsen its relations with rising neighbors, spoiling the region's broader integrative connectivity (from which Baku would benefit most) and risk a wider escalation of conflict with major powers.

Turkey is in a similar position: Ankara wants to capitalize on its aid to Baku and open up opportunities for wider normalization and strategic engagement that can benefit everyone, including Armenia which would, thus, partially compensate for the national tragedy of the exodus of its population from the enclave in Karabakh. Russia and Iran are equally interested in the same thing, regarding the Zanzegur corridor and the border along the Armenian province of Syunik (currently protected by Russian troops), all with the same commitment that the West should stay away from interference in regional relations. With all of this in mind, it is to be expected that a modus acceptable to all parties will be found around neuralgic issues (most likely, in a 3+3 format). In due time, instead of striving for hegemony, some kind of condominium over the area of Transcaucasia, which is in common interest, will be established.

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SUNNI RADICAL CLERICS – DO THEY HAVE A ROMANIAN AUDIENCE?

Abstract:	<i>Sunni radical online speech maintains great importance as a security matter, considering its potential impact on the views of individuals originated in regions with terrorist activity, as well as their potential impact on Romanian converts active on social media.</i> <i>In the light of its relevance, the current research aims to map the visibility of Sunni radical clerics in high ranked research publications, as well as factors that impacted this (in)visibility; the second part will question whether unrestricted social media activity of the digital community of Romanian converts on Facebook reflects an appetite for content, sermons and narratives of radical Sunni clerics, questioning whether Romanian converts share and appreciate such content– confirming their relevance on digital platforms.</i> <i>Furthermore, the paper raises potential research avenues, highlighting the need to focus on coded messages; our hypothesis is that as legal sanctions increase, be they administrative or legal (no flight lists, asset freeze, visa cancelation, social media ban), Sunni radical clerics will switch from an explicit to a latent, implicit hate speech, preserving content but altering form. Future research will investigate messaging in the context of tensions in Palestinian territories, as active conflicts were observed as a catalyst for enhanced radical speech.</i>
Keywords:	Coded Language; digital radicalization; extremism on social media; analyzing coded messages; machine learning in counterterrorism
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Literature Review

Despite being associated with terrorist organizations, designated as a source of radical discourse and a catalyst for violent acts, radical clerics have been of somewhat limited interest for scholars, if we compare the numbers of studies focused on radical sheikhs to those on terrorism in general and terrorist groups in particular.

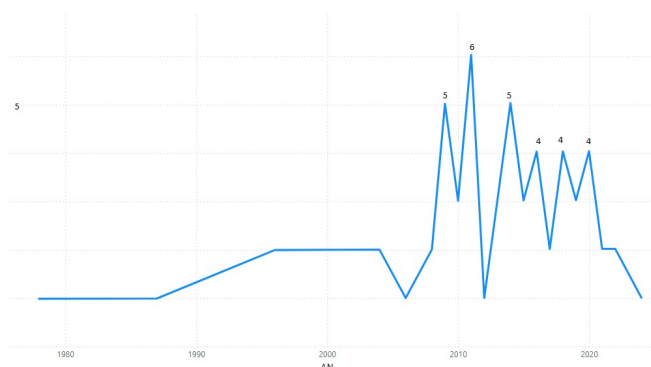


Figure 1. Distribution of research articles on radical clerics 1978-2024¹

In our quest for literature focused on radical religious figures, we have identified to date several 56 research articles starting 1978 on radical clerics, with an uneven distribution of years (Figure 1). These articles were selected

¹ Generated as result of the author` research

on the following criteria: a) including the term cleric or adjacent terms in their titles and/or abstracts (fatwas, sheikh/shaykh/sheykh, ulama/ulema) or names of specific radical Sunni clerics, b) were published in peer reviewed journals and c) discussed the role of radical Sunni clerics¹. A comparison to the numbers provided by Bart Schuurman in his 2020 literature review on terrorism shows us the focus of scholars between 2006 and 2017; respectively, the number of articles published in the nine leading journals of the terrorism/counterterrorism journals is 3442. As shown in the cited source, interest in the terrorism phenomenon is constant². Yet interest in radical vectors such as Sunni radical clerics were not, despite being clearly titled by the Radical Awareness Network in 2022 as highly relevant vehicles as radicalization – designated as non-violent Islamist extremists.

Certain trends in 2024 in the study of radicalization impact and touch the subject of radical clerics and their activity in supporting terrorist organizations – including recruitment for regional or global organizations, legitimizing their violence, exploitation of the online in promoting radical speech while circumventing moderation policies. Research spanning social sciences like sociology, religious and cultural studies, psychology touches upon methods radical clerics use to engage and influence converts or born believers.

Among the main trending approaches, we will name the theory of *Charismatic Authority and Influence* stemming from Weber's charismatic authority theory, with a body of research indicating that radical clerics often possess charismatic authority (despite struggling with issues to define charisma), allowing them to exert significant influence over their followers; charismatic leaders in general create a compelling narrative of purpose, belonging which can be attractive while struggling with more mundane issues. Furthermore, research on the psychological dynamics of radical clerics shows that clerics employ emotional and moral appeals to incite strong responses from their audience, using rhetoric that mixes religious, political, cultural themes. The Charismatic Leadership Theory posits that radical clerics gain followers through their ability to present themselves as legitimate, divinely guided leaders. Recent shifts of the theory point out the growth of relevance of online charisma, where clerics can craft an online *persona* that appeals to young and impressionable audiences; this persona-building is often bolstered by symbolic language, a strong ability to induce certainty, as well as calls for action framed as religious duty. Angela Gendron shows that this charismatic bond is triggered by a range of psychological, social and environmental factors which make certain individuals more susceptible to militant Islam than others³. No lesser contribution is brought by Quintan Wiktorowicz in *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*, highlighting how charismatic radical leaders use persuasive language, emotional appeal, and simplified theology to attract individuals searching for purpose, which often includes converts⁴.

A second trend in radicalization theories which touch the subject of radical clerics is the Digital Radicalization Theory; theory tackles how radical clerics use digital platforms to reach wide audiences, particularly vulnerable or isolated individuals. Scholars note that social media and encrypted messaging applications allow clerics to broadcast radical explicit messages, recruit followers without physical contact. The *Digital Radicalization Theory* indicates that online engagement enables clerics to amplify their reach globally, often decentralized and harder-to-regulate-spaces. This theory builds on the concept of the *virtual caliphate*, where the internet serves as a virtual space for ideological expansion. Limitations include addressing radicalization solely as an online phenomenon, excluding offline/real life radicalization processes which are complementary to online affairs. As such, Siegel observes the large volumes of religious content on Twitter on the verge of political events in the Middle East and Northern Africa; during political events, social media provides a space for cross-sectarian

¹ Al-Kandari Dashti, 2014; Alkandari Alburass, 2022; Alrasheed Mabon, 2020; Barta, 2015; bin Mohamed Osman, 2009; Brachman Levine, 2011; Condra, Isaqzadeh, Linardi, 2019; Coulson, 2022; Fodeman et.al., 2020; Gendron, 2016; Gregg, 2018; Hamm, 2009; Hariss-Hogan et al, 2022; Hitchens, 2012 and 2020; Klausen, 2014; Klausen et.al., 2018; Lahoud, 2009; Megari, 2022; Mustaqim, 2018; Perlinger, 2016; Pokalova, 2018; Renfer & Haas, 2008; Shane, 2016; Schuurman et al, 2016; Schurman, 2018; Sealy, 2021; Siegel, 2015; Seraphin et.al., 2019; Suljic, 2021; Taylor, 2008; Vidino et.al., 2022; Wagemakers, 2009; Wiktorowicz et.al., 2006; Yazbeck et.al., 2008

² Bart Schuurman, *Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship*, "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 32, No. 5, 2020, pp. 1011–1026

³ Angela Gendron, *The Call to Jihad: Charismatic Preachers and the Internet*, "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism", Vol. 40, No.1, 2021, pp. 44–61

⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising, Muslim Extremism in the West*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005

discourse and activism as well as for “sectarian vitriol spewed by influential clerics”¹. Findings are consistent with a report issued by the Swiss Intelligence Service SAP, in the sense that Islamist content is virally spread on social media, especially Twitter, concluding that “Intelligence Services have been aware that the Internet is used as the most important tool for the dissemination of Jihadist propaganda”².

Meleagrou-Hitchen, Wagemakers, Lahoud, Brachman and Levine, Al-Kandari & Dashti, Taylor developed a series of case-studies on how jihadi clerics use social media to promote themselves – highlighting the importance of social media, PR, marketing techniques and switching to English as *lingua franca* to disseminate content influenced the impact of their message. In the light of former studies, one can see how social media permanentizes radical speech, and enhances the effects of these messages even after the death of clerics, now martyred and, thus, legitimized. Yet the afore mentioned studies limit their approach to either Western based radical activity or overtly radical message dissemination. Mia Bloom and Charlie Winter examine in *Jihadism on social media: Radical Clerics and Youth Engagement* the use of visual, audio content to appeal to the youth, exploring how clerics simplify religious messaging to increase, reach and generate engagement on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, with a focus on digital recruitment. The study is consistent with Radical Awareness Network reports showing that not only radical content is targeting young people and vulnerable segments, but also correlating with the trend of converts to Islam to be young people and to draw their religious sources from the internet.

Merlyna Lim and Noorhaidi Hasan, tackling on digital media’s role in religious movements, especially in Southeast Asia, in their research *Digital Da’wah: Islamic Radicalization and Visual Culture* from 2024 analyze how religious figures adapt traditional Islamic outreach to digital spaces, using engaging formats to communicate complex ideas effectively. Yet studies like this are limited to one region. Jytte Klausen and Peter Neumann, experts in jihadist networks and the psychological aspects of online radicalization, focus on radical Sunni clerics who use memes and video clips to attract new followers – which shows an adaptation to new media and digital channels to address a wide segment of audience³.

There is unanimity within scientific literature on the digital impact of radical clerics on terrorist acts, as well as in influencing homegrown jihadis and indoctrination; some scholars argue that notorious radical clerics can influence political and social developments in their home countries, while official reports show that religious scholars and imams in Europe have historically been educated and influenced by radical figures in prestigious Muslim establishments. A third series of theories – the *Ideological Framing and Simplified Theology* focuses on how radical clerics employ ideological framing by presenting a binary worldview portraying Islam as oppressed and under attack and gives extreme calls to actions as a form of defense; simplified storytelling can resonate with vulnerable segments of the population, as well as with converts lacking a nuanced understanding of Islamic teachings and may view clerics as a legitimate authority. In this niche we mention Thomas Hegghammer and his research on Islamist movements, whose works highlight how radical clerics may present a distorted version of Islam that emphasizes violent or apocalyptic narratives. Hegghammer suggests that clerics exploit the limited religious literacy of some converts by framing violence as a religious duty, thus legitimizing extremist actions⁴. But valuable contributions were also Joe Whittaker with *Online radicalization. What we know*⁵.

Closer to our field of preoccupation, the dimension of *The Use of Coded Language and Dog Whistles* examines how terrorist groups use codes that may sound innocuous but carry specific meanings for initiated followers. Codification allegedly allows organizations and Jihadist groups to evade detection by authorities and convey extremist messages subtly. Within the segment, *Signaling Theory* suggests that coded language acts as a signal to followers who understand hidden meaning. This enables clerics to reach radicalized followers without directly using extremist rhetoric that would otherwise attract attention from counter-terrorism authorities.

¹ Alexandra Siegel, *Sectarian Twitter Wars: Sunni-Shia Conflict and Cooperation in the Digital Age*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015

² *Idem*

³ Jytte Klausen, *Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq*, “Studies in Conflict & Terrorism”, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2014, pp. 1-22

⁴ Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 273

⁵ Joe Whittaker, *Online radicalization. What We know*, Radicalisation Awareness Network, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

Punctually, Signaling Theory is referred to in Richard Nielsen's research *Deadly clerics: Blocked ambition and the paths to Jihad*¹, which applies Signaling Theory to understand how certain clerics, motivated by career frustrations and lack of mainstream opportunities, turn to jihadist preaching as a form of signaling their commitment to radical ideology. Studies in 2024 look at how clerics use culturally specific terms, Quranic references, and subtle ideological hints that resonate only with audiences familiar with radical discourse. This tactic is particularly effective in environments with strict surveillance, allowing clerics to subtly advocate for extreme views. Researchers suggest that clerics utilize Quranic verses selectively, presenting them in a way that resonates only with individuals familiar with radical interpretations, which subtly reinforces extremist views while maintaining plausible deniability. This strategy effectively bypasses detection, as only audiences already attuned to radical narratives grasp the ideological significance of these references. Again, RAN reports in 2021 like Root causes of violent extremism show a strong influence of non-violent Islamist extremism figures which use specific language, and highlight the importance of the human factor in investigating and researching the field².

Also, studies from the Yaqeen Institute examine how political dynamics shape both counter-radicalization discourse and religious messaging, suggesting that clerics' methods evolve to elude monitoring by leveraging ambiguous language that aligns with extremist ideology for select listeners. Meanwhile, research by authors like Abdul Mustaqim in *De-Radicalization in Quranic Exegesis explores reinterpretations of Quranic "violence verses"*, noting that radical clerics exploit these verses to frame violence as religiously legitimate, particularly for audiences inclined toward extremist interpretations³. Additionally, some sociological analyses emphasize the importance of understanding how clerics signal ideological alignment with global jihadist movements through references to shared grievances and Quranic exegesis, which resonate with certain subcultures and ideologically primed audiences. These findings underscore the clerics' sophisticated approach to messaging, blending overtly neutral or benign religious language with covertly radicalized signals aimed at specific audiences. Finally, another trending dimension of radicalization studies tackling or mentioning the activity of radical clerics is the *Adaptation to Counter-terrorism Efforts* – indicating that jihadist groups are adapting their tactics to circumvent counter-terrorism frameworks, often operating within legal limits to avoid prosecution. Synonymously, some clerics now frame their views in less overtly extremist terms, presenting themselves as simply advocating for Islamic morality or justice. The *Adaptation Theory* proposes that as Governments increase their surveillance and intervention measures, radical clerics adapt their strategies to continue their influence. They may switch to using indirect language, emoticons, graphic content, avoiding terms that would clearly signal extremism. This too shows the importance of the human factor complementary to AI to investigate trends in coded extremist language.

Researchers have observed that some clerics promote "grey-zone" content—messages that fall short of incitement but still encourage radical ideologies. This enables them to appeal to potential followers while staying under the radar of authorities, creating a challenge for counter-terrorism efforts. Notable mentions are Richard Nielsen's afore mentioned research – and to a lesser extent, Matteo Vergani's *The Radicalization of Individuals in Context: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature*⁴.

Touching the subject of the impact of radical religious figures on groups in the Western world, Yazbeck Haddad and Balz see indoctrination of religious communities in Europe as being severely influenced by radical clerics from Saudi Arabia, as the former are involved in training European imams to adapt their discourse with a

¹ Richard N. Nielsen, *Deadly Clerics: Blocked Ambition and the Paths to Jihad*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2017

² Magnus Ranstorp, Marije Meines, *The Root Causes of Violent Extremism*, Radicalisation Awareness Network, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, p. 5

³ Abdul Mustaqim, *De-Radicalization In Quranic Exegesis (Re-Interpretation of "Violence Verses" Toward Peaceful Islam)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, Proceedings of the International Conference on Qur'an and Hadith Studies (ICQHS) 2017

⁴ Matteo Vergani, Muhammad, Ekin Ilbahar&Greg Barton, *The Radicalization of Individuals in Context: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature*, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Taylor&Francis Journals, Vol. 43, No.10, October 2018, pp 854-854; Lorenzo Vidino, Seamus Hughes, *The Islamic State in America: After the Caliphate* Program on Extremism, George Washington University; National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center, *Reports, Projects, and Research*, 2022

radical lens¹. Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler indicate the grave impact of radical sheiks on conversions, as well as jihadist attacks, alongside other socio-psychological factors². Hamm advocates for radical clerics being a definitive factor in prison conversion to Islam³. Political implications of proselytism, indoctrination and Da'wah conducted radical clerics had also received some attention in Western research; Coulson's report *Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World: Is There a Problem? What Can We Do about It?* shows not only that radical indoctrination in the spirit of hate poses a grave security threat not only to the U.S., but also the Western world, as well as the influence of clerics in religious and political education⁴.

Nawab Bin Mohamed Osman, Levztion, Al-Rasheed and Akram, Barta, Alrasheed and Mabon focus on the impact of radical clerics on domestic policies and international policies in their home states, as well as influencing relations between diverse social and religious groups in their countries, concluding that radical clerics can produce impact in domestic developments. Julie Taylor highlighted in a 2008 study that a Saudi cleric managed to mobilize population and protest the secular Saudi regime – relevant in showing that the *ulama* may also impact domestic policy in a somewhat authoritarian Islamic regime.

The report *From Cradle to Grave: The Lifecycle of Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria* highlights that radical clerics seem to impact homegrown jihadists more than foreign fighters, indicating that studies on *returnees* show that a 25% percentage of the later segment stored religious content produced by jihadi clerics in their smartphones. This confirms the impact of radical clerics and their potential to trigger attacks on national soil⁵. Gregg's research on *Religious resources and terrorism* indicates that religion is an important factor influencing terrorism acts, and that, through a religious authority, jihadis can be impacted to challenge the social and political status quo "by shaping the group's ideology; through religious authority: as a code of conduct that binds members of the group together; by providing social and material resources; and as a form of identity"⁶. However, consensus hasn't been achieved whether converts would be more violent than born Muslims under the influence of radical messages; emerging from the very definition of terrorism as a social-psychological construct, the paths of radicalization were demonstrated to be quite particular for converts and born Muslims. Several studies suggest that converts may follow distinct radicalization pathways, often related to a rapid and quite enhanced immersion in their new belief system, making them more permeable to radical narratives. In some cases, it appeared that radicalization had led to a heightened sense of identity and purpose, on a background of feeling misunderstood, isolated, and a misfit in the societies they were born. In this respect, Harris-Hogan, Dawson, Amarasingam discuss in their 2024 study on Western foreign fighters that some converts exhibit higher susceptibility to radicalization, possibly linked to their need to "prove" their faith to themselves or their communities might lead to embracing more extreme views⁷. A relevant study (Fodeman, Snook&Horgan, 2020) showed that converts demonstrate to have higher activism and radicalism intentions scores, compared to natural born Muslims⁸; a series of research articles indicate that Muslim converts tend to be rather overrepresented in terrorism engagement and acts of terrorism, as opposed to *nonconvert* Muslims – and particular within their overrepresentation among Western foreign fighters. *Lower levels of Islamic knowledge* were touched upon in research which posits that converts who became radicalized may have had a less comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings compared to individuals born into the faith. This limited knowledge has had the potential to make them more receptive to oversimplified or extreme interpretations

¹ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Michael J. Balz, *Taming the Imams: European Governments and Islamic Preachers since 9/11*, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2008, pp. 215-235

² Quintan Wiktorowicz, Karl Kaltenthaler, *The Rationality of Radical Islam*, "Political Science Quarterly", Vol. 121, No. 1, 2006, pp. 295-319

³ Michael S. Hamm, *Prison Islam in the Age of Terror*, "British Journal of Criminology", Vol. 49, No. 5, 2009

⁴ Andrew J. Coulson, *Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World: is there a problem? What can We do about it?*, CATO Institute Policy Analysis, No. 511, 2004

⁵ Andre Perlinger, Daniel Milton, *From Cradle to Grave: The Lifecycle of Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria*, Combating Terrorism Center at Westpoint, 2016

⁶ Heather S. Gregg, *Religious Sources and Terrorism*, "Religion and Terrorism", Vol. 65, No. 2-3, 2018, pp. 185-206

⁷ Shandon Harris-Hoggan, Lorne L. Dawson, Amaranth Amarasingam, *A comparative analysis of the nature and evolution of the domestic jihadist threat to Australia and Canada (2000-2020)*, "Perspectives on Terrorism", Vol. 14, No. 5, 2024, pp.77-102

⁸ Ari D. Fodeman, Daniel W. Snook, John G. Horgan, *Picking Up and Defending the Faith: Activism and Radicalism Among Muslim Converts in the United States*, "Political Psychology", Vol. 41, No. 4, 2020, pp. 679-698

of Islam, especially when introduced to these ideas by charismatic figures or online radical content. Relevant for this is the *Muslim Converts and Terrorism in the West: A Comparative Analysis* by Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, bringing arguments that certain converts in Western countries might have lacked a deep grounding in Islamic scholarship, which can leave them more vulnerable to misinterpretations of doctrine that justify violence¹.

While research indicates that Muslim converts who radicalize may sometimes have less formal religious education and unique vulnerabilities, it is essential to approach this topic without generalizing findings. Most converts do not radicalize or adopt extremist views, and factors influencing radicalization are complex and multifaceted. Furthermore, the findings do not support a blanket statement that converts are inherently more violent or less educated in Islam but rather suggest that some may be susceptible to specific pathways influenced by social, psychological, and ideological dynamics. Focusing on the 56 selected articles which are aimed specifically towards radical Sunni clerics, the distribution of topics in articles focused on radical clerics shows a dominance of political topics, followed by the activity of clerics online and less to devotional aspects, as shown in Figure 2 below.

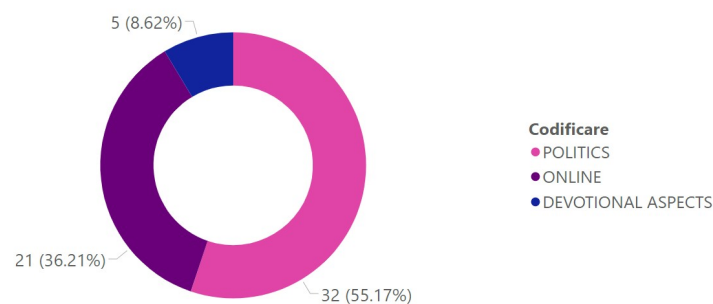


Figure 2. Article distribution on topics²

Interest in jihadi clerics seems to have been influenced by policy priorities, which in their turn were impacted by events in the terrorist/counterterrorist realm. We argue that research has been conducted because of Governmental and international interest in terrorism sources, to fuel policies and sometimes to justify and fuel a call to action within the Global War on Terror of the Bush administration. Historically, there seems to have been a causality relation between political developments and research; indicators of a research interest in radical clergy and the connection between the political realm and the religious establishment spike at the end of 1970^s, the first articles being drafted in 1978, mainly focused on the Shi'a clergy in Iran – probably in the context of turmoil and the Islamic revolution in Iran; later on, attention drifted to the Shi'a clergy's connections to Hizballah, a Lebanese political organization with an armed wing notorious for pursuing worldwide operations, involvement in terrorist acts, as well as transnational criminal activities. Furthermore, in the context of the Soviet conduct of the Afghan file, Al-Qaeda emerged as a point of interest, especially after the 1987 terrorist attacks at the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, making Al-Qaeda a central point of research in the years to come; 9/11 enhanced research on the afore mentioned terrorist organization, in the context of GWOT and the American change of pace in international anti-terrorism policies. As we speak, even after the Syrian conflict emerged, Al-Qaeda remained the main concern for Anglo-Saxon research on terrorism and counterterrorism policies.

¹ Lorenzo Vidino, Seamus Hughes, B Clifford, *Op.cit.*, p. 5

² Generated as result of the author's research

Following the London attacks in 2005, Madrid in 2007, the Paris attacks in 2015 and the ones in Bruxelles in 2016, research suffered a change of scope, focusing both on homegrown jihadis, the export of radical mindsets and narratives in the online, as well as on suggestions on how to improve domestic policies in Europe to prevent terrorist attacks and the spread of extremist narratives.

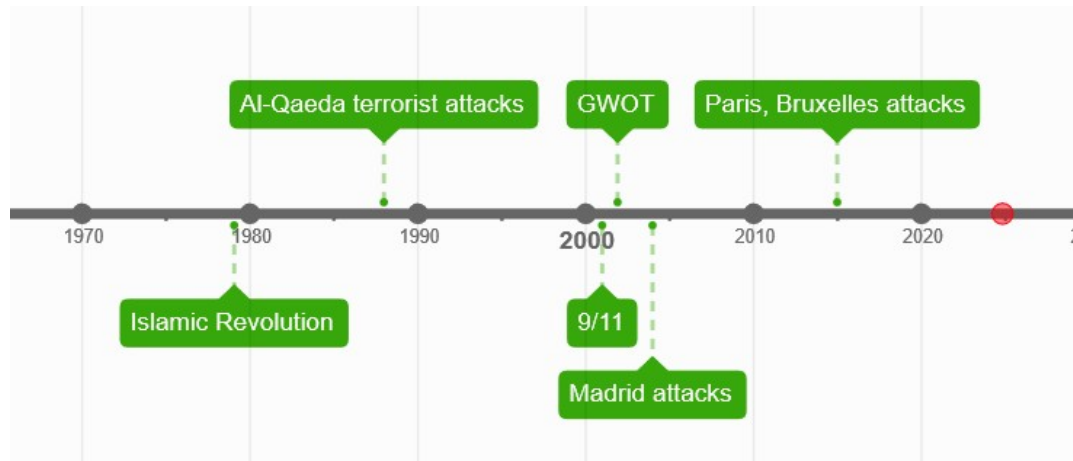


Figure 3. Events that impacted the scope and topics of terrorism/antiterrorism research¹

As shown in Figure 4, the distribution for topics of interest in connection to the Muslim radical clerics and their chronological development shows that the political dimension and impact of sheikhs promoting extremism was tackled starting the end of the 1970^s and maintained as an interest until late 2010; following terrorist attacks conducted by European born-Muslims and/or convert, lone wolves and online-radicalized individuals, attention shifted slowly towards the spread of radical content in the digital world. As such, we advocate that research was influenced by politics and events, and responded to political needs; yet the existing corpus of literature focused little on coded messages, as literature mainly specialized on content analysis of explicit radical narratives.

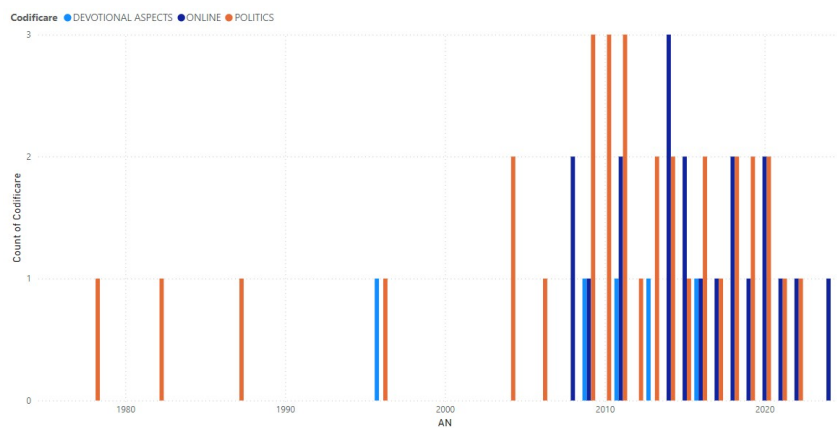


Figure 4. Chronological distribution of research topics²

¹ *Idem*

² *Idem*

Furthermore, content analysis applied to the titles of research articles identified in the analyzed timeframe highlights the main research topics of scholars within the discipline; the main interest lay in the political conduct of Saudi Arabia, on the use of the term Jihad in online and offline communication of clerics, as well as acts with violence and terror committed as a result of exposure to sermons, radical ideas and calls to action. A secondary interest lay in the impact clerics have historically had in domestic policies and developments in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Pakistan, Afghanistan; less interest was shown to the online field, as reflected in the seldom-use of “digital”, “media”, “online”.

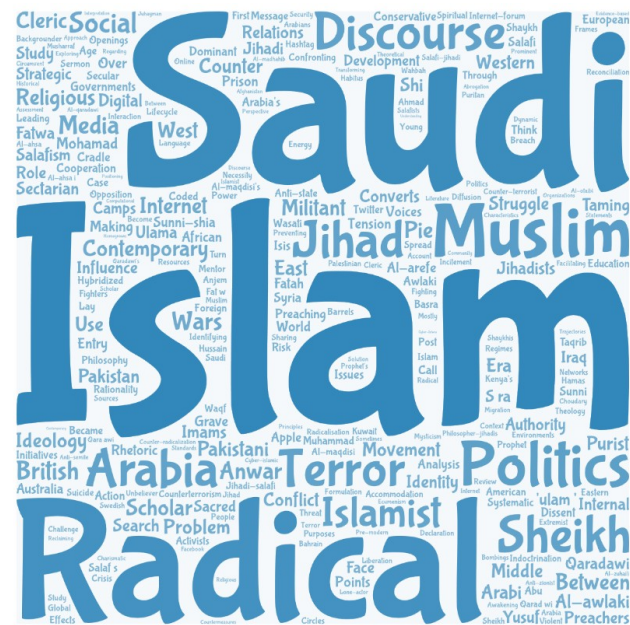


Figure 5. Word cloud content analysis of research articles titles¹

Design of Research

In the light of the above, considering the consensus of scholars regarding the impact of social media usage in spreading a deterritorialized radical message, we used comparative analysis to explore the potential impact of the official accounts used by radical clerics. We compared them to the audience of famous public figures, to offer contextualization. We used quantitative methodology in the form of statistical analysis to research whether a digital community of 101 Facebook accounts follows and shares content provided by radical clerics and conclude on whether Sunni radical clerics have a Romanian converted audience, the reasons for picking certain clerics and potential general features that would describe the afore mentioned options. The criteria for selecting the specific accounts considered were a) signs of Romanian origins (having Romanian name components, indicating Romanian location and/or having Romanian contacts and distributing content in Romanian), b) showing signs of conversion (Islamic name components, displaying signs of conversion or announcing it, sharing Islamic religious content), c) liking pages of radical Sunni clerics and/or sharing content originated from Sunni radical clerics and d) having a wide audience of more than 1000 accounts (criterion chosen to assess on their relevance and outreach as well, as potential impact – which makes the 101 accounts slightly relevant). Accounts were chosen based on stratified sampling, to assure representation of all Romanian regions, as well as gender representation – considering previous studies cleared that most converts are women, converting in the purpose of marriage. As such, the distribution of accounts by region and gender shows an overrepresentation of resident population from Muntenia (mostly Bucharest, which hosts most converts), and a predominance of accounts presumed to be managed by women. Clerics names were not clearly indicated in the present study to comply with GDPR regulations, as well as for ethical concerns (the purpose of this article was not to target individuals, nor to advertise for Islamist radical content).

Results and Discussions

Many religious Muslim leaders with a heavy body of followers indeed reside, as previous research would indicate, on the X platform (former Twitter); considering the lack of content moderation and restrictions, disseminating religious content with potential Islamist layers and potential coded extremism would go unmoderated on the said channel. Despite these findings, we observed that radical Sunni clerics indeed achieved a significant body of followers both on Facebook and Twitter/X; in this sense, we mapped the presence of notorious

¹ *Idem*

Sunni clerics with radical stances: MaA (prominent Saudi preacher and scholar, known for calls to violence and Jihad, anti-Semitic speech, intersectorian opinions, known for his support for the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Qaeda), SaO (prominent Sahwa leader and reformist cleric, campaigning for human rights, political reform in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while calling to anti-Semitic attacks and call to actions to Jihad in Syria for people to join the resistance against the establishment), ZN (Indian televangelist, considered the moral author of terrorist attacks in India and Bangladesh, notorious for justifying terrorist attacks and recruitment for DAESH), OA (Egyptian cleric referring to 9/11 and the Charlie Hebdo attack as being a joke, encouraging believers to commit violent antisemitic attacks), BP (Jamaican cleric, known for recruitment for terrorist organizations and terrorism promotion, active supporter of Al-Qaeda), AaQ (known for promoting violent Jihad and quoted by Al-Qaeda cells)¹.

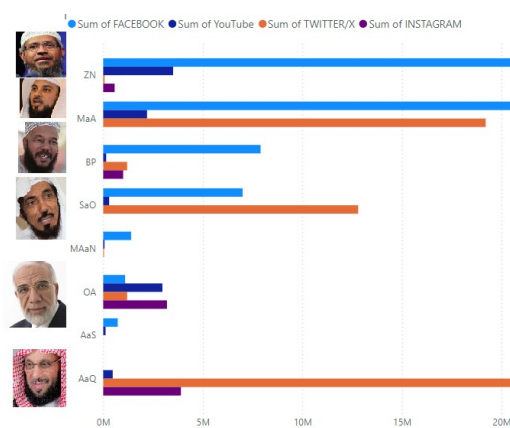


Figure 6. Followers' headcount of radical clerics on various social platforms²

Comparing their potential impact to the audience of well-known social media owners and pop artists, we can observe that radical clerics are addressing a rather extended audience than the later echelon of world-renowned public figures or rock bands:

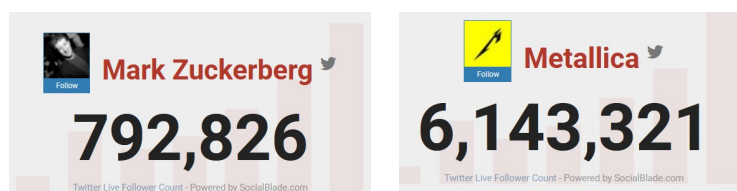


Figure 7. Followers of rock bands and owners of social-media trusts³

As Figure 6 indicates, heavy audiences are achieved mainly on Facebook (*for older clerics affiliated to Al-Qaeda and Muslim Brotherhood*), followed by Twitter for Saudi preachers. These numbers of followers show great impact of content disseminated on social platforms, giving them a free, instant and global audience that defies time, space and borders. This contradicts previous research showing the social platform indicated used most frequently by Islamist groups and extremism figures – is Twitter. The impact of radical clergy was previously analyzed and quantified in a series of studies; an honorable mention is Condra, Isaqzadeh and Linardi applied in 2017 a questionnaire to a sample of 305 Afghan men who participated in the armed conflicts in the region. Their

¹ <https://www.eman-network.com>, www.memri.org, www.counterextremism.com, www.pomeps.org (12.04.2025)

² Generated as result of the author' research

³ Generated as result of the author' research with the tool socialblade.com

conclusions indicated that the impact of the clergy on the population is significant¹. Multiple punctual research on the influence of jihadist clergy confirm their relevance in inspiring terrorist attacks - as for example, Anwar al - Awlaki, who inspired the Charlie Hebdo attack in 2015, continuing to influence even after his death².

Yet, the question resides on how popular radical clerics are in our region. We have mapped a digital community of 101 Facebook accounts administered by Romanian citizens showing marks of conversion (Romanian and Arabic religious name components, sharing both Romanian general content and Islamic religious material, with a large segment of contacts of Romanian descent and a similar profile, with unrestricted activity and indicating their residency) which followed official accounts of radical clerics. The socio-demographic profile of the sample shows an even distribution function of their location, as well as an even distribution on gender. Age could not be mapped or considered as a factor, as most accounts did not make theirs publicly available. Data shows that most women had converted to Islam in the context of their marriage to a believer, and most people included in the study had lived before overseas. In this respect, most converts included in the study live in the Romanian region of Muntenia, followed by Transylvania, as shown Figure 8. The gender distribution is mostly followed by women (60%), followed by men (39,22%), with two accounts where gender could not be established function of the username or public data, as shown in Figure 9.

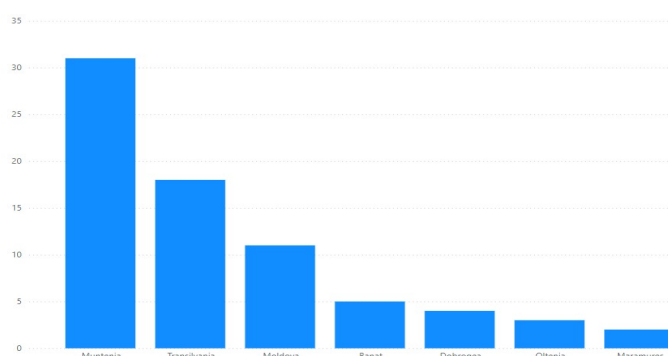


Figure 8. Regional distribution of converts included in the study³

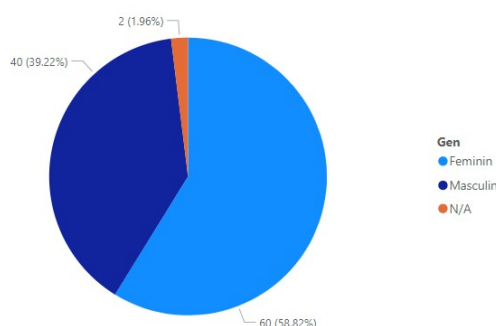


Figure 9 Gender distribution of converts included in the study⁴

¹L. N. Condra, Isaqzadeh Sinardi, *Clerics and Scriptures: Experimentally Disentangling the Influence of Religious Authority in Afghanistan*, "British Journal of Political Science", Cambridge University Press, Vol. 49(2), April 2019, pp. 401-419

²S. Shane, *The Enduring Influence of Anwar al-Awlaki in the Age of the Islamic State*, CTC Sentinel, July 2016, Vol. 9(7), Westpoint University Press, New York, 2016

³ Generated as result of the author` research

Most converts follow one single radical cleric (with a percentage of 56,2%), followed by accounts who follow two radical clerics (29,2%), converts following four clerics (8,76%) and a minority following 5, respective 3 clerics, as described in Figure 9.

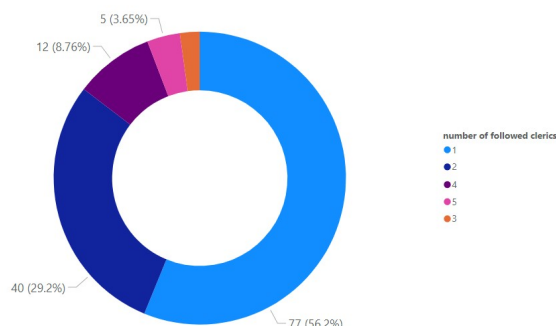


Figure 10. Distribution function of the number of followed radical clerics¹

In relation to the nature of interaction with the clerics' content, majority by a wide margin follows the accounts of radical clerics, with a minority of 9,8% which also distributes content generated by radical clerics, as shown in Figure 11.

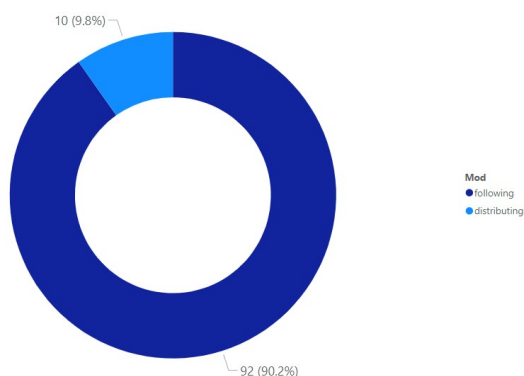


Figure 11. Distribution on the criterium of interaction with the accounts of radical clerics²

In which concerns the distribution on the gender of accounts on the mode of interaction with radical clerics' accounts, we can observe that there is an almost equal distribution, meaning that accounts managed by men distribute and follow content provided by the accounts of radical clerics equally (Figure 12).

⁴ *Idem*

¹ *Idem*

² Generated as result of the author' research

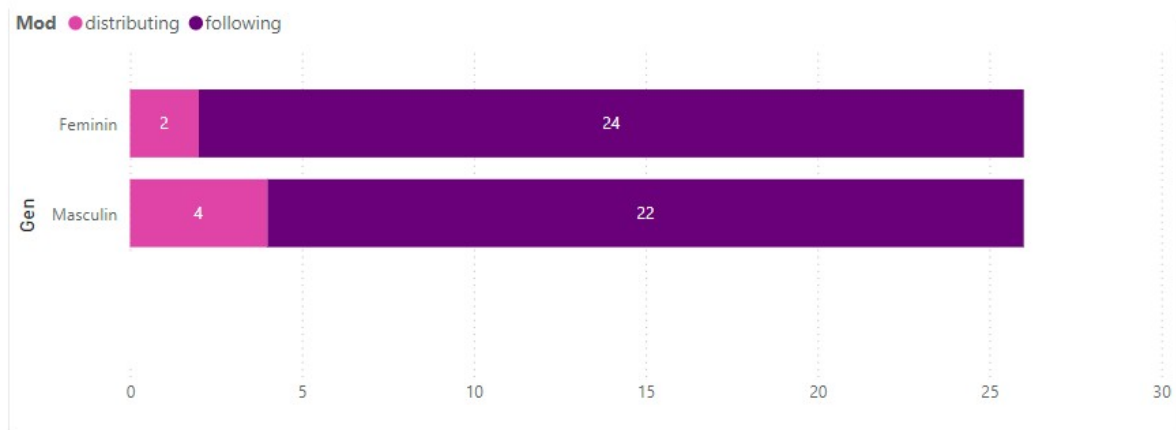


Figure 12. Distribution on the criterium of interaction with the accounts of radical clerics¹

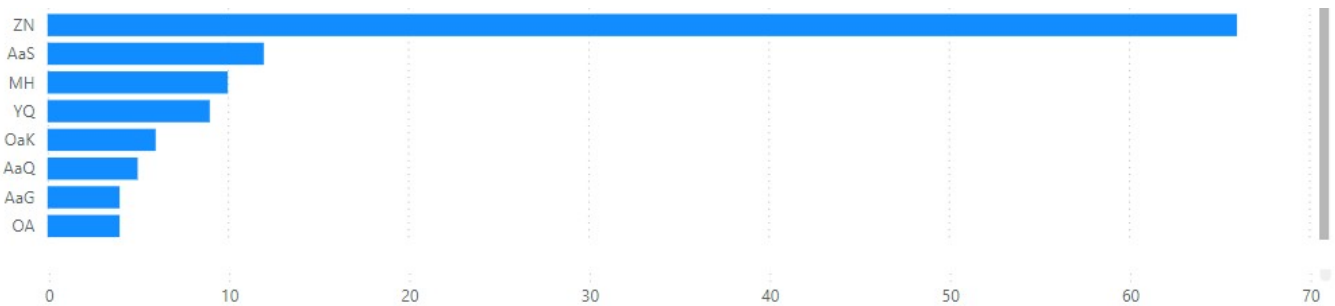


Figure 13. Accounts of radical clerics with most followers among Romanian converts²

The radical cleric accounts on Facebook with most followers among identified converts in Romania are, as Figure 13 would indicate, ZN, AaS, AaQ, YQ, AaG, MH, OA. It appears that among the leading clerics, both ZN and AaS appear to have more male followers, as opposed to AaQ whom has many female followers, as shown in (Figure 14).

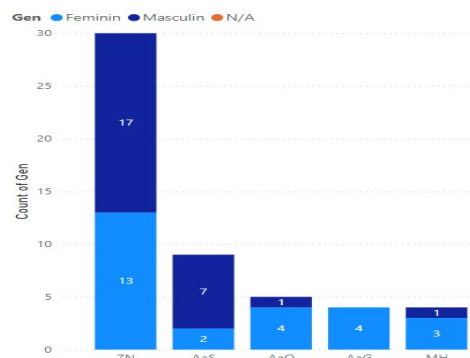


Figure 14. Distribution of genders on modes of interaction with radical clerics' content³

¹ *Idem*

² Generated as result of the author' research

³ *Idem*

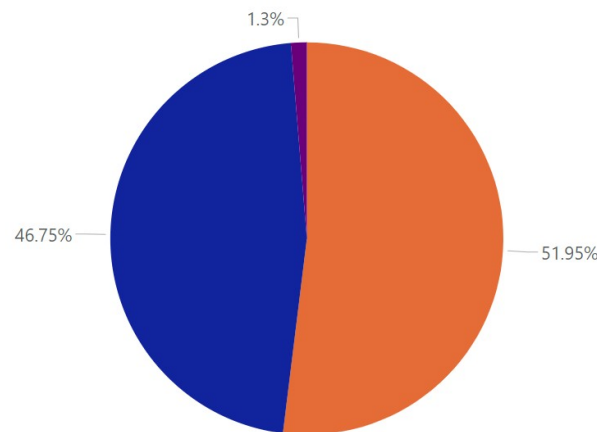


Figure 15. Distribution of language of preaching of radical clerics followed by Romanian converts¹

Finally, we concluded that radical clerics followed by the analyzed converts Facebook community preach evenly in Arabic and English, with a small minority of 1,3% French preachers (*yet, content which was reshared by Romanian converts has English subtitles in almost all cases*). This leads to the conclusion that half of the analyzed community accessed Arabic religious content - leading us to suspect that their conversion might have been doubled by Islamic and Arabic language education.

Conclusions, Approaches, and Potential Avenues of Research

As highlighted by the existing corpus of literature on clerics and adjacent fields (radicalization, counterterrorism, social and cultural studies), radical Sunni clerics can exercise relevant influence in the digital realm; they have been considered a direct influence and a source for radical hate speech, as well as terrorism attacks and violent acts. Punctual research on radical clerics is reduced in volume, yet scholars have started to show interest in the topic. Previous research was reactive - either triggered by a shift in policy, or by violent acts with global impact. Furthermore, research on how radical clerics use language has been focused mainly on explicit speech, rather than a symbolic, diluted form of language.

The current paper shows that the most well-known radical Sunni clerics with a massive online presence use, contrary to previous research, Facebook and Twitter as main platforms for expression, their main audience residing in the two platforms, followed by YouTube. Most content is present in the form of text or as video-sermons, leading us to conclude with the following hypothesis: considering the iconoclasm of Islamic cultures, words achieve a more profound significance for an initiated, educated audience, having enhanced power of penetration. In this sense, we suggest that, as words weigh differently within an Islamic culture and to an Islamic audience, radical clerics, as previous studies had shown, reduced their explicit narratives and probably shifted to a more dissimulated form of online communication, which can appeal to an audience which can decode radical or extremist messages².

Furthermore, we propose further research in the realm of online dissimulated radical messages spread by radical Sunni clerics, which can enrich knowledge in radicalization and counterterrorism disciplines.

Radical clerics have been found to have an audience in Romania. A small digital community of Romanian converts on the Facebook platform follows and/or shares content spread by radical clerics, leading us to conclude: (i) they adhere to some ideas spread by radical Sunni clerics; considering that what radical clerics preach isn't entirely radical, this cannot lead to the unequivocal conclusion that the analyzed community adhere to radical speech and radical ideas; (ii) their interpretation of Islam can be influenced by the lenses provided by the afore mentioned group of radical Sunni clerics with explicit extremist views. Furthermore, considering radical Sunni clerics seem to be reaching to a Romanian audience formed of national converts to Islam, we conclude and highlight that this interest in their content isn't reflected into literature, as it should be. Since a need to understand what specific content does its audience consume and to assess the impact of this consumption, we propose

¹ *Idem*

² <https://www.eman-network.com>, www.memri.org, www.counterextremism.com, www.pomeps.org (21.05.2025)

addressing this gap in literature with a content analysis on content spread by Sunni radical clerics and understand how message is formed, transmitted, intertextual aspects with a solid anchor in Islamic and cultural studies.

Future research on the topic can explore whether consumption of content provided by radical clerics can be connected to an appetite for Islamist appetite in the context of political turmoil in regions with most of the Muslim population. Such research can tackle, using comparative analysis (between explicit and dissimulated forms of messaging), whether clerics do maintain content and radical messages and alter form, as well as whether political developments do enhance the dissemination of radical messaging and whether the audience for such content spread by radical clerics can expand or enhance their interaction with radical content.

Proposal: in the light of the above, we propose systematic research of implicit, dissimulated radical narratives of radical clerics, considering that the community Sunni radical clerics heavily use social media platforms, therefore they would be expected to adapt their message to both circumvent social media moderating policies, and appeal to an audience with radical convictions.

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF ENERGY-RELATED TERRORIST ATTACKS TYPE ON SOCIETAL SECURITY

Abstract:	<i>One of the significant challenges for 21st century society is the security of energy infrastructure in the event of energy-related terrorist attacks. Long-term energy disruptions can not only annihilate several essential services for a community but can also create societal chaos. This paper aims to analyze the implications of energy terrorist attacks for the national security, economic security and cohesion of a state that has been involved in an energy terrorist attack. Policy interventions and international cooperation are recommended to counter energy-related terrorist attacks. Security strategies must protect energy infrastructure against energy-related terrorist attacks. Perhaps the most important aspect is the multidimensional approach to energy-related terrorist attacks, which must combine efforts at governmental, societal, state and international levels. Such an approach should aim to make society resilient to such terrorist attacks, but also to mitigate the long-term consequences of such attacks on the population.</i>
Keywords:	Attacks; energy; energy-related terrorist attacks; security; state;
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Introduction

Energy infrastructure constitutes a fundamental pillar of contemporary society, supporting the functioning of essential services, industry, and daily life. Precisely this central role transforms it into a preferred target for terrorist attacks that directly threaten societal security. Any disruption in energy supply chains may trigger economic instability, social unrest, and even geopolitical conflicts. In a global context marked by the intensification of both physical and cyber threats against energy systems, a profound understanding of the impact of such attacks becomes crucial for ensuring both national and international security.

This article analyzes the consequences of terrorist attacks on energy systems, emphasizing their implications for economic stability, public safety, and emergency response capabilities. Additionally, it discusses strategic measures for the prevention and mitigation of related risks. To coherently evaluate potential threats to societal infrastructure and essential services, the discussion begins by defining three key concepts: terrorism, terrorist attack, and societal security.

Terrorism is generally defined as the use or threat of violence by individuals, groups, or organizations with the intent to instill fear and achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives. Targets are typically civilian populations, governmental authorities, or state institutions, with the aim of influencing legislation, governance, or social structures. Terrorist actions may be perpetrated by non-state actors or, in certain cases, supported by state entities. To be classified as a terrorist act, an action generally fulfills several criteria:

- use or threat of violence – involving physical harm, property destruction, or credible threats;
- political, religious, or ideological motivation – intended to influence governmental decisions or public opinion;
- intent to instill fear – not only among direct victims but within the wider population;

- targeting of civilians or non-combatants – rather than military or security forces;
- organized and premeditated nature – reflected in coordination, financing, and structured execution;
- illegality under national and international law – distinguishing terrorism from conventional warfare;
- psychological or media impact – aiming to amplify the societal effects of violence and spread a political message.

Terrorism manifests in various forms:

- domestic terrorism – carried out by a nation's own citizens against its institutions;
- international terrorism – planned or executed across national borders;
- state-sponsored terrorism – when governments actively support terrorist groups;
- religious terrorism – motivated by extremist interpretations of religious beliefs;
- cyberterrorism – involving digital attacks to instill fear or cause disruption.

Numerous scholars have proposed relevant definitions and typologies of terrorism. Bruce Hoffman analyzes the evolution, motivations, and strategies of modern terrorist movements¹. Brigitte Nacos examines the media impact of terrorism and public policy responses². Karawan, McCormack, and Reynolds explore the intangible aspects of terrorism in the context of globalization³. John Horgan focuses on the psychological motivations and radicalization processes⁴, while David Whittaker compiles essential writings in the field⁵. Gus Martin provides a systematic analysis of causes, typologies, and global responses to terrorism⁶. Robert Pape investigates suicide terrorism as a strategic logic⁷, and Mark Juergensmeyer studies the links between religious extremism and violence⁸. In an edited volume, Hoffman and Reinares examine transformations in global terrorism in the post-9/11 era⁹, while Crenshaw and LaFree assess the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies¹⁰.

Energy Terrorism

Energy terrorism - also referred to as terrorism targeting energy infrastructure - refers to deliberate attacks on energy resources, infrastructures, or supply chains with the aim of causing significant economic damage, political destabilization, or profound societal disruption. These actions may be initiated by terrorist groups, insurgents, or even state actors using indirect methods to exert political pressure on governments or to pursue ideological or religious objectives¹¹. The targeted infrastructures include oil pipelines, electric grids, nuclear power plants, refineries, and fuel transportation systems. These attacks share several key features typical of terrorist acts¹²:

- use or threat of violence – bombings, sabotage, and cyberattacks on power plants, refineries, or pipelines are common examples;
- political, religious, or ideological motivation – energy infrastructure is often targeted to protest government policies, damage rival states, or impose radical values;
- intent to instill fear and disrupt society – disruptions in energy supply can generate widespread panic, economic instability, and social unrest;
- targeting civilians – although infrastructure is the direct target, the civilian population suffers the consequences, such as blackouts, fuel shortages, and sudden price increases;

¹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, 2017, pp. 1–35

² Brigitte Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, Routledge, 2023, pp. 15–27

³ Ibrahim Karawan, Wayne McCormack, Stephen Reynolds, *Values and Violence: Intangible Aspects of Terrorism*, Springer, 2008, pp. 7–19

⁴ John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, Routledge, 2014, pp. 42–59

⁵ David Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader*, Routledge, 2012, pp. 5–23

⁶ Gus Martin, *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues*, Sage Publications, 2024, pp. 30–48

⁷ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Random House Publishing Group, 2006, pp. 21–39

⁸ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, University of California Press, 2017, pp. 11–29

⁹ Bruce Hoffman, Fernando Reinares, *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's Death*, Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 3–45

¹⁰ Martha Crenshaw, Gary LaFree, *Countering Terrorism*, Brookings Institution Press, 2017, pp. 50–66

¹¹ Ibrahim Karawan, Wayne McCormack, Stephen Reynolds, *Values and Violence: Intangible Aspects of Terrorism*, Springer, 2008, pp. 112–128

¹² Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, 2017, pp. 1–35

- organized and premeditated nature – these attacks require meticulous planning, financial resources, and technical expertise;
- illegality – such acts violate both domestic and international law, distinguishing them from conventional acts of war;
- media and psychological impact – energy crises, stock market crashes, or widespread panic exert pressure on governments and amplify the terrorists' message.

Notable cases of energy terrorism include ISIS attacks on oil fields in Iraq and Syria (2014–2017) - the group financed its operations by selling oil while sabotaging rival energy sources¹; cyberattacks on Ukraine's power grid (2015) - suspected state-sponsored Russian groups caused blackouts that affected thousands of households²; pipeline bombings in Nigeria by Boko Haram and Niger Delta militants - these attacks aimed to weaken the government and gain economic leverage³; Al-Qaeda's calls to target U.S. energy infrastructure - the group promoted the sabotage of refineries and oil transportation systems to destabilize the U.S. economy⁴.

Specialized literature provides a wide range of perspectives on energy terrorism and its geopolitical implications. Kalicki and Goldwyn examine the global vulnerability of energy infrastructures and government response strategies⁵. Koppel warns of cyberterrorism threats to energy distribution networks⁶. Laqueur and Wall discuss how groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda use energy as a strategic weapon⁷. Pry explores the threat of electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks, while Yergin sheds light on the link between resource conflicts and terrorism⁸. Additionally, Singer and Friedman delve into the cyber dimension of energy terrorism⁹.

Societal Security

The concept of societal security refers to a society's ability to preserve its essential character, collective identity, and core values in the face of threats such as mass migration, cultural change, political instability, or external pressures¹⁰. This concept was notably developed within the Copenhagen School of security studies, which expands the traditional security paradigm beyond the military sphere to include social, economic, political, and environmental dimensions¹¹.

In approaching societal security, several key dimensions are distinguished based on the nature of the threats and the mechanisms employed by state and community actors¹²:

- 1) Identity-Based Security. This dimension concerns the protection of collective identity - encompassing language, religion, culture, and historical narratives. Threats may take the form of mass migration, forced cultural assimilation, the loss of indigenous languages, religious extremism, or pressures of secularization. In such contexts, nationalist movements can function either as elements of social cohesion or as factors of fragmentation.
- 2) Political-Social Security. This focuses on the stability of political institutions and the public's trust in governance. Risks include political polarization, civil unrest, the erosion of democratic values, authoritarian tendencies, foreign ideological influence, and disinformation or propaganda campaigns.
- 3) Economic Societal Security. This dimension addresses the economic well-being of society and how instability or inequality affects social cohesion. Major threats include growing income inequality, mass unemployment, the

¹ John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, Routledge, 2014, pp. 97–103

² David Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader*, Routledge, 2012, pp. 202–206

³ Gus Martin, *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues*, Sage Publications, 2024, pp. 163–171

⁴ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Random House Publishing Group, 2006, pp. 189–195

⁵ Jan Kalicki, David Goldwyn, *Energy and Security: Strategies for a World in Transition*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, pp. 45–61

⁶ Ted Koppel, *Lights Out: A Cyberattack, A Nation Unprepared, Surviving the Aftermath*, Crown, 2016, pp. 78–92

⁷ Walter Laqueur, Christopher Wall, *The Future of Terrorism: ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and the Alt-Right*, Thomas Dunne Books, pp. 66–81

⁸ Daniel Yergin, *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*, Penguin Press, 2012, pp. 432–448

⁹ Peter Singer, Allan Friedman, *Cybersecurity and Cyberwar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, pp. 98–113

¹⁰ Martha Crenshaw, Gary LaFree, *Countering Terrorism*, Brookings Institution Press, 2017, pp. 101–117

¹¹ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997, pp. 119–145

¹² *Idem*

impact of globalization on local industries, and economic dependency on foreign actors that may undermine national autonomy.

- 4) Socio-Demographic Security. This analyzes population dynamics and their effects on social stability. Risk factors include an aging population (with implications for labor markets and pension systems), declining birth rates, rapid population growth (which can lead to resource competition), accelerated urbanization, or the depopulation of rural areas.
- 5) Environmental Societal Security. This component recognizes that climate change, natural disasters, or pollution can lead to forced migration, resource shortages, and public health crises. Thus, environmental vulnerability becomes a risk factor for social resilience.
- 6) Technological and Cyber Societal Security. In the digital age, technology and cyberspace are key areas of societal security. Threats include cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, manipulation of public opinion via social media, labor market disruptions due to automation and artificial intelligence, and ethical dilemmas surrounding surveillance technologies or genetic engineering.

Dimensions of Societal Security Affected by Energy Terrorism

Terrorist attacks on energy infrastructure can produce wide-ranging consequences across multiple dimensions of societal security. Beyond immediate physical destruction, these actions generate cascading effects that impact economic stability, public health, social order, and the functioning of state institutions. The following sectors are particularly vulnerable to energy terrorism¹:

- 1) Critical Infrastructure. Energy infrastructure forms a fundamental pillar of societal functionality. Direct attacks on these systems can produce catastrophic consequences: (a) power grids – sabotage of substations or high-voltage lines can trigger massive blackouts, paralyzing economic activity, emergency services, hospitals, and communication systems; (b) oil and gas pipelines – disruptions in supply chains lead to fuel shortages, sharp price increases, and macroeconomic instability; (c) renewable energy installations – wind farms, solar plants, or hydroelectric facilities may become targets in efforts to undermine resilience and energy diversification.
- 2) Economic Stability. The economic consequences of a terrorist attack on energy infrastructure are significant: (a) loss of access to electricity or fuel disrupts industrial production, causes workforce reductions, and destabilizes financial markets; (b) rising energy costs as a result of destruction or sabotage may trigger inflation and a significant drop in household consumption.
- 3) Public Health and Safety. The dependence of medical services on electricity makes energy infrastructure attacks a direct threat to life: (a) hospitals and emergency services, including life-saving equipment, rely on uninterrupted power; extended outages may lead to loss of life; (b) water treatment systems may become non-functional, posing serious contamination risks or clean water shortages; (c) in regions with extreme climates, the absence of heating or cooling systems may lead to public health emergencies.
- 4) Transportation and Supply Chains. Logistics and transportation systems are highly sensitive to energy crises: (a) fuel shortages disrupt transport networks, delaying deliveries of essential goods such as food and medicine; (b) electric infrastructure at train stations, airports, or ports may shut down, causing bottlenecks or major delays.
- 5) National Security and Defense. Energy stability is also vital for defense systems: (a) military bases, strategic equipment, and tactical operations rely on a steady energy supply; an attack could compromise national defense capabilities; (b) cyberattacks on energy infrastructure may be used for espionage, sabotage, or preemptive strikes against state assets.
- 6) Social and Political Stability. Prolonged energy crises can severely affect social and political equilibrium: (a) lack of access to essential goods may lead to protests, social unrest, and even riots; (b) governments unable to manage an energy crisis effectively may suffer loss of legitimacy, or in extreme cases, institutional collapse.
- 7) Digital Networks and Communications. In a digitalized world, the dependence of infrastructure on energy is total: (a) servers, mobile networks, and banking systems require electricity; blackouts may cause communication breakdowns and financial instability; (b) cyberattacks on energy systems may facilitate disinformation campaigns and generate widespread public panic.

¹ Gal Luft, Anne Korin, *Energy Security Challenges for the 21st Century: A Reference Handbook*, Praeger, 2009, pp. 55–76

How Energy Terrorism Undermines Societal Security

Terrorist attacks targeting energy infrastructure have profound systemic consequences, destabilizing essential services and weakening the social fabric over both the short and long term. The critical interdependence between energy systems and societal functions means that even localized disruptions can escalate into nationwide crises. Analyzing these cascading effects highlights the vulnerability of modern societies to energy terrorism¹. First, the disruption of critical infrastructure - including power grids, oil refineries, gas pipelines, and nuclear facilities - can paralyze key sectors such as healthcare, water treatment, and emergency response. These breakdowns extend beyond immediate blackouts and shortages, exposing systemic fragilities that undermine societal resilience.

Second, the economic consequences of energy terrorism are immediate and expansive. Energy disruptions hamper industrial output, trigger inflationary pressures, destabilize financial markets, and increase unemployment rates. Over time, persistent disruptions can erode national economic competitiveness and deepen socioeconomic divides, fostering discontent.

Third, public safety and social order are jeopardized during energy crises. Blackouts facilitate criminal activity, incite public unrest, and strain already vulnerable security infrastructures. Moreover, a prolonged lack of access to essential goods can catalyze collective panic and erode social cohesion.

Fourth, political and geopolitical instability often follows when governments are perceived as incapable of protecting critical infrastructure. Loss of public trust, coupled with the exploitation of crises by terrorist groups for propaganda or recruitment, can fuel domestic unrest and strain international alliances, particularly when cross-border energy supply chains are affected.

Fifth, environmental and health risks emerge from attacks on sensitive facilities. Pollution, radiation leaks, and toxic spills have both immediate and enduring transboundary effects, exacerbating existing ecological vulnerabilities and placing additional burdens on healthcare systems.

Sixth, cybersecurity threats represent an increasingly potent dimension of energy terrorism. Digital attacks can produce physical consequences, such as widespread blackouts, while simultaneously disrupting essential services like finance, transport, and communication networks - sectors critical to societal functionality.

Finally, the psychological and social impacts of energy terrorism compound its physical damage. Widespread fear regarding energy security can undermine confidence in institutions, sow division, and increase susceptibility to extremist ideologies, particularly in already marginalized or stressed communities².

Scholarly analyses confirm these multidimensional vulnerabilities. Luft and Korin highlight the exposure of global energy systems to terrorist threats³; Cameron emphasizes the escalating lethality of terrorist methods, particularly regarding nuclear risks⁴; and Kester explores the broader social and political implications of energy insecurity for societal cohesion⁵.

A Holistic Governmental Approach to Strengthening Resilience Against Energy Terrorism

An effective strategy against terrorist threats targeting energy infrastructure must transcend isolated technical measures and instead embrace a systemic, holistic approach. Strengthening societal resilience requires not only physical fortification of assets but also strategic integration of prevention, preparedness, crisis response, and post-crisis recovery mechanisms⁶.

A holistic systemic approach to strategy aimed at countering terrorist threats requires:

Risk Prevention and Vulnerability Reduction. Prevention forms the foundation of resilience. Risk assessment and intelligence sharing between security agencies, law enforcement, and energy stakeholders are essential for early detection of potential threats. Securing critical infrastructure must combine physical hardening measures with robust cybersecurity protocols. At the same time, the implementation of a clear regulatory

¹ *Idem*

² Gavin Cameron, *Nuclear Terrorism: A Threat Assessment for the 21st Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, pp. 81–99

³ Gal Luft, Anne Korin, *Energy Security Challenges for the 21st Century: A Reference Handbook*, Praeger, 2009, pp. 55–76

⁴ Gavin Cameron, *Nuclear Terrorism: A Threat Assessment for the 21st Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, pp. 81–99

⁵ Johannes Kester, *The Politics of Energy Security: Critical Security Studies, New Materialism, and Governmentality*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 117–134

⁶ Daniel Yergin, *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*, Penguin Press, 2012, pp. 453–460

framework, aligned with national and international standards, establishes a common baseline for protection efforts and ensures accountability.

Preparedness and Capacity Building. Preparedness transforms the ability to anticipate into an operational capacity to withstand and absorb attacks. Interagency coordination - bringing together energy authorities, emergency services, cybersecurity experts, and the military - enables a unified response structure. Public-private partnerships strengthen operational readiness, while regular simulation exercises test and refine cross-sectoral cooperation and crisis management protocols.

Crisis Management and Rapid Response. When prevention fails, the rapidity and coherence of crisis response determine the extent of societal disruption. Specialized rapid intervention teams must be equipped to restore functionality swiftly. Investments in alternative energy sources - such as decentralized microgrids and renewables - offer resilience by maintaining critical services even when centralized systems are compromised. Strategic communication ensures public trust by minimizing the spread of misinformation and maintaining social order during emergencies.

Post-Crisis Recovery and Long-Term Resilience. True resilience is demonstrated not just by the ability to survive a crisis but by the capacity to recover and improve. Infrastructure modernization, incorporating smart grids and self-healing systems, enhances adaptability to future threats. Policy revisions based on lessons learned institutionalize resilience within governance frameworks. Finally, targeted economic and social recovery programs prevent systemic collapse and facilitate the rebuilding of affected communities, ensuring that resilience is both structural and societal. Thus, resilience against energy terrorism must be conceived as a dynamic continuum - an adaptive, integrated process rather than a static set of defensive measures¹.

Societal Stability in the Era of Artificial Intelligence and Energy Terrorism

In the context of the accelerating development of artificial intelligence (AI), societal stability no longer depends solely on traditional governance structures but increasingly on the state's capacity to integrate emerging technologies into coherent public policies and resilience strategies². AI's transformative impact on the energy sector, both in terms of vulnerabilities and security solutions, requires a multidimensional adaptation to prevent systemic risks and maintain social cohesion. This multidimensional adaptation covers the following aspects:

Cybersecurity of Energy Infrastructure. AI-driven algorithms offer enhanced predictive capabilities for identifying anomalies within energy networks, allowing proactive countermeasures against cyberattacks. Technologies such as blockchain and quantum cryptography further enhance communication security, building resilience into the digital backbone of energy systems³.

Diversification of Energy Sources. The diversification of energy portfolios, particularly through the promotion of renewable sources like wind, solar, and hydroelectric power, reduces dependency on centralized systems and thus mitigates the potential impact of targeted attacks. Microgrids and distributed generation provide critical redundancy and improve local resilience.

Predictive Analysis and Situational Intelligence. Machine learning models enable real-time threat detection and the automated containment of compromised network segments. This capability transforms the traditional reactive approach to crisis management into a predictive and preventive framework.

Public Policy and International Cooperation. The rapid integration of AI into the energy sector necessitates clear regulatory frameworks to ensure ethical, secure, and resilient deployment. At the same time, international cooperation is vital to prevent cross-border terrorism and harmonize cybersecurity standards.

Public-Private Collaboration. Collaboration between energy companies, AI developers, and cybersecurity firms foster innovation in defense mechanisms and ensures the sharing of threat intelligence, reducing systemic vulnerabilities across sectors.

¹ National Academies, Policy and Global Affairs, Public Policy Committee on Science, Engineering, Committee on Increasing National Resilience to Hazards and Disasters, *Disaster Resilience: A National Imperative*, National Academies Press, 2012, pp. 213–219

² Christo El Morr, *AI and Society: Tensions and Opportunities*, Routledge, 2023, pp. 56–90

³ Gal Luft, Anne Korin, *Energy Security Challenges for the 21st Century*, Praeger, 2009, pp. 45–78

AI-Augmented Physical Security. AI technologies such as drone surveillance, robotics, and facial recognition systems significantly enhance the early detection of sabotage attempts and internal security threats, complementing traditional protective measures.

AI-Assisted Crisis Management. Digital simulations powered by AI improve the design and testing of crisis response strategies. Smart grids equipped with autonomous rerouting capabilities ensure the rapid restoration of services, minimizing societal disruption during major incidents.

By strategically harnessing AI's potential while addressing its inherent risks, societies can build a new model of stability adapted to the realities of the 21st century¹.

Historical Case Studies and Emerging Threats in the Context of 21st Century Energy Terrorism

Energy infrastructure has historically been a strategic target for terrorist organizations, due to its essential role in national security, economic stability, and the functioning of modern society. The 21st century has witnessed a significant evolution in terrorist tactics, characterized by the convergence of traditional physical attacks with emerging digital threats.

In the following lines we mention only a few historical case studies relevant to our study:

Al-Qaeda's Attack on the Abqaiq Oil Processing Facility (Saudi Arabia, 2006). A suicide bombing attempt by Al-Qaeda at the Abqaiq facility was thwarted by security forces, but it exposed the vulnerability of global energy markets to terrorism.

In Amenas Gas Plant Hostage Crisis (Algeria, 2012–2013). The Al-Qaeda-affiliated group Al- Mourabitoun seized a gas facility in Algeria, resulting in loss of life. The case highlighted the risks faced by isolated energy installations in politically unstable regions.

Drone Strikes on Saudi Aramco Installations (2019). Houthi rebels, allegedly supported by Iran, targeted the Abqaiq and Khurais facilities with drones and missiles, temporarily halving Saudi Arabia's oil production and demonstrating the effectiveness of asymmetric warfare.

Sabotage of Oil Pipelines in Iraq (2003–2010). Insurgent groups repeatedly targeted Iraq's energy infrastructure following the U.S.-led invasion, aiming to undermine economic recovery and state authority.

Emerging threats from energy terrorism are also worth mentioning:

Cyberattacks on Energy Infrastructure: (a) Stuxnet (2010): A sophisticated cyberattack on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility, attributed to the U.S. and Israel, demonstrated the potential of cyber warfare; (b) *Colonial Pipeline* (2021): A ransomware attack on the U.S. pipeline network caused fuel shortages and revealed the digital vulnerability of energy systems.

Use of Drones and Autonomous Weapons. The increasing accessibility of drone technology enables non-state actors to strike refineries, power stations, or pipelines.

Hybrid Warfare and State-Sponsored Sabotage. Collaboration between terrorist groups and state actors blurs the line between terrorism and acts of war. Notable examples include Russian cyber operations against Ukraine's energy networks.

Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) and Grid Attacks. Some terrorist groups and hostile states are exploring EMP weapons that could paralyze large portions of the power grid.

Climate Change-Induced Energy Vulnerabilities. Geopolitical conflicts over energy resources (e.g., in the Arctic or transboundary waters) create opportunities for terrorist exploitation.

Academic reflections on energy terrorism are manifold. Scholarly literature offers valuable insight into the historical development and emerging risks in the domain of energy terrorism: (a) Kalicki and Goldwyn (2013) examine the relationship between energy security and geopolitical instability, emphasizing market vulnerability to terrorism², (b) Forest and Sousa (2006) focus on the Gulf of Guinea region, analyzing the impact of terrorist attacks on global energy supply³.

¹ Christo El Morr, *Op.cit.*, pp. 56–90

² Jan H. Kalicki, David L. Goldwyn, *Energy and Security: Strategies for a World in Transition*, Wilson Center Press, 2013, pp. 195–221

³ James J.F. Forest, Matthew V. Sousa, *Oil and Terrorism in the New Gulf: Framing U.S. Energy and Security Policies for the Gulf of Guinea*, Lexington Books, 2006, pp. 80–105

The key themes addressed when analyzing the strategic targets to which terrorist organizations relate to energy infrastructure are: (1) the impact of energy terrorism on global security; (2) case studies from the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia; (3) geopolitical ramifications of energy terrorism; (4) protective strategies and response policies.

Conclusions

In the twenty-first century, energy infrastructure stands at the intersection of technological progress, societal cohesion, and national security. As demonstrated in this study, *The Implications of Energy-Related Terrorist Attacks on Societal Security*, attacks targeting energy systems are not merely acts of material sabotage but profound assaults on the structural foundations of modern societies.

Energy terrorism, whether physical or cybernetic, disrupts more than supply chains—it destabilizes economies, fractures social trust, and erodes political legitimacy. The cascading effects of a single successful attack can reverberate across critical infrastructures, leaving states vulnerable not only to material losses but to systemic disintegration.

Defending against such threats requires a paradigmatic shift: resilience must be conceptualized not solely in terms of infrastructure hardening but through integrated strategies that combine technological innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and proactive public policies. Smart grids, decentralized energy production, and adaptive cybersecurity measures are no longer optional but essential components of a robust societal security framework.

Moreover, in a global context shaped by overlapping crises - geopolitical, environmental, and technological - the safeguarding of energy systems must be viewed as an ethical and strategic imperative. Securing energy infrastructures means securing the collective future of societies themselves.

Future research must further explore the evolving modalities of energy terrorism, particularly at the nexus of artificial intelligence, hybrid warfare, and climate-driven resource conflicts. As global interdependencies deepen, the capacity to anticipate, adapt, and resist will define the resilience - and survival - of nations.

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AN INVISIBLE WAR – RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA*

Abstract:	<i>Russian hybrid warfare has remained one of the most critical threats in Eastern Europe, especially since the escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in 2022. This threat extends to the Republic of Moldova, as evidenced by President Maia Sandu's February 2023 press conference, where she claimed that Moldovan security services had foiled a Russian attempt to carry out a coup against the government in Chişinău. This study aims to demonstrate that the Russian Federation conducted an ongoing hybrid operation against the Republic of Moldova between October 2021 and October 2023. To this end, military, economic, and sociopolitical dimensions are analyzed within the framework developed by Michael D. Reilly, which is based on the Clausewitzian Center of Gravity theory. The findings aim to identify the presence of elements from the Gerasimov model and to provide an outlook on Russian hybrid operations in Moldova.</i>
Keywords:	Russian Federation; hybrid warfare; Republic of Moldova; center of gravity
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Introduction

While the world focused on Ukraine, its small neighbor, the Republic of Moldova, was engaged in an invisible struggle for its sovereignty. On February 13, 2023, Maia Sandu, President of Moldova, announced that the Russian Federation planned to execute a coup against the government in Chişinău, a significant component of Russian hybrid operations ongoing since late 2021¹. This study aims to demonstrate that the Russian Federation carried out new generation operations against the Republic of Moldova and analyze the nature of such operations between October 2021 and October 2023. To offer an outlook, it is also an objective to determine possible future scenarios of these operations.

Given the complexity of the question, multiple dimensions of the strategic environment are investigated, based on the common aspects of the U.S. DIME/PMESII² and the Russian VPO³ (also, please decipher the abbreviation.) methodologies, which are the military, the economic, and the social-political

* This study is based on the author's research submitted to the 37th National Student Research Conference 2025 competition in Hungary.

¹ Wilhelmine Preussen, *Russia is planning a coup in Moldova, says President Maia Sandu*, 13.02.2023., <https://www.politico.eu/article/moldova-president-maia-sandu-russia-attack/> (11.08.2025)

² DIME and PMESII are frameworks used in strategic analysis to assess strategic environments and the instruments of national power. DIME represents the four main instruments of national power: Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic. PMESII represents the six key aspects of an operational environment: Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure.

³ The VPO (Военно-политическая обстановка, Voenno-Politicheskaya Obstanovka) is an abbreviation referring to the Military-Political Situation, a key concept in Russian military planning. It is a methodology used to analyze the current geopolitical and strategic environment.

dimensions^{1,2}. Through these frameworks, relevant events and features are identified and comprehensively analyzed. For the latter, the study employs the model developed by Russian General Valery Gerasimov and the 6-step methodology of Michael D. Reilly for analyzing hybrid threats, grounded in the Clausewitzian theory of the Center of Gravity^{3,4}.

Despite striving for the highest level of representativeness, several methodological limits and barriers must be acknowledged during the interpretation of results. First, the analysis relies solely on publicly available, open sources. Also, the Russian Federation is considered a rational actor, even though its highly centralized internal political system, especially the significant influence of siloviki elites⁵, can overly securitize certain issues, potentially introducing bias into Moscow's decision-making. Finally, as the study addresses an ongoing operation, the lack of closure complicates a comprehensive understanding of the Russian Federation's activities.

Theoretical Background

The concept of hybrid warfare has been a subject of interest within international research communities since the early 2000s, gaining significant attention following Russia's 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Despite extensive research, there remains a lack of academic consensus on its precise definition⁶. The term "hybrid warfare" was developed by the West to describe the new Russian approach to war⁷. Even within Russian academic literature, consistent terminology is absent. For instance, authors Sergey Chekinov and Sergey Bogdanov referred to "new-type warfare" between 2012 and 2017⁸. Following the publication of General Valeriy Gerasimov's influential 2017 article, the term "new-generation warfare" became more prevalent⁹. Concurrently, the concept of non-linear warfare, developed by Putin's right-hand man, Vladislav Surkov also entered the academic discourse. Additionally, multiple Russian theoreticians addressed the issue from a sociopolitical perspective: Aleksandr Dugin used the term "net-centric war", Evgeny Messner described it as "subversion war", while Igor Panarin wrote about "information wars"^{10,11}.

As mentioned earlier, definitional frameworks also vary considering English, Hungarian, and even Russian literature. Definitions in Western academic discourse focus mainly on the synergy of regular and irregular tools

¹ Dean S. Hartley III, *Practical VV&A for DIME/PMESII*, "Phalanx", Vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 33-39, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24910681> (11. 08. 2025)

² Clint Reach, Alyssa Demus, Eugeniu Han, Bilyana Lilly, Krstsyna Marcinek, Yuliya Shokh, *Russian Military Forecasting and Analysis*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2022, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA100/RRA198-4/RAND_RRA198-4.pdf (11. 08. 2023)

³ Valeriy Gerasimov, *The Value of Science Is in the Foresight – New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations*, "Military Review", January-February 2016, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/portals/7/military-review/archives/english/militaryreview_20160228_art008.pdf, (12.08.2025)

⁴ Michael D. Reilly, *Hybrid Threat COG Analysis*, "Joint Force Quarterly", Vol. 84, No. 1, 2017, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-84/jfq-84_86-92_Reilly.pdf (09.08.2025)

⁵ Siloviki elites include officials in high-level Russian decision-making roles, primarily with backgrounds in the security services, mainly the former KGB.

⁶ Zoltan Somodi, Almos Peter Kiss, *A hibrid hadviselés fogalmának értelmezése a nemzetközi szakirodalomban*, "Honvédségi Szemle", 2016, pp. 22-28 <https://kiadvany.magyarhonvedseg.hu/index.php/honvyszemle/article/view/207/199> (28.12.2025)

⁷ Andras Racz, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine – Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, FIIA Report, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki, 2022, p. 34, <https://www.fiaa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/fiiareport43.pdf>, (28. 12. 2025)

⁸ Timothy Thomas, *The Chekinov-Bogdanov Commentaries of 2010-2017: What Did They Teach Us About Russia's New Way of War?*, MITRE Corporation, 2020, p. 5, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1141587.pdf> (28.12.2025)

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13

¹⁰ Andras Racz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 37-41

¹¹ Markus Göransson, *Understanding Russian thinking on gibridnaya voyna*, in Mikael Weismann, Niklas Nilsson, Björn Palmertz, Per Thunholm (Eds.), *Hybrid Warfare: Security and Asymmetric Conflict in International Relations*, Bloomsbury Collections, London, 2021, p. 85, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1593245/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (28.12. 2025)

which are believed to shorten the duration of operations^{1,2,3}. In contrast, this article posits that the synergy of the mentioned tools extends the operational timeframe. Despite the duration of military engagement being reduced, other dimensions – political, economic, social, etc. – prolong the overall operation, evidenced by the events in the Republic of Moldova.

This perspective is also supported by relevant Russian literature. Chekinov and Bogdanov consistently highlight the inseparability of military and non-military phases of hybrid operations, emphasizing the superiority of the latter.⁴ They argue that aggressors achieve their political objective well before the deployment of military force.⁵

New-generation warfare signifies a substantial shift in Russia's foreign policy enforcement. As demonstrated by the war in Georgia in 2008 and the escalation periods of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in 2014-2015 and 2022, Moscow has abandoned the objective of physically and fully controlling adversary territory.⁶ Instead, the Kremlin seeks to abolish the adversary's statehood and sovereignty to gain full control over its political leadership and society. This strategic shift is evident in post-2014 publications by Chekinov and Bogdanov, who underscore the importance of achieving absolute control over both the adversary and the chaos induced by hybrid operations.⁷

While Valeriy Gerasimov's article is more of a summary than an in-depth analysis of new-generation warfare, the general's operational model serves as a foundational framework for understanding Russia's new approach to warfare.⁸ According to this model, hybrid operations encompass six phases: covert origin, strains, initial conflicting actions, crisis, resolution, and reestablishment of peace. The previously mentioned emphasis on non-military means is clearly demonstrated by these phases: armed forces are only employed in the final three, with a non-military to military tools ratio of 4:1⁹

¹ Istvan Resperger, *A válságkezelés és a hibrid hadviselés*, Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2018, p. 21, https://nbi.uni-nke.hu/document/nbi-uni-nke-hu/Resperger%20István_A%20válságkezelés%20és%20a%20hibrid%20hadviselés.pdf, (28.12.2025)

² Imre Porkolab, *Hibrid Hadviselés: új hadviselési forma, vagy régi ismerős?*, "Hadtudomány", No. 3-4, 2015, p. 41, https://www.mhht.eu/hadtudomany/2015/3_4/2015_3_4_5.pdf, (28.12.2023)

³ Krisztian Jojart, *A hibrid hadviselés és a jövő háborúja*, "Honvédségi Szemle", No.1, 2020, p. 5, http://real.mtak.hu/105872/1/JojartKrisztian_Ahibridhadviselesesajovohaboruja.pdf, (28.12.2023)

⁴ Sergey Chekinov, Sergey Bogdanov, *The Evolution of the Essence and Content of 'War' in the 21st Century*, "Voennaya Mysl", No. 1, 2017, p. 42

⁵ Sergey Chekinov, Sergey Bogdanov, *Asymmetric Actions in Support of the Military Security of Russia*, "Voennaya Mysl", No. 3, 2010, p. 21

⁶ Nataliya Bugayova, Kateryna Stepanenko, Frederick W. Kagan, *Weakness is Lethal: Why Putin Invaded Ukraine and How the War Must End*, 01.10.2023., <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/weakness-lethal-why-putin-invaded-ukraine-and-how-war-must-end> (11.08.2025)

⁷ Timothy Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 11

⁸ Jozsef Holecz, *A Geraszimov-doktrína – Egy másik megvilágításban*, "Felderítő Szemle", Vol. 16, No. 3-4, p. 7, <https://www.knbsz.gov.hu/hu/letoltes/fsz/2017-3-4.pdf>, (11.08.2025)

⁹ Valeriy Gerasimov, *Op. cit.*, p. 28

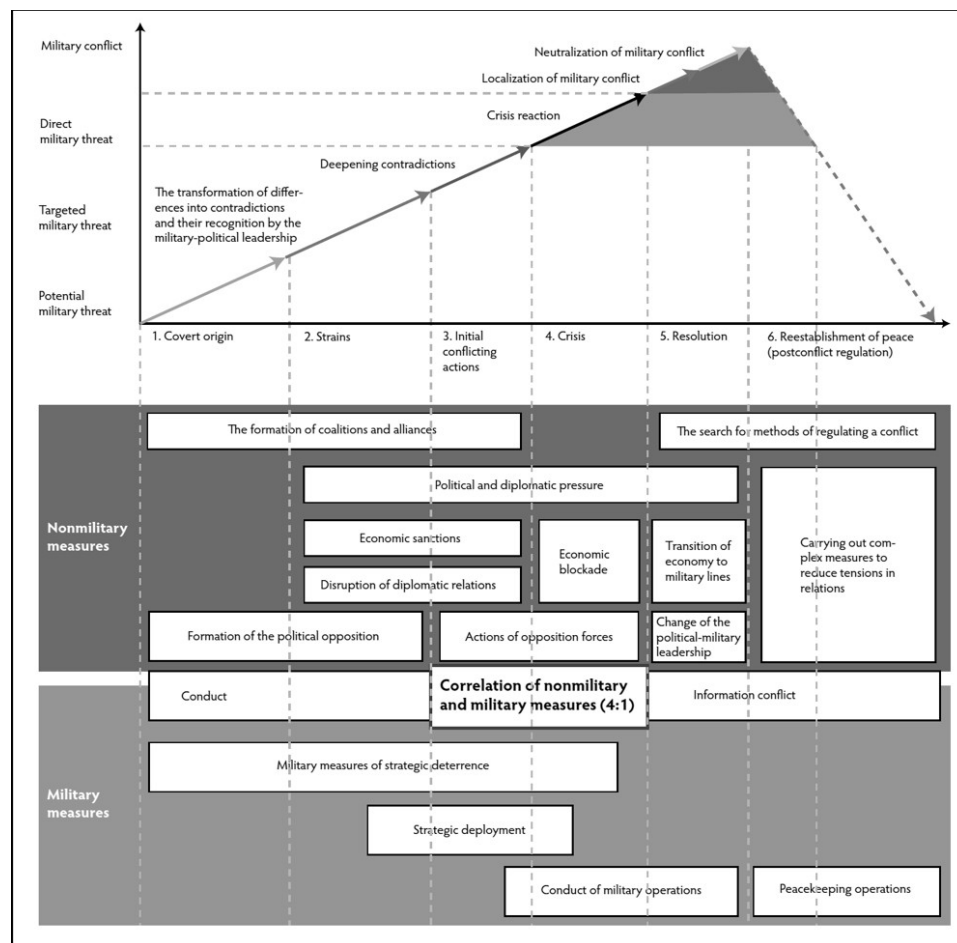


Figure 1. The Gerasimov model¹

As for theoretical clarification, this article argues that hybrid operations, including those against the Republic of Moldova, should be understood as a homogenous process wherein the non-military and the military periods are integrated components. Furthermore, the shift towards achieving absolute control in Russian objectives should serve as the framework for interpreting operations against Chişinău.

Aspects Of Russian Hybrid Warfare Against the Republic of Moldova

Military

Although this study emphasizes the dominance of non-military means in Russian hybrid warfare, conventional tools remain significant and cannot be overlooked. The Gerasimov model demonstrates that new-generation operations do not exclude the use of conventional tools; rather, the ratio of non-military and military actions shifts throughout different phases. Therefore, examining military aspects is essential. From a geopolitical perspective, the Republic of Moldova holds significant strategic importance for both the Russian Federation and the West. Moldova's location in the post-Soviet space and its membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) make it a fundamental part of Russia's Near Abroad. This is evidenced by the fact that the Federal Security Service (FSB) handles intelligence operations in the country, rather than the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR)².

¹ *Idem*

² Nick Reynolds, Jack Watling, *Ukraine Through Russia's Eyes*, 25.02.2022, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/ukraine-through-russias-eyes> (11.08.2023)

Since Russia's 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Western allies have also increased their attention to Chişinău. Moldova shares a border with NATO member Romania and NATO ally Ukraine, highlighting Western interests in the region. Also, Chişinău's European aspirations further enhance its strategic value: the European Union Association Agreement, which opened the common market to Moldovan goods, underscored the Union's direct interest in preserving the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Moldova's exposure to conventional threats also plays a significant role in the military dimension. According to the 2024 Global Firepower Index, Moldova ranks among the weakest military powers globally, second to last out of 145 countries¹. This vulnerability is well demonstrated by its lack of tanks and air force. Moldova is characterized by the absence of human resources: it has only 3,200 active personnel out of its 3.3 million of population². Moldova's military expenditures have also stagnated since 2010, with defense spending at just 0.3-0.4% of GDP according to SIPRI data³.

Moldova's lack of military resilience is not solely due to material deficiencies. Ianac Deli, commander of Moldova's KFOR delegation, accentuates the shortcomings of strategic documents in terms of clear directives for the military and the lack of professionalism⁴. This reflects the broader absence of political will to strengthen Moldova militarily. Since the 1992 Transnistrian war, Moldova's principle of non-alignment has been the foundation of Moldova's foreign policy – codified in both strategic documents and the constitution – impacting the country's resilience⁵. The mentioned military shortcomings are far more concerning in the context of the separatist Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR). Transnistria obtains almost the same number of human resources as Chişinău, despite its much smaller population. According to the questionably representative 2015 Transnistrian census, it has 4,500 active military personnel. The Transnistrian leadership claims to possess 18 T-64 tanks, eight helicopters, and four aircraft, although the operational status of this equipment is unclear⁶.

The threat posed by the PMR is exacerbated by the presence of legally and illegally deployed Russian troops. Russia's military presence dates to World War II and it played a significant role in the formation of the separatist Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic (PMR). Following the 1992 war, Russian troops remained in the country, partly as peacekeepers enforcing the ceasefire, partly illegally. Despite international efforts to alter the status quo, including the 5+2 format and the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, 1,200-1,500 troops are still deployed in Transnistria⁷.

The Russian Federation also has great influence over Transnistrian intelligence services. For instance, Vladimir Antufeyev headed the Ministry of National Security until 2012 and later became a deputy prime minister in the Donetsk People's Republic. After Antufeyev, Valery Gebos, a former KGB and FSB agent, assumed his position⁸. The escalation of the war in Ukraine further increased the PMR's significance for Russia. Since one of Moscow's subordinate main efforts was toward the northwestern coast of the Black Sea, especially Odessa, creating

¹ Global Firepower, *2023 Moldova Military Strength*, https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=moldova (11.08.2023)

² IISS, *Military Balance*, 2023, <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tmib20/123/1?nav=tocList>, (05.08.2024)

³ World Bank, *Military expenditure (% of GDP) Moldova*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=MD> (11.08.2023)

⁴ Ianac Deli, *Assessing Military Readiness in National Army of Republic of Moldova's Units – Methods and Challenges*, "Journal of Defense Resources Management", No. 1, 2022, pp. 106-183, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1049499>, (20.02.2024)

⁵ Tamas Orban, *Military modernisation in the Republic of Moldova (post-1991)*, 30.06.2022. <https://danubeinstitute.hu/en/research/military-modernisation-in-the-republic-of-moldova-post-1991> (20.02.2024)

⁶ Pridnestrovskaja Moldavskaja Respublica, *Law enforcement and armed forces of Pridnestrovie*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091104073203/http://pridnestrovie.net/armedforces.html> (20.02.2024)

⁷ Ion Tăbărta, *Russian Military Presence in Moldova – A Sensitive Issue for the Future of Relations Between Chişinău and Moscow*, "Bulletin of Power, Politics, and Policy", No. 8, 2020, p. 3, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/viewpdf?id=1022266>, (20.02.2024)

⁸ Kamil Caşu, *The Russian hybrid threat toolbox in Moldova: economic, political, and social dimensions*, Hybrid CoE Working Paper, The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, p. 18, https://www.hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/20230413-Hybrid-CoE-Working_Paper-23-Moldova-WEB.pdf, (20.02.2024)

a land corridor between the area and Transnistria has also been mentioned by high-level Russian officials as a possibility¹. This would have provided Moscow with an access to the Soviet ammunition depot in Cobasna².

Despite the strategic value of the PMR to the Russian Federation, the entity's loyalty to the Kremlin remains uncertain. As Foster notes in his 2024 study, the Transnistrian leadership's stance on Russian operations against Ukraine is rather unclear. Tiraspol's standpoint was dominated by a neutral approach in the investigated period, mainly due to the interests of the local elites. Foster suggests that the Transnistrian entity's troops would obviously prefer local command to Russian control if forced to choose³. During the examined period, Transnistria's approach altered only once, after the terrorist attacks against government facilities in Tiraspol in April 2022. While Russian media claimed that the attacks were carried out by Ukrainian militants, Western experts identified the events as Russian false flag operations aimed at drawing Tiraspol into the war during the most active phase of operations in southwestern Ukraine⁴. In conclusion, it is evident that the territory of the Republic of Moldova is especially important to the Kremlin due to its geostrategic setting as well as the presence of Transnistrian and Russian troops. This is also demonstrated by the 1995 presidential decree, which declared that the PMR was a region of special interest to Russia⁵. All in all, the military presence and potential of Russia in Moldova pose a significant threat to Chişinău's sovereignty, which can become even more serious if complemented by political, legal, and economic influence.

Economy

Hybrid operations against the Republic of Moldova must also be examined from an economic perspective, as new-generation warfare is predominantly characterized by economic and political tools during the initial, non-conventional phases. This section investigates Russia's actions from two viewpoints: first, the internal economic features of Moldova, which constitute the operational environment exploited by the Russian Federation through sanctions and coercive trade policies; second, energy security, focusing on aspects such as natural gas imports and electricity supply, which played a significant role during the research period. Despite modest GDP growth since the millennium, the Republic of Moldova remains one of the poorest countries on the European continent⁶. According to World Bank data, in 2022, the GDP per capita was only \$5,714, approximately 10% of the European Union average^{7,8}. This is compounded by the low purchasing power parity of the Moldovan leu and stratospheric inflation rates.⁹ The National Bank of Moldova reported that inflation began to skyrocket in September 2021 (6.68%) and peaked a year later. In October 2022, rates rose to 34.62%, far exceeding the target of 5%. This

¹ Andrew Roth, *Russian commander suggests plan is for permanent occupation of south Ukraine*, 22.04.2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/22/ukraine-south-occupation-russian-military-chief-rustam-minnekayev> (17.03.2024)

² Ilie Gulca, *Cobasna: Russia's 'MacGuffin' Between Ukraine and NATO*, 20.03.2023., <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/20/cobasna-russias-macguffin-between-ukraine-and-nato/> (20.02.2024)

³ Shaun D. Foster, *Pridnestrovie for Peace: Accounting for Transnistrian Divergence from the Russian Position vis-à-vis the Russo Ukrainian War*, "Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice", No.1-15, 2024, pp. 1-15, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/10402659.2024.2311691?needAccess=true>, (20.02.2024)

⁴ Will Baumgardner, *What Russia's Failed Coercion of Transnistria Means for the Annexation of Occupied Territory in Ukraine*, 20.09.2022, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/what-russia-s-failed-coercion-transnistria-means-annexation-occupied-territory-ukraine> (20.02.2024)

⁵ Volodymyr Nikiforenko, Yuriy Kuryliuk, *Current Issues of Peace and Security Taking Into Account Aggressive Policy of the Russian Federation*, "Przegląd Strategiczny", No. 16, 2023, p. 285, http://studiastrategiczne.amu.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/19-Nikiforenko_Kuryliuk-3.pdf (20.02.2024)

⁶ World Bank, *GDP (Current US\$) – Moldova*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=MD> (20.02.2024)

⁷ World Bank, *GDP per capita (Current US\$)–Moldova*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=MD> (20.02.2024)

⁸ World Bank, *GDP per capita, PPP (Current international \$)–European Union*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=EU> (20.02.2024)

⁹ World Bank, *GDP per capita, PPP (Current international \$) – Moldova*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?end=2022&locations=MD&start=1995&view=chart> (20.02.2024)

economic fallback was utterly dangerous for the stability of the country as it led to an over-the-top cost of living¹. The latter provided the Russian Federation with an opportunity to exacerbate social tension and weaken Chişinău's resilience.

Despite the tertiary sector being the most significant in Moldova's domestic economy, exports are dominated by the electronics industry and, to a greater extent, agriculture^{2,3}. This economic distortion originates from Soviet-era policies that industrialized the Transnistrian, Russian-speaking parts of the country, leaving the areas west of the Dniester predominantly agricultural.⁴ Consequently, Moldova's trade is highly import-dominated; in 2021, imports were double the value of exports. Chişinău's major trade partners include its neighbors, such as Romania, Ukraine, and indirectly, the Russian Federation, making the country highly susceptible to their influence⁵. The Kremlin leveraged of its role in Moldova's economy on several occasions over the past decades. For instance, between 2006 and 2013, Russia imposed an embargo against Moldovan and Georgian wine products, citing alleged food safety concerns. These embargoes heavily impacted the Moldovan wine industry, as Russia accounted for nearly 90% of its exports⁶. According to Dan Amonte (2010), the embargo was politically motivated, likely in retaliation for Moldova's participation in the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM)⁷. A similar situation occurred in 2014, which Kamil Caşus (2014) attributed to Moldova's Association Agreement with the European Union. During the examined period, Moscow imposed politically motivated trade regulations again in August 2022, from which pro-Russian Transnistria and Gagauzia were exempted⁸.

Despite the embargo, Russian firms are less affected by economic sanctions against the Republic of Moldova. By 2018, the share of legal Russian businesses fell to 4%, and the share of Russian foreign direct investment (FDI) decreased to 22% in the country.⁹ While this might suggest a reduced Russian influence, the smaller number of Russian companies facilitates economic warfare with minimal sacrifices.

In contrast, Transnistrian businesses are highly affected by the Kremlin's actions. The Sheriff Corporation, founded by former KGB officer and Russian oligarch Viktor Gushan, dominated the PMR's economy, accounting for 60% of its economic activity in 2021¹⁰. This economic power translated into political influence within the pseudo-state¹¹.

Despite Gushan's pro-Kremlin and KGB background, Will Baumgardner points out an enormous conflict of interest between Moscow and the Sheriff. Ukraine's border closures due to the Russian invasion forced

¹ Moldova National Bank, *Annual inflation*, <https://www.bnm.md/en/content/inflation> (20.02.2024)

² Lloyds Bank, *Moldova: Economic and Political Overview*, <https://www.lloydsbanktrade.com/en/market-potential/moldova/economical-context> (20.02.2024)

³ Trading Economics, *Moldova Exports by Category*, <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/exports-by-category> (20.02.2024)

⁴ Andras Olah, *A transznysztiai konfliktus két évtizede és megoldatlanságának okai I.*, "Nemzet és Biztonság", No. 5, 2014, p. 91

⁵ GlobalEDGE, *Moldova: Trade Statistics*, <https://globaleedge.msu.edu/countries/moldova/tradestats> (20.02.2024)

⁶ BBC, *Russian wine more draws protests*, 30. 03. 2006., <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4860454.stm> (20.02.2024)

⁷ Dan Amonte, "Wine" Warfare at the Doorstep – Nothing New Just Business for Russia, "Moldova's Foreign Policy Statewatch", Institute for Development and Social Initiatives "Viitorul", August 2010, pp. 1-6, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/121707/IDIS_8.pdf (20.02.2024)

⁸ Kamil Caşus, *Russia's embargo on Moldovan goods is extended*, 23. 07. 2014., <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2014-07-23/russias-embargo-moldovan-goods-extended> (20.02.2024)

⁹ Ion Butmalai, Tatiana Lariusin, Ion Preaşca, *Russian Economic Footprint in Moldova*, "CAPE – CSD – CIPE", <https://corrosiveconstructivecapital.cipe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Russian-Economic-Footprint-in-Moldova-Study.pdf> (26.02.2024)

¹⁰ Evan Gershkovich, *In Separatist Transnistria, Sheriff Calls the Shots*, 27.09.2021, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/09/27/in-separatist-transnistria-sheriff-calls-the-shots-a75149> (26.02.2024)

¹¹ Matt Ford, *Sheriff Tiraspol: Moldova, Transnistria – or dreamland?*, 29. 09. 2021., <https://www.dw.com/en/sheriff-tiraspol-the-champions-league-club-without-a-country-but-now-in-dreamland/a-59177975> (26.02.2024)

Transnistrian goods to be exported through Chişinău's customs to the European market, highlighting the instability of Tiraspol's loyalty to Moscow¹.

Energy supply and security are crucial factors for Moldova's stability and resilience. The country relies entirely on natural gas imports². Until 2021, both Chişinău and Tiraspol purchased natural gas from Moldovagaz, a company 50% owned by the Russian Gazprom, 35.33% by the Moldovan government, 13.4% by the Transnistrian leadership, and 1.23% by private ownership³.

Until 2021, the required natural gas was entirely provided by the Russian Federation, based on a 2006, annually renewable deal between the two countries which employed network-based indexation for pricing in the second and third quarters and oil price-based indexation during the coldest months of the year. The gas contract between the parties expired at the end of September 2021; the Russian Federation sought to renegotiate terms to blackmail Moldova into not implementing the European Union's Third Energy Package, which promotes the diversification of the internal energy market⁴. Although Gazprom extended the supply for two months in September 2021, prices were increased by more than 40% and pressure in pipelines was reduced dangerously, which forced Chişinău to declare a state of emergency by the end of October. As a solution, the Moldovan government tried to obtain natural gas from alternative sources (for example, Romania) but diversification efforts seemed solely temporary. Despite multiple renewal attempts by the Moldovan government in 2021, the parties could only agree on a new deal on 29 October, due to high energy prices across Europe and Russian claims of the \$709 million Moldovan and the \$7 billion Transnistrian debt⁵.

In the fall of 2022, the energy crisis worsened again when Gazprom cut gas supplies by 30%, for both Moldova and the Transnistrian entity⁶. This reduction had severe implications, as Moldova's electricity supply comes entirely from the natural gas-operated Cuciurgan power plant, located on Transnistrian territory⁷. Because of Russian gas supply reductions, Tiraspol cut electricity transfers to Moldova by 73%, doubling prices⁸. Simultaneously, Russian missile attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure paralyzed electricity supply from Ukraine, forcing Chişinău to purchase electricity from Romania at a much higher price rate until December 2022. Eventually, a deal was struck, in terms of which Transnistria received the entirety of Russian gas supplies in exchange for providing Moldova with electricity until October 2023, while Chişinău sought alternative gas suppliers⁹.

After two years of crisis, the Moldovan government was better prepared for winter in 2023. Prime Minister Dorin Recean announced in May 2023 that Moldova permanently ceased purchasing Russian gas, diversifying its suppliers with European partners¹⁰. Additionally, implementing the third energy package terminated the operating

¹ Will Baumgardner, *What Russia's Failed Coercion of Transnistria Means for the Annexation of Occupied Territory in Ukraine*, 20. 09. 2022. <https://www.aei.org/articles/what-russias-failed-coercion-of-transnistria-means-for-the-annexation-of-occupied-territory-in-ukraine/> (26.02.2024)

² IEA, *Energy Security*, <https://www.iea.org/reports/moldova-energy-profile/energy-security> (26.02.2024)

³ Interfax, *Vestmoldtransgaz becomes temporary operator of Moldova's entire gas transmission system*, 10.07.2023., <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/92384/> (26.02.2024)

⁴ Jakub Pienkowski, Maciej Zaniewicz, *The Moldovan Gas Crisis: Causes and Consequences*, 26.11.2021., <https://www.pism.pl/publications/the-moldovan-gas-crisis-causes-and-consequences> (26. 02.2024)

⁵ Katja Yafimava, *Moldova's Gas Crisis and Its Lessons for Europe*, 5.11.2021., <https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/85721> (26.02.2024)

⁶ Interfax, *Gazprom reduces daily gas supplies to Moldova by almost one-third – Moldovan deputy PM*, 03.10.2022. <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/83485/> (26.02.2024)

⁷ Infotag, *Moldavskaya Gres Warned on Cutting/Termination Electricity Supply to Moldova from October 11*, 08.10.2021., <https://www.infotag.md/economics-en/294575/> (26. 02. 2024.)

⁸ Reuters, *Most Moldovan power supplies restored after Russian strikes on Ukraine*, 23.11.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/half-moldova-without-power-after-russian-strikes-ukraine-deputy-pm-2022-11-23/> (26.02.2024)

⁹ Carolin Bosch, *Moldova is making some progress on energy security*, <https://www.german-economic-team.com/en/newsletter/moldova-is-making-some-progress-on-energy-security/> (26. 02. 2024.)

¹⁰ Leo Litra, *The final frontier: Ending Moldova's dependency on Russian gas*, 01. 11. 2023., <https://ecfr.eu/article/the-final-frontier-ending-moldovas-dependency-on-russian-gas/> (26.02.2024)

license of the Gazprom-owned transmission company, Moldovatransgaz, replaced by the 75% Romanian and 25% EBRD-owned Vestmoldtransgaz¹.

Even though the natural gas issue appeared to be fixed by the end of the examined period, it did not mean a comprehensive solution for the energy security of Moldova. Despite the March 2022 synchronization of Moldovan and European electricity networks and Chişinău's efforts to build two power plants by 2025, the country's electricity supply is still dependent on Tiraspol, and indirectly on Moscow. This maintains, albeit in a more limited way, the Kremlin's possibility to exploit energy dependence as hybrid means. In conclusion, it is evident that Moscow was engaged in active warfare in the fields of trade and energy security. Demonstrated by both the embargoes and actions provoking an energy crisis, the Kremlin aimed to inflict the greatest damage and reduce Moldova's resilience to the largest extent.

Economic warfare against Moldova is ruinous on its own as well, but its contextual importance is much larger. The social discontent brought about by the energy and livelihood crisis resulting from Russia's actions contributed significantly to the Kremlin's indirect political influence discussed in the next chapter. This connection between political and economic dimensions is a cornerstone of Russian hybrid warfare against Moldova and proof of the operation's complexity.

Society and politics

Evidenced by the events of the examined period, trade and energy security highly impact the internal stability of Moldova and remain sources of political tension in the country. Consequently, the study focuses on social and political aspects of Russian hybrid operations, including unstable elements of the operational environment, long-term social trends, and pro-Russian actors.

Moldova is a parliamentary republic with a strong presidential political system. Since 2016, the president has been elected directly due to an internal political crisis between September 2009 and March 2012, during which the parliament could not reach a consensus on the issue². The president holds a key role in initiating legislation and foreign policymaking, which makes the position crucial in responding to Russian coercive operations, demonstrated by Maia Sandu's national security policy³.

The internal structure of the state provides Russian operations with great opportunity, as manifested in the form of the pro-Russian Gagauzia and the so-called Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic. The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (ATUG) enjoys a high level of autonomy within the Republic of Moldova: based on a 1994 law, Comrat may determine its own legislation and executive power⁴. The autonomous territory is led by the bashkan, pro-Russian Evghenia Guţul of the Şor Party since May 2023⁵. Guţul clearly opposes the central government of Chişinău. Gagauzia's pro-Russian stance is not surprising: even though ethnically the Gagauz people has Turkish origins, everyday life is dominated by the Russian language, and the most popular religion is Orthodox Christianity, with 96% adhering to the Moldovan Orthodox Church (MOC)⁶.

Although the statehood of the Transnistrian entity remains unrecognized by either the international community or Russia, the de facto country poses a serious political challenge to the pro-Western Chişinău leadership. The idea of reintegrating the Transnistrian region, which could greatly increase Moldova's energy security and resilience, has been raised again with the start of the EU accession process, but this conflicts with the

¹ Catalina Mihai, *Transgaz Romania takes over Gazprom's operations in Moldova*, 06.09.2023., <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/transgaz-romania-takes-over-gazproms-operations-in-moldova/> (26.02.2024)

² Brian Mefford, *Moldova's Presidential Election Pits Pro-Europe Candidates Against Pro-Russia Ones*, 07.04.2016., <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/moldova-s-presidential-election-pits-pro-europe-candidates-against-pro-russia-ones/> (26.02.2024)

³ Presidency of the Republic of Moldova, *The status and powers of the President of the Republic of Moldova*, <https://presedinte.md/eng/statutul-si-atributiile> (26.02.2024)

⁴ Laszlo Csulak PhD, Agnes Visegradi PhD, *A gagauz autonómia alkotmányjogi berendezkedése alapjainak elemzése*, "Magyar Jog", 2010/12, pp. 756-768, <https://szakcikkadatbazis.hu/doc/2875152> (05.03.2024)

⁵ Denis Dermenji, *Candidata Partidului Şor care câştigă în Găgăuzia promite să deschidă o reprezentanţă a regiunii la Moscova*, 15. 05. 2023., <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/candidata-partidului-sor-care-castiga-in-gagauzia-promite-sa-deschida-o-reprezentanta-a-regiunii-la-moscova-/32412100.html> (05.03.2024)

⁶ Milan Mayer, *Gagauz people – their language and ethnic identity*, "Kulturní studia", No. 2, 2014, pp. 39-54, <https://kulturnistudia.cz/gagauz-people-their-language-and-ethnic-identity/> (05.03.2024)

interests of both Moscow and Tiraspol.¹ Galiya Ibragimova points out that the Moldovan government has sought to corner Tiraspol and increasingly control the Transnistrian area during the examination period, mainly by criminalizing separatism and by starting to integrate its customs policy into the European system.² Past examples demonstrated that the Kremlin and Transnistrian leaders were not averse to reunification, but they have a vision contradicting Chişinău. The 2003 proposal of the Kozak Memorandum is the most accurate demonstration of this vision, providing Tiraspol with great autonomy and a veto over central decisions. This de facto federalization of the country would empower the Russian Federation with a new level of indirect influence over Moldova, paralyzing Chişinău's exercise of sovereignty. In addition to the Moldovan domestic political system, pro-Moscow long-term trends and attitudes of the society contribute to a favorable operational environment for Russian hybrid warfare.

One significant factor is the ageing of society: Moldovan National Statistics Office data suggest that the ageing rate (i.e. the ratio of citizens aged 60 and over per 100 inhabitants) increased to 22.5 in 2021, compared to 21.7 in 2020³. The emigration of the younger population is a contributing driver to this; the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims that approximately 1.1 to 1.2 million citizens were living abroad in 2021, while 15.8% of the country's GDP is remitted by expatriates, according to the World Bank⁴.

The ageing of society leads to a rise in nostalgia for the Soviet era. Ion Marandici's 2020 study points out that this phenomenon is mainly observed in the North and some Southern regions, including Gagauzia, correlating with the territorial distribution of the Russian-speaking population. Marandici also proves that Eurosceptic political parties internalizing Soviet nostalgia are most popular among ethno-cultural minorities that suffered socio-political and economic decline after Moldovan independence. These minorities are practically the same groups previously favored by the Soviet Union⁵. The economic situation and living standards of these minorities can be exploited by pro-Russian parties, especially during the cost-of-living crisis observed through 2021 and 2022. The momentum of these political forces obviously works in the Kremlin's favor along with the polarization of society increased by the pro-European policies of the Sandu presidency⁶.

Political polarization can also contribute to the success of information space influence operations, facilitating the advancement of Moscow-backed parties⁷. The presence of Russia in the Moldovan information space is not a novel phenomenon; for instance, Todor Galev highlighted in 2018 that Moscow not only utilized media ownership to gain influence but also used indirect measures, such as firms contracted to disseminate Russian news, certain social media profiles, and media representation of pro-Russian politicians⁸. This is also confirmed by Dumont and her colleagues who found that out of the twenty different types of platforms they studied, five were supposedly owned by Russia, four had proven Russian connections, and one was under direct control of Moscow⁹.

¹ Анна Выприцких: *Санду: Молдова не отказывается от Приднестровья на пути вступления в ЕС*, <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/sandu-moldova-ne-otkazyvaetsya-ot-pridnestrovyya-na-puti-vstupleniya-v-es> (05.03.2024)

² Galiya Ibragimova, *Is Moldova Ready to Pay the Price of Reintegrating Transnistria?*, 24.01.2024., <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91460> (05.03.2024)

³ Statistica Moldovei, *Numărul populației cu reședință obișnuită pe sexe și grupe de vârstă la 1 ianuarie 2021*, 12.07.2021., https://statistica.gov.md/ro/numarul-populatiei-cu-resedinta-obisnuita-pe-sexe-si-grupe-de-9578_50073.html (05.03.2024)

⁴ Kanat Makhanov, *Emigrant Moldova and the Changing Concept of Migration*, <https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/emigrant-moldova-and-the-changing-concept-of-migration/> (05.03.2024.)

⁵ Ion Marandici, *Nostalgic Voting? Explaining the Electoral Support for the Political Left in Post-Soviet Moldova*, "Eurasian Geography and Economics", Vol. 63, No. 4, pp. 522-536, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2021.1918565>, (06.03.2024)

⁶ Polina Dvornikova, *Foreign Influence and Disinformation in Moldova*, "The Peace and Security Monitor", August 2023, p. 30, <https://peacehumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/The-Peace-and-Security-Monitor-SEE-BSR-Issue-9.pdf#page=30>, (06.03.2024)

⁷ Denis Cenușă, *Moldova's handling of Russian disinformation: building new tools and uprooting old patterns*, <https://www.eesc.lt/en/publication/moldovas-handling-of-russian-disinformation-building-new-tools-and-uprooting-old-patterns/> (06.03.2024)

⁸ Todor Galev, *Tackling Russian Propaganda through Investigating Russian Influence in the Media Sector*, 4.12.2018, https://csd.bg/fileadmin/user_upload/events_library/files/2018_12/Presentation_Todor_Galev.pdf. (06.03.2024)

⁹ Emily Dumont, Jonathan Solis, Lincoln Zaleski, *Moldova: Profile of Media Ownership and Potential Influence Channels*, AidData, 2022, pp. 5-7, <https://docs.aiddata.org/reports/media-resilience/mda/Moldova-Profile-of-Media-Ownership-and-Potential-Foreign-Influence-Channels.pdf>, (19.03.2024)

These channels provide the Kremlin with access to the aforementioned social groups that are open to Russian ideology.

Additionally, the presence of Orthodox Christianity is also an important socio-political factor in the Republic of Moldova. 96% of Moldovans identify as Orthodox Christian; 88% belong to the Moldovan Orthodox Church (MOC) and 8% to the Bessarabian Orthodox Church (BOC)¹. The former falls under the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate, while the latter is patroned by the Bucharest Patriarchate, illustrating the divisions induced by geopolitical shifts in the region². The predominance of the Moldovan Orthodox Church also has contributed to the Kremlin's influence, as Moscow has used religion as a soft power tool and as a connecting link in the post-Soviet near abroad for decades³. This is evidenced by Patriarch Kirill's statements claiming that Moldova was a part of the 'Holy Rus', which can be interpreted as the center of the Russian world ('Russkiy Mir')⁴.

The concept of the Russkiy Mir can be also observed throughout the conflict between the Moldovan and the Bessarabian Orthodox Churches, despite former MOC-leader Metropolitan Vladimir's rather restrained statements on the Russo-Ukrainian war and Moldova's European integration.⁵ Nevertheless, other representatives of the MOC sharply criticized the European Union and the Sandu administration for their preference for 'Western values', including LGBTQ+ rights⁶. The ideology of Russian politics is closely correlating with values of the Moldovan Orthodox Church, evidenced by a statement by the Bishop of Balti suggesting that Russia is a 'defender of Christian values'⁷. This comment implies also the Katechon theory and the presence of Slavic paternalism, which are constituent elements of the Kremlin's foreign policy⁸. The mentioned social factors, complemented by the presence and popularity of the Moldovan Orthodox Church, provide the Russian Federation with a wide range of opportunities for influence, but the activity of pro-Russian parties in the political arena is essential to exploit these.

Implied by the significance of Soviet nostalgia in the Moldovan society, the pro-Russian political ideologies have been represented by the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova and the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova in the last decade. Communists were able to form a government between 2001 and 2009, under the presidency of Vladimir Voronin, whose foreign policy was characterized by a more balanced approach. Politico described Voronin as an "opportunistic communist" because he refused to sign the Kozak Memorandum solely due to political pressure from the EU and the United States⁹. Prior to the examined period, the Socialist Party unquestionably dominated the political scene of Moldova. Voronin's attempt of a balanced foreign policy was abandoned by Socialist president Igor Dodon, who came to power in 2016. Dodon opted for a pro-Russian approach, evidenced by his election campaign, which incorporated photos with Russian President Vladimir Putin

¹ Classroom Country Profiles, *Moldova*, <https://jsis.washington.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/moldova.pdf> (06.03.2024)

² Andrei Soldatov, Irina Borogan, *Putin's Useful Priests*, 14.09.2023., <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/putins-useful-priests-russia-church-influence-campaign> (06.03.2024)

³ Martin Solik, Vladimir Baar, *The Russian Orthodox Church: An Effective Religious Instrument of Russia's „Soft” Power Abroad*. The Case Study of Moldova, "Acta Politologica", No 11, 2019, pp. 13-41, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=802107>, (06.03.2024)

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 29

⁵ Paul Goble, *Clash of Moldova's Two Orthodox Churches Complicates Chisinau's Turn to the West*, 17. 08. 2023., <https://jamestown.org/program/clash-of-moldovas-two-orthodox-churches-complicates-chisinaus-turn-to-the-west/> (06.03.2024)

⁶ Anastasia Pociumban, *In Church we trust. The Case of the Moldovan Orthodox Church*, "New Eastern Europe", 2020/5, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2020/09/07/in-church-we-trust-the-case-of-the-moldovan-orthodox-church/>, (06.03.2024)

⁷ The New York Times, *In Expanding Russian Influence, Faith Combines with Firepower*, 14.09.2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/europe/russia-orthodox-church.html?_r=2. (06.03.2024)

⁸ The Katechon theory is based on Russia's self-portrayal as the restrainer of evil (in this case, the so-called 'collective West' and the saviour of Orthodox Christian values. The theory became widespread during the early 2010s, especially after the annexation of the Crimea. The theory is attributed to Alexander Dugin, the ideologue of President Vladimir Putin. See for further information: Maria Engström, *Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy*, "Contemporary Security", Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 356-379 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13523260.2014.965888>, (06. 03. 2024.)

⁹ Alexandru Eftode, *Opportunistic Communist*, 22.07.2009, <https://www.politico.eu/article/opportunistic-communist/> (06.03.2024)

and Dodon¹. Prior to the 2020 presidential election, President Dodon faced several scandals, leading to a loss of credibility among his people². For instance, in 2019, a recording was published of the incumbent president admitting that his party received approximately 700 thousand to one million dollars as funding from the Kremlin³. What is particularly interesting about the case is that the footage was released by Publika TV, owned by businessman and then-president of the centrist Democratic Party Vlad Plahotniuc, who also appeared on the recording. Plahotniuc's media platforms' licenses, including Publika TV, were withdrawn by the Moldovan government in October 2023 for the dissemination of Russian propaganda⁴. The radical decline in Dodon's popularity resulted in his loss in the presidential elections to pro-European Maia Sandu and his arrest in 2022 on charges of treason and corruption⁵. With Dodon's fall from power, Russia was left with no significant agent in Moldova.

During the research period, Moscow considered the Șor Party a major pro-Russian party with large potential⁶. Its predecessor was established in 1998, but it only gained trust and support in 2016 when former Orhei mayor Ilan Șor took over as president of the party⁷. Șor was born in Israel, but spent most of his childhood and youth in Moldova, acquiring many businesses, including the duty-free shop at the Chișinău airport and several television channels⁸. By the time Șor was promoted to party leader, he had already been under house arrest, named as the prime suspect in the notorious case of 1 billion dollars disappearing from Moldovan banks⁹. Șor left the country without permission in 2017 and fled to Israel, from where he actively organized protests the Sandu administration during the investigated period. Nonetheless, according to Interpol, Șor left Israel in November 2023, and his location has remained unknown since¹⁰.

Despite Șor being a fugitive, his party actively orchestrated anti-government protests, particularly during the energy and cost-of-living crisis in the fall of 2022. Center for Insights in Survey Research October-November 2022 data suggest that Șor became the fourth most popular politician in Moldova, just a single percent behind President Sandu¹¹. The series of protests began in September 2022, when a Șor Party demonstration drew 20,000 people to the streets of Chișinău¹². The public turmoil continued until June 2023, when the Supreme Court of Moldova banned the party from operating.¹³ The activities of the Șor Party, as Calus notes, were aligned with Russian interests; the demonstrations were often attended by socialist and communist politicians, and protesters

¹ Galiya Ibragimova, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Has Rocked Moldovan Politics*, 09.08.2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90356> (06.03.2024)

² Nadja Douglas, *Moldova's presidential election: little trust in the political class*, 04.11.2020., <https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/moldovas-presidential-election-little-trust-in-the-political-class> (06.03.2024)

³ Madalin Necsutu, *Moldovan President Probed over 'Illegal Russian Funding' Claim*, 11.06.2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/06/11/moldovan-president-probed-over-illegal-russian-funding-claim/> (06.03.2024)

⁴ Chris Dziadul, *Moldova blocks more Russian media outlets*, 31.10.2023, <https://www.broadbandtvnews.com/2023/10/31/moldova-blocks-more-russian-media-outlets/> (06.03.2024.)

⁵ Euronews, *Former Moldovan President Igor Dodon arrested on suspicion of corruption*, 29.05.2022, <https://www.euronews.com/2022/05/24/igor-dodon-former-moldovan-president-arrested-on-suspicion-of-corruption> (06.03.2024.)

⁶ Kamil Calus, *Op. cit.*, p. 14

⁷ Partidul Șor, Party History, <https://partidulsor.com/en/partid/istoria-partidului.html>. (06.03.2024)

⁸ Mark Baker, *Moldova's Mysterious Magnate*, 06. 05. 2015., <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-mysterious-magnate-ilan-shor-scandal/26998388.html> (06.03.2024)

⁹ Cristi Vlas, *Appeal Court decides that Ilan Șor stays under house arrest*, 05.08. 2016., <https://www.moldova.org/en/court-decides-ilan-shor-stays-house-arrest/> (06.03.2024)

¹⁰ Alexander Tanas, *Fugitive Moldovan magnate has left Israel, Interpol says*, 09.11.2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/fugitive-moldovan-magnate-has-left-israel-interpol-says-2023-11-09/> (06.03.2024)

¹¹ Center for Insights in Survey Research, *Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova – October – November 2022*, https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Moldova-Poll_Public-Release.pdf (06.03.2024)

¹² Alexander Tanas, *Thousands take part in anti-government protests in Moldova*, 18.09.2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-take-part-anti-government-protest-moldova-2022-09-18/> (06.03.2024.)

¹³ Redacția Unimedia, *Ultima oră! Partidul Șor, declarat neconstituțional de Înalta Curte*, 19.06.2023, <https://unimedia.info/ro/news/c340c25e978ce8cc/ultima-ora-partidul-sor-declarat-neconstitutional-de-inalta-curte.html> (06.03.2024)

blamed the pro-Western administration's foreign policy towards the Russian Federation for the livelihood crisis.¹ However, it was revealed that the party's protests were not only aligned with Moscow's objectives but also actively supported by the Kremlin. An investigative report in the Washington Post elucidated that Kremlin strategists had been helping Șor's team to operate since 2021². Additionally, the Chance Party, an alliance created by Ilan Șor, received Russian financial support through third-country nationals, according to CEPA³. In October 2022, Moldovan prosecutors found \$233,000 in cash of unknown origin in Șor Party offices, which the party's staff had likely used to pay protesters⁴. Although corruption and buying votes are not unknown phenomena in Moldova (locally called 'Grechka'), according to the European Council on Foreign Relations, the level of bribery reached unprecedented proportions in this case⁵.

Thus, summarizing the factors impacting society and politics, the operational environment in the Republic of Moldova has distinctly favorable characteristics for Russian hybrid warfare. These include the nostalgia of an ageing and economically struggling society for Soviet times, and as a result, its receptivity to populist ideologies, the constitutional issues of Gagauzia and Transnistria, and the presence and active contribution of the Moldovan Orthodox Church to Russian influence. However, the Kremlin can only truly exploit these advantages of the operational environment through active political agents, which are embodied by the Șor Party.

The ban on the party and some of Ilan Șor's media outlets in 2023 may curtail its activity in the short term, but it will not solve the country's lack of resilience against Russian social-political hybrid threats in the long run. Additionally, it raises questions that require further research, such as the compatibility between the preservation of democratic pluralism and freedom of expression while defending the sovereignty of a state in the face of acute hybrid threats.

Comprehensive Analysis of Russian Hybrid Operations Against the Republic of Moldova

Considering the investigated aspect of the research period, in the following, the study focuses on the comprehensive assessment of Russian new generation operations against the Republic of Moldova. For this, the six-step methodology by Michael D. Reilly is utilized. It is important to emphasize that Reilly's methodology combines the Clausewitzian Center of Gravity (COG) and Joe Strange's four-pronged analysis, even though the former was developed in the era of conventional warfare. Nonetheless, Reilly argues that if the Center of Gravity is understood as the main effort of the actor, rather than the "source of greatest strength", the theory can be applied to the analysis of non-conventional hybrid operations⁶.

Identifying observed modalities

Considering the observed events, three of four modalities (conventional warfare, irregular warfare, terrorism, criminal behavior) outlined in the definition by Frank Hoffman, and utilized by Reilly, have been identified. Criminal behavior appeared mainly in the socio-political scene. The illegal funding provided by the Russian Federation to the socialists and communists of Moldova is noteworthy. The first paragraphs of Article 39 of the Moldovan Electoral Code state that parties are prohibited from using financial support by "foreign countries, foreign, international or joint enterprises, institutions, organizations, as well as by individuals who are not citizens of the Republic of Moldova"; which makes the aforementioned funding criminal behavior⁷. Terrorism as a modality was identified during the analysis of the military aspect. Despite the small-scale terrorist attacks in April 2022 being attributed to Ukrainian militants by Tiraspol, Western experts suggested that the events could be interpreted as Russian false-flag operations designed to draw the Transnistrian entity into the war in Ukraine.

¹ Kamil Calus, *Op. cit.*, p. 13

² Catherine Belton, *Russia's security service works to subvert Moldova's pro-Western government*, 28.10.2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/28/russia-fsb-moldova-manipulation/> (06.03.2024)

³ Marija Golubeva, *Russia's Hand Seen in Moldovan Local Elections*, 13. 11. 2023., <https://cepa.org/article/russias-hand-seen-in-moldovan-local-elections/> (06.03.2024)

⁴ Kamil Calus, *Op. cit.*, p. 13

⁵ Andrew Wilson, *Democracy under siege: Tackling Russian interference in Moldova*, 08.12.2023, <https://ecfr.eu/article/democracy-under-siege-tackling-russian-interference-in-moldova/> (06.03.2024)

⁶ Michael D. Reilly, *Op. cit.* pp. 88-89

⁷ *Article 39 on Banning foreign subsidies, Electoral Code of the Republic of Moldova*, https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/Cod_Electoral_ENG_2020_16_09_2020.pdf, (17.03.2024)

Transnistria becoming a belligerent party against Ukraine would have served Moscow's interests, especially during the most active phase of fighting in Southern Ukraine.

The third observed modality was irregular warfare. According to a definition by Zoltan Somodi, irregular warfare must be separated from traditional warfare as it seeks to achieve its objectives through the population (using their influence over the political leadership) indirectly, without the need for military utilization of irregular forces¹. This definition includes, for instance, Moscow obstructing the renewal of the natural gas contract between the Chişinău government and Gazprom, the unilateral radical reduction of gas supplies in October 2022, and even the direct support for the Şor Party demonstrations.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Russian Federation only excludes the employment of conventional military force in the case of Moldova. The lack of conventional means is a consequence of the developmental state of the operation, as the Gerasimov model suggests that military force is only utilized for conventional military operations at the end of the third phase and during the fourth and the fifth phases. In this sense, it is evident that the Russian operation in Moldova has not yet reached these phases.

Identifying adversary's assessed objectives and limitations

To identify Moscow's objectives, it is essential to define the role of Moldova in Russian foreign policy, considering historical tendencies and reviewing current geopolitical trends. Elias Götz suggests that the post-Soviet space is of great importance for Russia, due to both internal and international political interests.² Russian foreign policy towards Moldova can be exclusively interpreted in this context, as Moscow considers the country an essential part of the Near Abroad³. In this sense, maintaining control over the Near Abroad must be considered one of Russia's main goals, as it is a fundamental determinant of Moscow's regional and great power policy.

The preservation of Russian dominance can be achieved through a wide range of instruments; therefore, historical experience must be considered to decode the playbook envisaged by the Kremlin. One of the most effective means of exerting pressure on Moldova has been the issue of Transnistrian separatism. In this case, Moscow occupies an advantageous position; as boots of the 14th Russian Army (now known as the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Transnistria – OGRF) remained on the ground, it can pressure the Moldovan and the Transnistrian leaderships, while cornering the international community into a situation where it must accept that without the Federation, the issue cannot be resolved. This is evidenced by the Kremlin's presence during all attempts to alter the status quo, including the 1998 Odessa Agreement⁴ and the 1999 Kyiv Agreement⁵. From a historical perspective, Russia's objectives for Moldova are best represented by the 2002 Kozak Memorandum, which proposed a federal transformation of the country, with a de facto veto right for Transnistria and Gagauzia. The federalization would ensure the Kremlin's long-term influence over Chişinău in a sustainable and low-cost way, as both Transnistria and Gagauzia are considered pro-Russian actors in the region.

The advantageous character of federative solution for Russia is evidenced by the geopolitical situation during the period under review. Given that Russian foreign policy has been determined by the war in Ukraine since February 24, 2022, Moscow is not able to devote an infinite number of forces to operations in Moldova. As a result, deploying additional forces to the 14th Russian Army would be counterproductive not only from an international legal viewpoint but also in terms of resources. The economic effectiveness of further deployments for Russia is also reduced by the lack of a direct border with Moldova, making the integration of the territory into Russia much harder. The latter would be rather inconvenient for Russia anyway as it would create a new NATO-Russia border in

¹ Zoltan Somodi, *Nem hagyományos hadviselés az országvédelemben*, "Honvédségi Szemle", 2021/1, pp. 16-18, <https://real.mtak.hu/120530/1/SomodiZoltan.pdf>, (14.03.2024)

² Elias Götz, *Near Abroad: Russia's Role in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, "Europe-Asia Studies", Vol. 74, No. 9, pp. 1529-1550, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2022.2133086> (17.03.2024)

³ Octavian Țicu, *Moldova Between the Near Abroad Policy of the Russian Federation and the Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union*, "Eurolimes", 2008/6, pp. 160-167, <https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=3c9cbb5d-bb9a-4482-b749-c6df7b5a5d47%40redis> (17.03.2024)

⁴ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Agreement on Confidence Measures and Development of Contacts between the Republic of Moldova and Transdnistria*, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/d/42310.pdf> (17.03.2024)

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, *Joint statement of Participants in the Kiev Meeting* <https://mid.gospmr.org/en/FBs>, (17.03.2024)

the western part of what is now called Moldova. In this context, Moscow's main objective is to maximize its control over the political leadership in Chişinău, which can be achieved in the short term by bringing a pro-Russian president to power, and in the long term by a federal transformation of the country. This would prevent Moldova's further re-approachment with the West and promote the development and stabilization of Chişinău's pro-Russian orientation.

Several factors limit Moscow's ability to fulfill these objectives. For instance, Mary Glantz suggests that the Russian Federation has to face many long-term problems at the military, economic, and even social levels because of the 2022 invasion¹. In addition to the internal challenges, the aggression against Ukraine has also had negative consequences for Russia's position in the international arena, as Moscow's diplomatic isolation and the spotlight on its military shortcomings have significantly damaged the Russian great power reputation². All the above contribute to the Kremlin's diminishing capability to project force, which is essential for maintaining its influence over the Republic of Moldova. Maia Sandu's Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) also represents an obstacle for Moscow. The Sandu administration is the flagship of the country's European integration efforts, resulting serious efforts to combat Russian hybrid operations. For instance, Chişinău has reduced its dependence on Russian natural gas and has also managed to limit the activities of Russian agents such as the Şor Party during the examination period.

In conclusion, Moscow's primary goal is to build and maintain its influence over Moldova, thus preventing the country's integration with the West. This objective is highly affected by the resource demands of the war in Ukraine and its impact on Moscow's force projection ability, while also being constrained by the leverage of Western-oriented political forces led by Sandu.

Identifying critical capabilities

The political nature of the identified Russian objective makes control over pro-Russian political forces in Moldova a primary critical capability for Moscow. During the investigated period, Moscow mobilized its resources to gain full oversight of these forces; communists, socialists, and even the Şor Party depended heavily on financial support from the Kremlin for their survival and thus operated in accordance with its interests. This worked equally well for the autonomous Gagauzia, as both former leader Irina Vlah (socialist, then independent) and current bashkan Evghenia Gutul (Şor Party) explicitly governed the territory in favor of Moscow. Paradoxically, Transnistria's position was questionable regarding the Russo-Ukrainian war, despite the separatist entity's high dependence on Russia³.

The second most significant critical element of Russian hybrid operations is the Kremlin's capability to maintain their economic influence over Moldova. This is especially relevant for the energy sector, considering that during the first half of the examined period, the energy crisis caused a decrease in the living standards of society, resulting in growing discontent against the current government. Despite Chişinău's successful energy diversification policy, the electricity supply remains a tool of blackmail for Moscow, via the Cuciurgan powerplant in Transnistrian territory.

Another key factor is Russian strategic communication towards Moldovan society. Media outlets with Russian connections or under direct control of the Kremlin, and even the Moscow-patroned Moldavian Orthodox Church, provide tools for the Russian Federation to influence social discourse in the Republic of Moldova.

Finally, military capabilities must be highlighted. Russian boots on Transnistrian ground deter the Chişinău government and its allies from attempting to alter the status quo by force and compel Tiraspol to prioritize Moscow's interests even before its own. Despite the Gerasimov doctrine suggesting that non-military means are four times more important than conventional military tools, their presence in the model cannot be neglected. Even though the identified modalities indicate that Russian operations against Moldova did not involve the conventional utilization of military force during the research period, the presence of the 14th Russian army is the guarantor of Moscow's interests being considered in the region.

Identifying the Center of Gravity

¹ USIP, *Ukraine war takes toll on Russia*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/ukraine-war-takes-toll-russia> (17.03.2024)

² Janko Šćepanović, *Still a great power? Russia's status dilemmas post-Ukraine war*, "Journal of Contemporary European Studies", Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 88-95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2023.2193878>, (17.03.2024)

³ Shaun D. Foster, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-15

The identification of the used modalities clearly demonstrated that irregular elements were predominant in the examined Russian hybrid operation against Moldova; this study considers them the primary modality, namely the Clausewitzian Center of Gravity. However, within the category of irregular warfare, a shift could be observed as the investigated operation progressed. During the first half of the period under review, economic tools, including gas supply-related events, were prevalent, while later, political means like supporting the Șor Party took over. There is a direct link between economic and political elements making this shift possible, evidenced by the Șor Party's high dependence on the social discontent resulting from high energy prices and the cost-of-living crisis.

The secondary modalities, namely criminal behavior and terrorism were mainly intended to support the primary modality. This was obvious in the case of criminal behavior, while terrorist acts, such as the Tiraspol bombings, served indirectly to maintain Moscow's aforementioned critical capabilities, including the control over pro-Russian political forces and Transnistria. Alongside identifying the evolution of the Center of Gravity, it can be concluded that – in terms of the Gerasimov model – operations against Moldova reached the stage of the third phase during the investigated period, as no military force had been used so far but the activity of the political opposition had reached the level of the initial conflict.

Identifying critical requirements

Critical requirements encompass the factors without which operations against the Republic of Moldova would not be feasible. They largely derive from the status quo in Moldova. Since the primary modus operandi of the Russian Federation irregular warfare was focused on social pressure during the period under review, the factors that provide Moscow with a critical advantage should not be ignored. These include the observed social divisions, as their absence would make the revival of the political opposition much more costly for the Kremlin. This is closely linked with the receptiveness of some Moldovan social groups to Russian ideology, particularly the issue of the 'Russkiy Mir'. Another significant requirement is Moscow's authority over the Moldovan Orthodox Church, offering the Kremlin an irreplaceable network for conducting certain disinformation campaigns. Additionally, the Russian presence in the Moldovan information space is also a critical requirement for Moscow's hybrid operations.

Given the significant predominance of economic warfare during the first half of the investigated period, Russia's role in Moldova's energy supply security and the Moldovan economy is also a critical requirement. This was evidenced by Russia's embargo policy prior to 2021 and by the gas supply issues between 2021 and 2023. In this respect, the willingness of Gagauzia and Transnistria to cooperate is of particular importance, as the latter plays a key role in Moldova's electricity supply, which the Russian Federation may utilize to exert decisive pressure on Chișinău, even in the absence of natural gas dependence.

Gagauzia's and Transnistria's collaborative stance towards Russia remains an important factor as well. These territories play a cardinal role in the subsequent phases of the hybrid operation, especially in consolidating any gains that Moscow may make, including the federalization of Moldova. Moreover, the PMR, and especially the Transnistrian conflict provide an essential international legal basis for the presence of some of the Russian troops deployed in the pseudo-state.

Finally, the existence of pro-Russian parties in Moldova and their willingness to cooperate with Moscow must be highlighted, as their activities were the essence of the main modality during the second half of the period under review.

Identifying critical vulnerabilities

Critical requirements identified earlier are also critical vulnerabilities of the operation structure. In the following, the study summarises these elements.

Moscow's role in Moldova's energy supply has several weaknesses, evidenced by the success of Chișinău's energy diversification measures¹. Although the country has not yet achieved full independence from Russian energy supplies due to the aforementioned issue of electricity supplies from Transnistria, Moscow's options have been significantly reduced. For its ability to blackmail Chișinău with energy supplies, Moscow must exert pressure on the Transnistrian entity, which is another uncertain element of the operation.

The problem of control over Tiraspol is another vulnerability. Although the presence of Russian troops is meant to ensure the Transnistrian government's obedience to Russian interests, Tiraspol's attitude towards the

¹ Euractiv, *Moldova no longer needs Russian gas, minister says*, 16.03.2023., <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/moldova-no-longer-needs-russian-gas-minister-says/> (17.03.2024)

invasion of Ukraine was not satisfactory to Moscow, raising questions about the PMR's loyalty. Nevertheless, the Transnistrian leadership has little room for maneuver, given its high economic dependence on the Russian Federation. Still, the observed trends do not rule out the possibility of Transnistria taking independent actions, making it a point of vulnerability to Russian hybrid operations.

The presence of pro-Moscow political forces was central to the Russian operations during the second half of the examined period, yet it has become another uncertain factor. Although the Kremlin was able to restructure the political forces representing its interests by preferring the Șor Party after the fall of socialists and communists, Moscow faced a significant problem when the Șor Party was banned in 2023.

Chișinău's measures to limit Russian influence pose a serious risk to hybrid operations, especially in the information space. The Sandu administration not only banned the Șor Party but also several media platforms owned by Ilan Șor and his circle, which greatly contributed to the party's political popularity and Russian influence. The Moldovan government's actions against these media outlets took place at the end of the examined period, so their full impact requires further investigation. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that the Sandu Administration can exercise a certain degree of control over the Moldovan media environment, which could force the evolution of Russian operations on a different course in the future¹. Altogether, the critical vulnerabilities are evidenced to occur in the same areas as the critical requirements, indicating the instability of Russian hybrid operations against the Republic of Moldova.

1.	Identifying observed modalities	- Irregular warfare: Russian gas supplies to Moldova, activity of pro-Russian parties - Criminal behavior: illegal funding of pro-Russian parties - Terrorism: bombings in Tiraspol
2.	Identifying adversary's assessed objectives and limitations	Moscow's primary objective is to develop and maintain its influence over the political leadership of Moldova. This is constrained by the Kremlin's diminished ability of force projection due to the war in Ukraine and the measures taken by the ruling Moldovan government.
3.	Identifying critical capabilities	1. The ability to control pro-Russian political forces 2. The ability to blackmail and exert pressure on the Moldovan government 3. The ability to influence the society of Moldova 4. The ability to maintain military superiority over Moldova
4.	Identifying the Center of Gravity	The primary modality was irregular warfare. The first half of the examined period was dominated by economic warfare, while during the second half, actions of pro-Russian political parties were prevalent.
5.	Identifying critical requirements	- Social division, receptiveness to Russian ideology within the Moldovan society - Russia's role in the energy supply of Moldova - Transnistria's and Gagauzia's willingness to cooperate with Moscow - The presence of pro-Russian political parties and their willingness to cooperate with the Kremlin
6.	Identifying critical vulnerabilities	- Chișinău's measures to diversify energy resources - Transnistrian attitudes towards the war in Ukraine - Chișinău's measures to combat Russian influence in the country, including the ban of the Șor Party and pro-Russian media outlets

Table 1. Center of Gravity analysis of Russian hybrid operations in the Republic of Moldova²

Conclusions

¹ Alexander Tanas, *Moldova bans pro-Russian Șor party after months of protests*, 19.06.2023., <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/moldova-bans-pro-russian-shor-party-after-months-protests-2023-06-19/> (17.03.2024)

² Based on the author's research

Regarding the elements of Russian hybrid warfare, the case of Moldova incorporated non-military and military components, mostly found in the first phases of the Gerasimov model. These include the formation of the political opposition (in this case, the Șor Party) and their activities, certain economic sanctions (such as Russia's unilateral reduction of gas supplies to Moldova), political and diplomatic pressure (whether through Transnistria or Gagauzia), and strategic deterrence (via the presence of the 14th Russian Army in Transnistria). On this basis, it can be stated that the Russian operation reached the beginning of the third phase of the Gerasimov model by the end of the period under review.

Additionally, it should not be neglected that the Gerasimov model is mainly focused on the actions of the aggressor, rather than the elements of the strategic environment. In this context, it should therefore be stressed that the operational space represented by Moldova has social and economic qualities that greatly facilitate Russian penetration. Due to these characteristics, it is particularly difficult for the Moldovan government to develop social and economic resilience against Moscow's hybrid operations.

Regarding an outlook for Russian hybrid operations in the country, Moscow must decide whether it aims to escalate the situation. Taking the operation to the next level would provoke a large-scale escalation, as the next stages of the already ongoing third phase require the conventional use of military force. In this sense, the resource demands of the Russo-Ukrainian war should not be overlooked, which greatly reduce the Kremlin's ability to mobilize, making success doubtful¹. The establishment of unquestionable military superiority was previously envisaged by combining forces in Southern Ukraine and Moldova, but once the eastern parts of Ukraine became primary in Russian strategy, the previously mentioned scenario was unable to materialize.

At the same time, an open offensive against Moldova would not only be disadvantageous for Moscow in terms of resources. Just like the invasion of Ukraine, an operation to take over Moldova could instantly become part of Moscow's domestic political agenda, which would risk losing face for President Vladimir Putin, who was ahead of presidential elections at the end of the examination period. As a result, it can be argued that the use of conventional military forces in Moldova could, if successful, bring rapid and large-scale profits for the Kremlin, as absolute control over Moldovan political leadership could prevent the country from drifting westwards.

In contrast, Moscow can continue to weaken Moldova by hybrid means while maintaining the current status quo. In this case, by using tools that fit the Gerasimov model and by exploiting social and economic characteristics of the operational environment, the Russian Federation can preserve its position in Moldova and begin to address the weaknesses that emerged at the end of the investigated period. The most important of these drawbacks is the loss of its most important agent, the Șor Party. Consequently, the Kremlin needs to seek or create a new political satellite, as has happened after the failure of the communist and socialist political forces. The presence of pro-Russian political forces is practically the center and genesis of the hybrid instruments utilized by Moscow, without which the full control over Moldova cannot be achieved. The importance of this is further enhanced by Moldova being on the verge of municipal, parliamentary, and presidential elections at the end of the investigated period, which provides the Russian Federation with an opportunity to further increase its influence over the country. Maintaining the status quo thus requires a slow and systematic continuation of Moscow's actions to achieve the outlined objectives, which spares Russia the consequences of the risks of the escalation scenario. At the same time, it is uncertain whether the Kremlin will be able to avoid the effects of the measures introduced by the Sandu administration and the implications of the war in Ukraine, as the time is running out and Chișinău moves closer to EU accession day by day.

In conclusion, the research findings outlined in this study suggest that the Russian Federation had an ongoing hybrid operation in the Republic of Moldova between October 2021 and October 2023. This operation has reached the beginning of the third phase of the Gerasimov model. As for Moscow's further options, I have concluded that the Kremlin is forced to decide whether to take a great risk and escalate the situation in Moldova, or preserve the status quo, despite the country's European aspirations.

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NATO'S MECHANISMS FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF CYBERSECURITY

Abstract:	<i>In the current context of escalating digital threats, cybersecurity has emerged as a critical pillar of NATO's collective defense framework. The Alliance formally recognizes cyberspace as an operational domain, alongside land, air, maritime, and space, signifying that a major cyberattack may trigger Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which pertains to collective defense.</i> <i>NATO collaborates closely with its member states to enhance cyber resilience by facilitating real-time information sharing, conducting joint exercises, and supporting the development of advanced national capabilities. The Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia, plays a pivotal role in training specialists and testing defensive strategies.</i> <i>Cyber threats often emanate from both state and non-state actors and are characterized by attacks on critical infrastructure, data theft, disinformation campaigns, and attempts to undermine democratic institutions. NATO addresses these multifaceted challenges through a cooperative international approach, fostering partnerships, including private sector, and by integrating emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and advanced data analytics.</i> <i>Consequently, cybersecurity transcends the military sphere, constituting a shared responsibility that engages all segments of society. Through coordinated actions and proactive strategies, NATO reinforces its role as a guarantor of peace and security in the digital age.</i>
Keywords:	NATO; cyber security; cyber defense; CCDCOE; Estonia; strategic concepts; Article 5
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Introduction

Even though NATO has always protected its information systems and communication, an important moment in time being the cyber-attacks against Estonia's public and private institutions in 2007, our purpose is not to present a detailed chronology of the NATO history in this context, but only the most important recent approaches. It is worth mentioning that because of these events, the Allied Defense Ministers approved of their first Policy on Cyber Defense in January 2008¹. Starting with 2010 the North-Atlantic Alliance Organization Strategic Concept proposed a new approach related to the need of adapting to the new security threats environment, to manage the increasing context of cybersecurity, terrorism, transit routes for energy and trade, global climate change, technology². The 2021 NATO Summit in Brussels proposed the Comprehensive Cyber Defense Policy³, a

¹North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Cyber Defense*, <https://www.act.nato.int/activities/cyber/> (12.04.2025)

² Albulena Halili, *Non-traditional Security Threats and NATO's Response in the Contemporary Security Environment*, "SEEU Review", Vol. 18, No. 2, 2023, DOI: 10.2478/seeur-2023-0095, p. 149

document supporting NATO's purposes in terms of its overall defense posture and deterrence. Another important moment is the 2022 Madrid NATO Summit which reevaluated the cyberspace as a complex and contested arena, in terms of cyberoperations, cyberattacks, cyberweapons, cyberspace, cyber enabled disinformation¹. NATO continued to achieve new strategies to manage the cyber defense at the 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius and integrated Nato's cyber defense levels as technical, military, and political, in terms of civil-military cooperation, also engaging the private sector².

At the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, D.C., the Allies agreed to establish the NATO Integrated Cyber Defense Centre to enhance network protection, situational awareness and the implementation of cyberspace as an operational domain. The most important institutions which are involved in this area are: the NATO Integrated Cyber Defense Center (NICC) in Mons, Belgium, established in July 2024; the NATO Cooperative Defense Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallin, Estonia³ established in 2008. CCDCOE hosted in May 2025 the Locked Shields 2025 cyber defense exercise, gathering almost 4000 experts representing 41 NATO ally and partner nations⁴. All the trainings and exercises are conducted by CCDCOE, within the Crossed Swords annual technical red teaming cyber exercise training penetration tester, digital forensic experts and situational awareness experts⁵; The NATO Communications and Information (NCI) Academy in Oeiras, Portugal (2029)⁶; The NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany; The NATO Defense College in Rome, Italy (1951)⁷. Even though this concern could be considered as a new one, it is important to mention that the first cyber crisis happened in Kosovo air campaign in 1999, when NATO's e-mail accounts were blocked, and the website was disrupted⁸. In that period, cyber dimensions of a conflict used to be considered as subordinating to conventional warfare. Some authors consider that although threats of cyber-attacks are or the first time mentioned verbatim in the 2002 Prague Summit Declaration, the year of 1999 is the one which could be seen as the key milestone, as the first recognition and jumpstart of NATO's perspective on cyber defense. The research mentioned before presents as two important events - the cyber-attacks orchestrated by Serbian and Russian hackers against NATO networks and systems during the Kosovo War and the mistaken bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade⁹.

In this context, we consider worthy to mention NATO Strategic Communication (STRATCOM) as an important aspect of consolidated action related to all the hybrid threats area¹⁰. Given the paramount importance and inherent complexity of cybersecurity in the contemporary world, it is evident that organizations such as NATO play a critical role in addressing these multifaceted challenges. The digitalization of conflicts and crises is becoming increasingly tangible in the present era. Traditional instruments of warfare - aircraft, bombs, and missiles - are progressively being supplanted by cyberattacks, malware, and disinformation campaigns. In the digital realm, adversaries can test security frameworks with a mere click of a mouse. Consequently, global criminal cyberattacks, the aggressive exploitation of social media by groups such as Daesh to incite terrorism, and the alleged role of

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Cyber Defense*, 30th of July 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm#:~:text=At%20the%202021%20NATO%20Summit%20in%20Brussels%2C%20Allies,well%20as%20its%20overall%20deterrence%20and%20defence%20posture (16.05.2025)

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² *Idem*

³ NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, <https://ccdcoc.org/about-us/> (17.04.2025)

⁴ Eduard Kovacs, *41 Countries Taking Part in NATO's Locked Shields 2025 Cyber Defense Exercise*, "Security Week", May 7, 2025, 41 Countries Taking Part in NATO's Locked Shields 2025 Cyber Defense Exercise - SecurityWeek (12.05.2025)

⁵ Marko Arik, *How Do NATO Members Define Cyber Operations?*, "Communications in Computer and Information Science", December 2023, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-49212-9_2, pp. 8-14

⁶ NATO Communications and Information (NCI) Academy in Oeiras, Portugal, NATO Communication and Information - Academy | QA Hub - NATO QA Programme (21.04.2025)

⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Cyber Defense*, 30th of July 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm#:~:text=At%20the%202021%20NATO%20Summit%20in%20Brussels%2C%20Allies,well%20as%20its%20overall%20deterrence%20and%20defence%20posture (16.05.2025)

⁸ Bildiri Kitabı, *On the Individual, Society, and Politics in a Digitalized World*, Ivik University, Istanbul, 2022, p. 157

⁹ *Idem*

¹⁰ Igor Gjoreski, Zoran Nacev, *Global Security Trends in Euro-Atlantic Area and NATO New Strategic Concept*, "Security Dialogues", Vol. 13, No.2, 2022, DOI: 10.47054/SD22132023gj, p. 62

Russia in disseminating disinformation and fomenting confusion exemplify the evolving threat landscape confronting NATO. This underscores the Alliance's exposure to a complex and rapidly shifting threat environment. Cyberattacks may be perpetrated by both state and non-state actors during military operations. Hybrid warfare has also encompassed cyber intrusions, information leaks, and espionage in recent events. Cyber incidents bear geopolitical ramifications and can jeopardize the security, stability, and economic well-being of the Alliance as a whole. NATO currently faces a formidable challenge: how to safeguard itself and its member states against the pernicious power wielded in cyberspace.

The Approach to Cybersecurity at NATO Level

The evolution of NATO's cybersecurity domain has been driven by heightened awareness and the progressive strengthening of incident response capabilities. Positioned at the forefront of cyber defence, NATO has successfully enhanced its cyber capabilities through comprehensive training, education, and rigorous exercises. The 2021 Comprehensive Cyber Defence Policy builds upon NATO's core missions as well as its overarching defence posture and deterrence, thereby enabling the Alliance to further bolster its resilience. Continuously advancing its cybersecurity defence framework, NATO has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt and respond to emerging challenges in the cyber defence landscape through collaboration, information sharing, and sustained training initiatives¹. Experts from the CCDCOE consider that the weaponization of the internet represents one of the most dangerous trends of development of modern cyberspace, and the modern military structures are ready to use it as a parallel battlefield², knowing that space and time considerable changes in the last decades, one of the reasons being the exponential increase of technology.

Among the firsts steps of NATO's approaches were to establish a theoretical framework for the cyber terminology accepted by the member states, as a common understanding, an important aspect directly related to the interoperability necessary within the NATO activity in this area. CCDCOE mentioned before had an important role, also the information from the governmental sources and military field, as it is presented in Figure 1.

	Data sources		
	GOV	MIL	CCDCOE
CAN	6	-	-
EE	5	-	-
FRA	5	-	-
GER	1	1	1
ITA	6	-	1
LIT	3	-	1
NL	6	-	-
ES	5	-	1
SWE	1	1	-
TUR	2	-	1
UK	4	-	-
USA	8	2	-

Figure 1. Data sources of NATO Cyber Operations Doctrinal Publications³

¹NATO, *Cyber Defense*, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics78170.htm> (27.03.2025)

² Christian Czosseck, Kenneth Geers (Eds.), *The Virtual Battlefield: Perspectives on Cyber Warfare*, IOS Press, Amsterdam, Berlin, Tokyo, Wahington, DC, 2009, pp. 119-121

³ Marko Arik, *How Do NATO Members Define Cyber Operations?*, "Communications in Computer and Information Science", December 2023, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-49212-9_2, p. 4

The NATO members states have a comparable understanding of the cyber-related terminology, also similar organizational and logistic infrastructure, as a part of their commitment to realizing and respecting the NATO strategic purposes. In 2021 CCDCOE provided a comparative study on the cyber defense of Alliance's members states, focused on terminology mostly¹. This study clarified the confusion between the terms cyber defense and cyber security, considering that there is no uniform distinction between them², adding though that could be noticed a certain distinction whether is used in a civilian or military environment³. Since 2016 a series of publications on cybersecurity and its terminology have been released by NATO Joint Publications, that contributed to the establishing of a mutual approach in terms of the theoretical framework for the member states. Within the doctrinal publications of the study mentioned before selected countries, there were indicators of the distribution of the publications and whether cyberoperations are defined, as it is presented in Figure 2. It is important to mention in this context of 2016 that at the Warsaw Summit, for the first time NATO declared cyberspace as a military domain, and one year later the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg delivered the NATO Cyber Operations Center (CYOC)⁴.

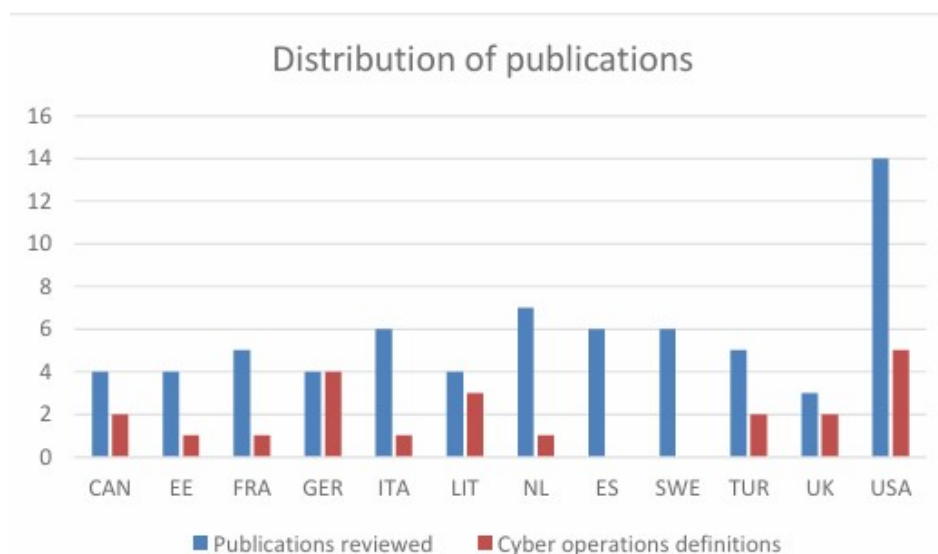


Figure 2. Distribution of NATO Cyber Operations Doctrinal Publications⁵

NATO's involvement in cyber defence demonstrates that the Alliance operates in cyberspace and that cyber defence is a fundamental part of its core mission, collective defence. It is emphasized that NATO is fully aware of the negative effects cyberattacks can have on the vital infrastructures of its member states. NATO's primary responsibility is to defend its Allies against security threats across all domains, including cyberspace. Cyber defence within NATO is not limited to the protection of its own infrastructure; rather, it extends to a broader mission of collective defence of its members. Beyond detecting and countering cyberattacks, this effort includes strengthening the cyber resilience of member states through the sharing of knowledge, experience, and best practices. To support cooperation among member states and international partners, the Alliance has developed a series of policies and strategies that encourage collaboration. This fosters a coordinated and unified response to cyber threats. NATO recognizes the harmful impact cyberattacks can have on critical infrastructures such as financial systems,

¹ Damjan Strucl, *Comparative Study on the Cyber Defence of NATO Members States*, CCDCOE NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence Tallin, 2021, p. 3

² *Ibidem*, p. 21

³ Alexander Klimburg (Ed.), *National Cyber Security Framework Manual*, NATO CCDCOE Publication, 2012, pp. 12-13; Miguel Ferreira da Silva, *Cyber Security vs. Cyber Defense: A Portuguese view in the distinction*, Cyberlaw CIJIC, pp. 1-2

⁴ Jeppe Jacobsen, *Cyber Offence in NATO: Challenges and Opportunities*, "International Affairs", March 2021, p. 3

⁵ Marko Arik, *How Do NATO Members Define Cyber Operations?*, "Communications in Computer and Information Science", December 2023, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-49212-9_2, pp. 4-5

emergency services, communication networks, and other essential aspects of modern life. Thus, cyber defence is seen not only as a technical necessity but also as a key element of both national and international security¹.

NATO's Cybersecurity Strategy within the Strategic Concepts

The early 2000^s marked a watershed moment in the historical trajectory of cybersecurity within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a period during which the organization began to acknowledge and address cyber threats as substantial risks to both national and international security. Foremost among the drivers of this shift was the heightened awareness prompted by the rapid pace of technological advancement and the widespread proliferation of the Internet, both of which fundamentally altered the dynamics of interstate interaction and defense, not only in terms of self-protection but also in safeguarding allied interests. A seminal step in this evolving posture was the establishment, in 2002, of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Cyber Incident Response, a strategic initiative born out of the pressing need for coordinated action and rapid response to cyber incidents with the potential to undermine the critical infrastructures of NATO and EU member states². This initiative emerged as a direct response to the pressing need for coordination and rapid reaction in the face of cyber incidents, which carried the potential to significantly compromise the critical infrastructures of European Union member states. Its core objective was to establish a robust framework for the exchange of information and best practices among NATO member states, with the overarching aim of enhancing collective defence mechanisms against the escalating tide of cyber threats.

Moreover, the cultivation of awareness across the Alliance was prominently emphasized as a strategic priority, with particular focus placed on educational and training dimensions within the cybersecurity domain. This educational approach was conceived not merely as a transfer of knowledge, but as a comprehensive strategy for fostering specialized competencies and developing the institutional capacities required to effectively confront the multifaceted and evolving spectrum of threats within cyberspace³. The current decade has witnessed the evolution of incident response capabilities from relatively modest initial efforts to the formulation of complex and multifaceted strategies that encompass not only reactive measures, but also proactive dimensions of prevention and detection. In alignment with this trajectory, NATO's initiatives have been meticulously designed to ensure effective collective defence, the safeguarding of critical infrastructure, and the sustained functioning of societal life and essential services for citizens⁴.

At the NATO Summit held in Bucharest in April 2008, cybersecurity was officially acknowledged as a strategic domain within the framework of the Alliance's collective security architecture. This formal recognition stemmed from an enhanced understanding of the profound international repercussions that cyber vulnerabilities could engender—ranging from the compromise of a state's critical infrastructure to broader implications for global security. The summit adopted concrete measures aimed at strengthening cyber defense and integrating this dimension into both NATO's military and civilian planning processes. In doing so, it laid the foundational groundwork for subsequent policy development and strategic initiatives in the field of cybersecurity⁵. In May 2007, one year prior to the Bucharest Summit, Estonia became the target of a large-scale cyberattack that effectively paralyzed the country's vital infrastructure, including government institutions, financial systems, and mass media outlets. The attacks were precipitated by a diplomatic and social conflict surrounding the relocation of a Soviet-era monument in Tallinn. This incident starkly illustrates the extent to which modern states are vulnerable to cyberattacks and how such operations can severely disrupt the normal functioning of society. The event holds significant importance in the context of NATO's cybersecurity posture, as it served as a critical catalyst in accelerating the recognition of cybersecurity as an essential component of both national and international security

¹Darius-Antoniou Ferent, Corneliu Preja, *NATO's involvement in Cyber Defense*, <https://www.intelligenceinfo.org/natos-involvement-in-cyber-defence/> (27.03.2025)

²NATO, *Cyber defense*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.html (27.03.2025)

³*Idem*

⁴Kenneth Geers, *Cyberspace and the Changing Nature of Warfare din 2008*, https://ccdc.org/uploads/2018/10/Geers2008_CyberspaceAndTheChangingNatureOfWarfare.pdf (27.03.2025)

⁵MAE, *Summit-ul NATO de la București din 2-4.04.2008*, <https://www.mae.ro/node/1574> (27.03.2025)

frameworks¹. The cyberattacks in 2007 Estonia drew full political attention of NATO. A direct conventional attack on Estonia would precipitate NATO's collective 157 military response. However, the lack of provisions at that time made these attacks unpunished. The Estonian Defense Minister Aaviksoo pointed out this aspect: "At present, Nato does not define cyber-attacks as a clear military action. This means that the provisions of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty, or, in other words collective self-defense, will not automatically be extended to the attacked country"². These attacks served as a wakeup call for NATO's cyber defense capabilities. The development of NATO's cybersecurity policy was significantly shaped by both the 2007 cyberattacks on Estonia and the subsequent formal recognition of cybersecurity at the 2008 Bucharest Summit. These events catalysed collective action and laid the foundation for enhanced cooperation within the Alliance, emphasizing the critical importance of prevention, detection, and response in the face of cyber threats. The decisions taken during these pivotal moments have deeply influenced NATO's approach to cybersecurity, establishing it as a core element of the Alliance's broader security strategy to confront 21st century threats.

In response to the continuously evolving nature of cyber threats, these initiatives underscore the necessity of a proactive and adaptive posture. Nevertheless, despite rapid technological advancements, cybersecurity had not traditionally occupied a prominent place on NATO's strategic agenda. It took a high-profile event such as the cyber assault on Estonia to elevate the issue to the level of a major strategic priority. Further cyberattacks, particularly those that fuelled the crisis in Ukraine's Crimea and Donbas regions, served as an unmistakable wake-up call. At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO declared a state of heightened alert, placing cybersecurity at the forefront of its political agenda. The Allies endorsed a revised Cyber Defence Policy, and an accompanying Action Plan designed to address the shifting nature of cyber threats. This marked the emergence of a more inventive and forward-looking approach to collective defence in the digital era, positioning cybersecurity at the very heart of NATO's strategic vision³.

Regarding cybersecurity, NATO achieved significant progress at the 2016 Warsaw Summit. The Allies decisively concluded that the operationalization of cyberspace would henceforth be integrated as a fundamental component of NATO's defense and planning policy, on par with the terrestrial, maritime, and aerial domains⁴. The NATO Cyber Defence Commitment, a significant outcome of the Warsaw Summit, stipulated that NATO member states prioritize the enhancement of cyber defence capabilities for their national infrastructures and networks. Following this mandate, most member states have reviewed or developed comprehensive national cyber defence strategies. These policy developments have engendered workshops, training courses, and exercises aimed at improving the resilience, expertise, and operational capacities of Allies within the cyber domain.

A particularly notable initiative in this regard is the "Locked Shields" exercise, the largest and most sophisticated international live-fire cyber defence exercise. It is organized annually in Tallinn, Estonia, by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. Locked Shields gather cybersecurity experts from NATO partner countries, member states, and industry with real-time, scenario-based cyberattacks. This immersive exercise enables participants to practice aspects of defending information technology networks and systems, under realistic conditions. Furthermore, NATO's annual Crisis Management Exercise (CMX) now incorporates crisis scenarios related to cyber warfare and hybrid warfare. Within CMX, both military and civilian of the Alliance test consultation and decision-making processes within realistic simulations based on scenarios derived from Articles 4 and 5 of the NATO Treaty. Presently, these exercises, alongside other initiatives such as the annual Cyber Coalition exercise, play a crucial role in enhancing NATO's collective cyber defence capabilities⁵.

¹Rain Ottis, *Theoretical Model for Creating a Nation-State Level Offensive Cyber Capability din 2007*, https://ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/Ottis2009_TheoreticalModelForCreatingANation-StateLevelOffensiveCyberCapability.pdf (27.03.2025)

² The Guardian. (2007, May 17). "Russia accused of unleashing cyberwar to disable Estonia", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/may/17/topstories3.russia> (10.04.2025)

³Ulrich Karock, *NATO after the Wales Summit: Back to Collective Defense din 2014*, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2014/536430/EXPO_BRI%282014%29536430_EN.pdf (27.03.2025)

⁴CCDCOE, *NATO Recognizes Cyberspace as a 'Domain of Operations' at Warsaw Summit din 2016*, <https://ccdcoe.org/incyber-articles/nato-recognises-cyberspace-as-a-domain-of-operations-at-warsaw-summit/> (27.03.2025)

⁵Bruno Lete, Dalga Dege, *NATO Cybersecurity: A Roadmap to Resilience din 2017*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18857?searchText=NATO+and+Cybersecurity&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch>

In accordance with the NATO-EU Joint Declaration from the Warsaw Summit¹, NATO has also been actively advocating for the intensification of its cooperation with the European Union in the field of cyber defence, recognizing the mutual interest of both entities in enhancing resilience. In February 2016, NATO and the EU formalized this collaboration by signing a technical agreement on cyber defence, aimed at improving communication, cooperation, and information exchange between NATO's Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) and the EU's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-EU). Moreover, the European Union has regularly participated in NATO's cyber defence exercises, further solidifying this partnership. Furthermore, NATO increasingly acknowledges the critical importance of collaboration with industry partners to enable the Alliance to fulfil its cyber defence policy objectives. The NATO Industry Cyber Partnership was inaugurated in September 2014 as a strategic initiative to foster closer engagement with the private sector in addressing cyber threats². This initiative signifies the imperative for NATO and industry to collaborate more closely in combating cyber threats through the exchange of information, expertise, and best practices. A strategic partnership between NATO and the EU, the cooperation in the complementary development of defense and security capabilities and the cohesion and efficiency of NATO and EU, and transnational connections are important factors³ that could contribute to the proper development of the strategic interest in the cyber security field.

NATO cannot afford complacency or optimism in the face of the transformative challenges posed by the digital era. The Alliance is now poised for a critical test and, in this regard, remains in a comparatively precarious position to manage the rapid changes that cyberspace has introduced to the security domain. In the eyes of its members, partners, and adversaries alike, NATO must consolidate its standing as a robust and formidable force within the cyber environment. To achieve this imperative, NATO must persist in enhancing its cyber force multiplication capabilities, refine its command and decision-making systems to operate effectively during cyber crises and conflicts, and bolster interoperability with cyber allies and partners. Swift responses to contemporary security challenges demand flexible policy frameworks that empower networked actors with the discretion to employ coercive measures as appropriate.

In alignment with the emerging digital world order, NATO's forthcoming high-level summits must continue to evolve and adapt the Alliance's posture and strategic orientation⁴.

Article 5 in the Context of Cybersecurity

Even though the application of Article 5 of the Alliance is characterized by flexibility in the application process, as an essential aspect of the Alliance' integrity, it also could create some specific uncertainties in the terms of cyberspace. Article 5 refers to the Principle of Individual or Collective Defense, and states that "an armed attack against one or more [parties] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all [which then] will assist the Party [by taking] such action as it deems necessary [...] to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area"⁵.

At the 2021 NATO Summit in Brussels, member states adopted a Comprehensive Cyber Defence Policy aimed at reinforcing NATO's three core tasks and strengthening its overall deterrence and defence posture. They reaffirmed NATO's defensive role and pledged to use the full spectrum of capabilities to deter, defend against, and respond to the entire range of cyber threats—potentially through collective action. These responses must be continuous and utilize the full breadth of NATO's instruments, including political, diplomatic, and military tools.

%3FQuery%3DNATO%2Band%2BCybersecurity%26so%3Drel&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A03d70d1e89a7f472381c8f454036a6c9&seq=1, (11.03.2025)

¹Consiliul European, *Summitul NATO, Varşovia, Polonia, 8-9.07.2016*, <https://www.consiliium.europa.eu/ro/meetings/international-summit/2016/07/08-09/> (25.03.2025)

²Bruno Lete, Dalga Dege, *NATO Cybersecurity: A Roadmap to Resilience din 2017*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18857?searchText=NATO+and+Cybersecurity&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DNATO%2Band%2BCybersecurity%26so%3Drel&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A03d70d1e89a7f472381c8f454036a6c9&seq=1 (17.03.2025)

³ Rajnai Zoltan, Dai Phuoc Huu Nguyen (Eds.), *Cyber Security*, L'Karmattan, Paris, 2023, pp. 25-27

⁴*Idem*

⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (10.03.2025)

Allies also acknowledged that the cumulative effect of significant malicious cyber activities could, under certain conditions, be considered an armed attack, potentially prompting the North Atlantic Council to invoke Article 5 on a case-by-case basis. Given the complex nature of cyberspace, a unified and comprehensive approach is essential across political, military, and technical dimensions. The 2021 policy, along with its action plan, guides NATO's efforts across all three levels.

Despite NATO's recognition of the critical importance of enhancing cyber capabilities, significant ambiguities and challenges persist. A fundamental issue concerns the ambiguity surrounding the application of Article 5 in the context of cyberattacks, raising complex questions regarding the threshold at which a cyber incident qualifies as an "armed attack" warranting a collective response. Myriam Dunn Cavelty further highlights the risk that NATO may overextend its mandate in the cyber domain, potentially exceeding its capacity and available resources. The author considers that NATO needs to avoid its Article 5 aspirations for cyberattacks and risks taking on too much cybersecurity accountability¹.

To build a resilient and adaptive cyber defence posture, NATO members and international partners must foster closer cooperation and robust information sharing. It is imperative to underscore the necessity for a coordinated and balanced approach to effectively address cyber threats, emphasizing the continuous adaptation of NATO's strategies to the rapidly evolving security environment².

NATO remains firmly committed to upholding international law, including the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law, where applicable. The Alliance continues to advocate for free, open, peaceful, and secure cyberspace, while advancing efforts to strengthen stability and minimize the risk of conflict. This includes promoting respect for international legal frameworks and supporting voluntary norms for responsible state behavior in cyberspace³. The problem of ensuring the security of information technologies and systems of NATO and its members has, in addition to issues of technical support and strategic planning, a political dimension. First, this refers to the possibility of applying Article 5 of the Founding Treaty in relation to information attacks. The most active protagonists of the expansion of the principle of collective responsibility in the field of information security are Estonia and, partially, the USA⁴. Some authors consider that by not releasing the terms of the policy (related to the NATO Space Policy as classified) the alliance doesn't clearly outline how and if the Article 5 protections apply to space assets⁵. The question is if an attack via cyber means may be considered an armed attack, as it may not be executed through traditional, physical armed forces. In this context it is important to additionally refer to Article 6, the Nationality Principle – an attack is only recognized if "deemed to include an armed attack on the territory of any of the Parties (...) in the forces, vessels, or aircrafts of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area"⁶. Also, we need to mention that NATO's cyber defense actions are framed within Article 4 – members will consult together in the case of cyber-attacks, even though are not duty bound to aid each other as it is described in Article 5. "Keeping NATO's cyber defense within Article 4 mechanisms is in fact crucial if NATO wants to remain a credible player in cybersecurity matters—anything else would lead to severe legal, practical, and strategic problems. However, it is very likely that there will be further attempts to move the

¹ Myriam Dunn Cavelty, *Cyber-Allies. Strengths and Weaknesses of NATO's Cyber Defence posture*, IP Global Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 11

² Myriam Dunn Cavelty, *Cyber-Allies: Strengths and Weaknesses of NATO's Cyber Defense Posture* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228199410_Cyber-Allies_Strengths_and_Weaknesses_of_NATO's_Cyberdefense_Posture (27.03.2024)

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Cyber Defense*, 30th of July 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm#:~:text=At%20the%202021%20NATO%20Summit%20in%20Brussels%2C%20Allies,well%20as%20its%20overall%20deterrence%20and%20defence%20posture.

⁴ Paul Neuman, *NATO and Cyber Security*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352107026_NATO_and_Cyber_Security (12.04.2025)

⁵ Myriam Dunn Cavelty, *Cyber-Allies. Strengths and Weaknesses of NATO's Cyber Defence Posture*, IP Global Edition, Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 14

⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (10.03.2025)

cyber topic under the frame of Article 5”¹. If we add at those already mentioned in this context the 2022 Albanian incidents, that spurred renewed discussions on how Article 5 ought to apply in cybers space².

Conclusions

Over time, the Alliance has implemented initiatives and measures to enhance the cyber defense capabilities of its member states and ensure a coordinated response to cyberattacks. NATO has recognized the critical importance of cybersecurity and has developed comprehensive policies and institutional frameworks to address these emerging threats. Cyberspace has become an essential operational domain for NATO, prompting the Alliance to adapt and respond to these emerging security challenges. Founded on the principle of collective defence, the North Atlantic Alliance has consistently demonstrated a capacity for adaptation to effectively address evolving threats to the security of its member states. A significant shift in NATO’s security doctrine was the formal recognition of cyberspace as a distinct operational domain, on par with the traditional domains of land, air, and sea. This strategic reorientation underscores the critical importance of cyberspace and NATO’s commitment to safeguarding the vital digital infrastructures of its members against cyberattacks. NATO possesses sophisticated mechanisms that enable member nations to collaborate and coordinate effectively to ensure robust cyber defense.

These mechanisms, including Center of Excellence, rapid response teams, and unified cybersecurity policies are specifically designed to facilitate swift and coordinated reactions to cyber threats. Major cyber incidents, such as attacks targeting vital infrastructure within member states, have exposed existing vulnerabilities and underscored the necessity of a cohesive and efficient approach to managing such threats. These events have brought to light the imperative of implementing a common strategy and fostering international cooperation to respond effectively to the complex challenges of the cyber domain. In an increasingly digitalized world, cybersecurity has become a fundamental component of both national and international security.

The protection of critical infrastructure and sensitive data from cyber threats has gained prominence over recent decades, leading to the emergence and evolution of the cybersecurity paradigm. Cyber threats have far-reaching implications, impacting the global economy, public health systems, and national security. Vulnerabilities within cyber infrastructure can result in significant financial losses, erode public trust, and pose substantial risks to public health and safety. Strengthening cybersecurity requires robust international cooperation.

To establish common security standards and facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, NATO actively engages with other international organizations, such as the European Union, as well as with non-member states. Current trends underscore the urgent need for a cybersecurity posture that is both resilient and adaptable. Threats such as ransomware, phishing, and the deployment of automation and AI in cyberattacks exemplify the dynamic nature of the cyber domain. NATO has long acknowledged the importance of cybersecurity and has established policies and institutional structures aimed at countering these risks. Over time, the Alliance has implemented a range of initiatives and measures to enhance the cyber defences of its member states and ensure a cohesive and coordinated response to cyberattacks. High-profile cybersecurity incidents such as attacks on healthcare systems and critical infrastructure have demonstrated the extent to which contemporary society remains exposed to digital vulnerabilities. These threats are continuously evolving, becoming increasingly complex and sophisticated.

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¹ Myriam Dunn Cavelty, *Op. cit.*, p. 14

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