

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

TRANSFORMING CONFLICTS AND BUILDING PEACE

(second edition)



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Presa Universitară Clujeană

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DELIA POP-FLANJA AND LAURA M. HERȚA
(EDITORS)

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CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION. TRANSFORMING CONFLICTS AND BUILDING PEACE

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This volume aims to bring together articles which present, explore, analyse and interpret salient events from the international arena. The focus falls on those phenomena and events which have a global outreach and which impact entire communities, as well as individuals and domestic/sub-state groups. Traditionally, the analysis of *international politics* used to evoke a Realist view and mind-set and, starting with the 1970s, a Neorealist outlook, according to which phenomena occurring in world politics generated reactions from state actors and, hence, state interaction and state behaviour were observed and commented on.

This collection of studies is centred on *and* owes its methodological structure to the conceptualization of authors such as John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, as stated and explained in the book *The Globalization of World Politics*.¹ The book shows the transition from the *inter*-state relations to the *global/globalized*, interconnected and interdependent ones, which is more resembling to the ontology of an international society (like the one theorized by the English School scholars) than to the *international* system in which isomorphism is implicit and the distribution of material power is essential in understanding global events and phenomena.

Therefore, theoretically and methodologically, this volume subscribes to interpretative analyses which focus on shared ideas of state actors, on norms and their role in international relations (both constitutive and regulative, as defined and theorized by Kratochwil²), on international law, as well as on the role of international organizations and institutions. Consequently, the chief premise is, as stated by Alexander Wendt, that international politics is rather social than material³, and intersubjective knowledge and shared meanings are equally important in observing global phenomena and state behaviours, as material power is.

This volume brings together various analyses which look at the structural transformations in global politics or at regional level which have a significant impact not only on governmental or foreign policy decision making processes, but also on groups defined in identity terms, on the societies within the states. The Covid-19 pandemic, the war, tackled as illegitimate means of ending disputes, the European Union and its tools for conflict resolution,

¹ John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

² Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions. On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

³ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

crisis communication during emergency situations, these are all phenomena and processes which are problematized in this collection of texts.

The perspectives undertaken by authors, meaning the lenses through which events and phenomena are presented, described and analysed, as well as their impact on societies and individuals are specific to the fields of study *Conflict Resolution*, *Crisis Communication*, and *Security Studies*.

The first one centres on various ways through which disputes or conflicts are solved. Essentially, the field of Conflict Resolution includes a lexicon and a conceptual framework which relevant for understanding peace accords, international mediation, the role of humanitarian law and human rights, and the capacity of international or regional organizations in preventing conflicts, ending wars and minimizing horrific effects of armed conflicts on people and on human security. The terminology employed in this volume include negotiations, mediation, interdependence, conflict resolution, normative power (usually associated with the European Union), conflict prevention, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, peace-making.

Therefore, we will briefly define some key terms which are prevailing throughout this volume. Conflict transformation is understood as a set of “activities which influence inter-group conflicts with the aim of promoting sustainable peace and social justice.”⁴ According to Roderick von Lipsey, conflict prevention entails the use of “measures and mechanisms that reduce tensions [...] or coerce cooperation between individuals, groups, and the state in such a way as to prevent the occurrence of war.”⁵ Others follow the same line of thought, focusing on the need to prevent a dispute from turning into violent conflict, by tackling conflict prevention as a “set of instruments used to prevent or solve disputes before they have developed into active conflicts.”⁶ Since the aim is to find non-violent ways of addressing conflicts/disputes, many practitioners prefer the terms “crisis prevention” or “violence prevention.”⁷ Conflict transformation is often “described as a complex process of constructively changing relationships, attitudes, behaviours, interests and discourses in violence-prone conflict settings.”⁸ As far as conflict management is concerned, it “is a theoretical concept focusing on the limitation, mitigation, and/or containment of a conflict without necessarily solving it.”⁹ But, conflict resolution refers to specific measures taken in order to solve the conflict, ideally addressing its root causes. As defined elsewhere, conflict resolution “has traditionally referred to measures attempting to resolve the underlying incompatibilities of a conflict, including attempts to get the parties to mutually accept each other’s existence.”¹⁰ The Conflict Resolution literature also distinguishes between two chief phases after armed conflicts are over. The first one represents the signing of the peace

⁴ Martina Fischer, and Norbert Ropers, “Introduction”, *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, 2004, p. 13. <https://www.berghof-foundation.org/ar/publications/handbook/berghof-handbook-for-conflict-transformation/>.

⁵ Roderick von Lipsey, *Breaking the Cycle*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997, p. 5.

⁶ Niklas L.P. Swanström and Mikael S. Weissmann, *Conflict, Conflict Prevention, Conflict Management and beyond: a conceptual exploration*, Washington: Johns Hopkins University, 2005, p. 5; Sophia Clément, *Conflict Prevention in the Balkans: Case Studies of the FYR Macedonia*, Alencon: Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1997.

⁷ Berghof Foundation (ed.), *Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation*, 2012, p. 18.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Swanström and Weissmann, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Fred Tanner, “Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution: Limits of Multilateralism”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, September 2000.

¹⁰ Swanström and Weissmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6; Peter Wallensteen, *Understanding Conflict Resolution: war, peace and the global system*, London: SAGE, 2002.

agreement (which can turn into an entire, long-term process, when there are deep-rooted grievances); here, the course of negotiations is crucial, and the role mediator can prove to be essential. The second phase, however, is much more fragile and represents the implementation of the provisions included in the peace agreement. Often this post-conflict phase includes complicated issues, such as return of refugees and internally displaced people (and property rights), organization of new, fair, democratic elections, disarmament and reintegration of former soldiers/irregulars etc.

The role of the United Nations in preventing, but rather intervening to mitigate and end conflicts is discussed in several chapters of this book. The conceptual architecture includes some important terms: peace-making, peace keeping, peacebuilding, mediation. Peace-making refers to several diplomatic efforts undertaken by states, state leaders, but most often in world politics by the UN in order to compel parties to a conflict to end hostilities, reach a ceasefire and start negotiating a peace settlement. Roderick von Lipsey showed that “UN peace-making brings hostile parties to agreement through diplomatic means” and emphasized the crucial role of the UN Secretary General in this sense. Also, Roderick von Lipsey argues that “in its most narrow interpretation, peacekeeping is the use of neutral forces between, and with the consent of, previously warring parties for the maintenance of an existing cease-fire or cessation of hostilities.”¹¹ According to the International Peace Academy, the chief role of peacekeeping operations (PKOs) is “the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states, through the medium of a peaceful third-party intervention organized and directed internationally, using a multinational force of soldiers, police, and civilians to restore and maintain peace.”¹² Post-conflict peace building is a term meant to capture the entire set of processes and changes at the end of violent conflicts. The term separates from the act of ending a war and signing a peace agreement by the leaders of parties that have been engaged in violence from the medium and long term process of building peace and bringing about reconciliation at societal level. According to the United Nations, “peacebuilding aims to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. It is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace.”¹³ Finally, the term mediation is essential in the field of Conflict Resolution. Oran Young defines it as “any action taken by an actor that is not a direct party to the crisis, that is designed to reduce or remove one or more of the problems of the bargaining relationship, and therefore to facilitate the termination of the crisis itself.”¹⁴ Linda Singer tackles mediation as a “form of third-party assistance [that] involves an outsider to the dispute who lacks the power to make decisions for the parties.”¹⁵ Negotiations, mediation and arbitration are terms which display a range of scholarly approaches and interpretations.

¹¹ von Lipsey, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 15.

¹² *Apud* Dennis C. Jett, *Why Peacekeeping Fails*, New York: Palgrave, 1999.

¹³ United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>, accessed November 2022.

¹⁴ *Apud* Jacob Bercovitch, “Mediation in international conflict”, in William Zartman; J. Lewis Rasmussen (eds.), *Peacemaking in International Conflict. Methods and Conflicts*, Washington, D.C., 1997, pp. 125-153.

¹⁵ *Apud ibidem*.

The second field of study illustrates the role of communication during unfolding conflicts or crises which trigger structural transformations, reactions from policy makers, but which also generate anxiety and lack of predictability at societal level. Therefore, Crisis Communication uses various instruments and protocols and is meant to provide stability, the sense of control, and the prospect of overcoming the crisis. Crisis communication is the first step towards crisis management and, as explained by Timothy Coombs, can be defined as “the strategic use of words and actions to manage information and meaning during the crisis process.”¹⁶

The field of (International) Security Studies has only been recently introduced in Romania. However, in the United States and Great Britain it played a major role in academia during the Cold War period. It was at the time equated with strategic studies while security almost always meant *national* security. Therefore, the traditional understanding of security overwhelmingly emanated the Realist account. The realist thought in International Relations is committed to a materialist view on states’ interaction and thus to the equation of state security to both capabilities and inter-governmental relations. The political, economic and cultural framework of the Cold War provided impetus for the validation of such perspective.

However, the aftermath of the Cold War also indicated the shift from inter-state wars to intra-state ones and brought along new issues for International Security Studies. The 1990’s were marked by an increase in intra-state armed conflicts and ethno-political strife, but it also witnessed innovations and developments on the field of humanitarian law. Africa represents the illustrative region for the salience of intra-state violence, humanitarian emergencies, proliferation of insurgent armed groups and civilian insecurity.¹⁷ The United Nations tried to cope with the new challenges in its Security Council Resolutions and its humanitarian interventions. New threats triggered the need to revisit the concept of security and to analyze its new accommodating dimensions. The terms *securitization/de-securitization*, *ontological security*, *positive/negative security*, *societal security* and *human security* were designed for this purpose.

Ole Waever underlined that “security is, in historical terms, the field where states threaten each other, challenge each other’s sovereignty, try to impose their will on each other, defend their independence [...]”.¹⁸ The realm of Security Studies could be roughly subdivided into *traditional, military and state-centric* views, on the one hand, and *non-traditional approaches*, on the other hand. Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen focused on the disciplinary boundaries of International Security Studies and International Relations in order to see “where ISS ends and other academic disciplines, particularly IR, begin” and underlined that “[t]he boundary between ISS and IR is difficult to draw.”¹⁹ However, the scholars point, “in the early decades

¹⁶ W. Timothy Coombs, “Crisis Communication. The Best Evidence from Research”, in Jr. Gephart, C. Chet Miller, Karin Svedberg Helgesson (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Risk, Crisis and Emergency Management*, Routledge, 2019, see chapter 4.

¹⁷ Laura M. Herța, “Intra-State Violence in D.R. Congo and Features of ‘New War’ Scenarios”, in *The 21st International Conference - The Knowledge-Based Organization, Management and Military Sciences, Conference Proceedings* 1, 11-13 June 2015, “Nicolae Balcescu” Land Forces Academy Publishing House, Sibiu, 2015, DOI: 10.1515/kbo-2015-0006, pp. 44-49.

¹⁸ Ole Waever, “Securitization and Desecuritization”, in Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen (eds.), *International Security (volume III Widening Security)*, London: Sage Publications, 2007, p. 69.

¹⁹ Barry Buzan, Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 16.

following the Second World War, the answer to this problem could have been given with some accuracy as: 'What distinguishes ISS from the general field of IR is its focus on the use of force in international relations'."²⁰

The chapters included here are revised and extended versions of papers presented during the second edition of the International Conference *Crisis Communication and Conflict Resolution* and focus on issues which expose the interplay among crisis communication, conflict resolution and security studies.

The first chapter, titled *Successes and Failures of the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions*, focuses on the identification and analysis of the factors which are more important than others when it comes to achieving a successful United Nations mission. Jovanovska and Andeva aim to show the need for further development in the area of peacekeeping operations. The research analyses five completed peacekeeping missions all with different outcomes in two phases. The chapter divides each peacekeeping mission into successful ones or failed ones. Then the research brings forth four different factors which can most affect the outcome of the mission. The results of this analysis indicate what a successful peacekeeping mission should ideally look like and what minimises the fatalities of an armed conflict.

In their paper on the *Norwegian Cultural Values Emerging from the Discourse on the Russian Invasion in Ukraine*, Raluca Pop and Ioana-Andreea Mureşan focused on how Norwegian discussions about the Russian invasion of Ukraine can help people better comprehend Norwegian culture. To emphasize some of the most salient Norwegian cultural characteristics, such as promoting peace, equality, and global solidarity, they conducted a discourse analysis of media coverage from the national television and a press release published by the Norwegian government. The study's primary contribution relates to its didactic relevance, in the context of teaching Norwegian as a foreign language.

In their paper on *The Rhetorical Paradigm, Language Use, and Power Control in Crisis Communication: A Case Study of the Mh370 Disappearance*, Wang Huabin and Yang Yu examine the language manifestations of the crisis response tactics used by Malaysia Airlines and the Malaysian state during the disappearance of Flight MH370. The results of this qualitative study point out that before drawing conclusions about the efficacy of changing behaviours, communication researchers and crisis managers should look at how a variety of linguistic devices and discursive strategies are used to reveal the nature of organizational discourse, its underpinning power, and projected images.

The chapter signed by Aldea and Herţa analyses the success of the intervention in Sierra Leone conducted by a regional organization, namely The Economic Community of West African States and an international body, specifically The United Nations. In this sense, our analysis uses concepts related to peace studies relevant to our research, such as "new wars", "peacekeeping" and "peacebuilding". Building on such concepts, the chapter aims to show the importance of the intervention in Sierra Leone in terms of regional peace initiatives, cooperation and dissension between ECOWAS and the UN and the important lessons that the intervention provided. Accordingly, the paper poses the following research questions: What

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

were the major obstacles and difficulties of the intervention? Was the intervention successful in bringing an end to systemic violence?

In her chapter, Tóké Gyöngyvér Erika sets the goal of the research as follows: to offer an overview of the digital transformation discourses of significant IT businesses in Cluj-Napoca from March 11 to December 31, 2020. The paper focuses on a thematic content analysis of 107 corporate website articles connected to the Covid-19 epidemic from nine big Cluj-Napoca-based IT firms. The organizations investigated communicated primarily with their functional target groups, namely customers and workers, during the epidemic. Their key message was that the status quo was no longer viable and that digital transformation may aid in crisis resolution. The findings of the exploratory study are consistent with the literature, which shows that the Covid-19 pandemic reinforced the positive discourses of digital transformation processes.

In his chapter, Radu Albu Comănescu examines the new narrative adopted by Romanian diplomacy through the examination of two documents: a 2020 op-ed by Bogdan Aurescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the National Defence Plan released the same year. The two texts communicate a message, the investigation of which is important in understanding not only the trajectory of Romanian foreign policy, but also the method in which communication is developed in order to express the new narrative.

Doina Gavrilov, in the paper *Social networks between managing and triggering crises: An empirical analysis of the social media impact during the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine*, in addition to outlining the significance of boosting the participation of legitimate authorities in the information process and social dialogue management in the online environment, covers the European reaction to social media manipulation and crisis management. The study analyses the role of social networks in educating the public during the COVID 19 pandemic and the Ukraine War, in mobilizing the European society for a coordinated response to these crises, as well as the issues these networks raised during the crises, such as the propagation of mass fears. The article ends with a series of recommendations for enhancing the ability to resolve disputes.

Georgiana Manole-Andrei and Luminița Oprea contribute to the studies on coronavirus crisis communication with a paper on *The analysis of universities' messages during the first and the last part of the coronavirus crisis and the first part of the Ukraine crisis*; given the prevalence of false information and the necessity for reliable information, it became crucial for universities to use social media platforms to communicate. In the current study, the authors analysed the messages distributed by the institutions during and after the state of emergency, with the goal of comparing the primary decisions that universities communicated via their social media pages, looking into their content, format, and frequency. The results showed that the messages from the universities focused on *the decision that the courses will start in a face-to-face format and the debate on the situation in Ukraine*.

Sabina Rusu is another author that focused on the crisis situation in Ukraine, and proposed a paper on the *Conditions for War Termination in Ukraine – A Bargaining Model Perspective*. The paper's focus is on the perspectives for ending the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. By using the bargaining model of war and drawing on game theory literature and tools, the main questions that direct the research are whether a ceasefire is equivalent to the end of the war, or, in other words, how likely is the emergence of a long-

term, stable peace versus a new prolonged conflict, and what are the minimal conditions that must be met for the war to end.

In his paper on *Social Resilience – Key Factor in Managing Crisis, Conflicts and Other Challenges*, Radu-Gabriel Goliță highlights that every time crises or conflicts arise, they have a profound impact on people and society, and history has relevant examples to demonstrate that life continues after these tragedies brought on by human activity or natural disasters. By combining theoretical underpinnings with several questionnaires and interviews conducted by the author, this study illustrates how people view resilience, how much they comprehend it, what they believe could be done to improve it, and what variables they see as detrimental to reaching this goal.

Mihaela Șerpi concentrates on ethnic and political migration, which she believes is an under-researched topic in academic literature and migration studies. According to her, this topic becomes more complex when seen through the eyes of a post-Soviet unrecognized state that remained in a state of frozen conflict. This article examines the phenomenon of ethnic and political migration from Moldova's Transnistrian area, a tiny strip of land on the left bank of the Dniester River. This research will look specifically at the major characteristics of ethnic and political migration from the disputed area between Moldova and the Russian Federation. This study is based on documentary research as well as data from the Transnistrian Statistical Service.

Adrian Ionuț, in his chapter entitled *Putin's Discourse Analysis during the Russian-Ukrainian War*, shows how salient a role political discourses have in the fields of political science, international relations, or communication. The author intends to show how they are also categorically differentiated according to the context in which they are given or the content they possess. This research captures the analysis of Vladimir Putin's speeches on February 24 and September 21, respectively, highlighting an important number of discursive peculiarities. Also, a comparative analysis between the two speeches is included and this is meant to indicate observations that at first sight cannot be noticed.

George Bontea, in his chapter *The "War on Terror" in Xinjiang and the Issue of the Uyghur Minority*, shows how, in recent years, the situation of the Uyghurs community is more and more publicized due to charges of abuses from Chinese administration. Methodologically, the research paper is shaped along the following research question: Why did the international community tacitly accept the situation of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang on the basis of a "terror" discourse promoted by China? The interpretative approach undertaken in this chapter is (successfully) a social-constructivist one, chosen in order to be able to understand how the perceptions of the international community on this case were built. However, so far, Bontea argues that we do not have a specific portrayal of the situation thus far owing to China's lack of openness; in other words (or in a more realistic language), the Chinese state wants its sovereignty to be respected when dealing with and settling internal disputes, shows the author.

In her chapter, Francesca Dubariu shows that the 2021 Myanmar coup d'état confirmed a persistent, but sometimes forgotten reality: the influence of the military junta is strongly embodied into the Burmese political culture. In this context, discussions about the legitimacy and necessity of an eventual UN peacekeeping mission sparked the interest of many scholars. However, the main goal of Dubariu's study is to take things one step further

and analyse the effectiveness of such an intervention, should it occur. The focus of the research relies on the capabilities of a UN peacekeeping mission in assuring a true and long-lasting democratic transition, by changing the political environment and involving all ethnic communities.

Last, but definitely not least, Ramona A. Neagoş presents a very interesting account on the development of conflict resolution as a field of study. Her chapter focuses on the main stages and moments in this chronology and identifies the relevant scholars: Johan Galtung, Edward Azar, John W. Burton, Leonard Doob, Herbert C. Kelman, Ronald J. Fisher, John Paul Lederach, D.D. Laitin, Marshall Montyg, Ted Robert Gurr, Louis Kriesberg, Nadim Rouhana, Peter Wallensteen, William Zartman, J. Lewis Rasmussen, Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, Oliver Richmond etc. Also, the chapter shows how the field of International Conflict Resolution also experienced a continuous expansion, becoming institutionalized in colleges, universities, governmental and non-governmental agencies.

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SUCSESSES AND FAILURES OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

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Introduction

Throughout the decades, peacekeeping, conflict prevention, peace enforcement and peace-making were some of the goals in the UN peacekeeping operations. However even after countless peacekeeping missions there often are failures in attaining peace in a turbulent territory. This research intends in part to find out why that is and what are the factors which are most credited in bringing a successful end to a peacekeeping mission. This research evaluates five peacekeeping missions: UNEF 1 (United Nations Emergency Force) UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force), UNPREDEP (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force), UNMIBH (United Nations Mission in Bosnia- Herzegovina) and UNSMIS (United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria). Then the research compares the four different factors relating them to the outcome of the mission. The research contains both successful and unsuccessful missions so that a comparison between the factors' dynamic of the successful missions can be made versus the factors' dynamic in the unsuccessful missions. These factors include the safety of the environment, the time management, the budgeting and the inclusion of external forces.

Later a contrast is made between the successful and failed missions and how each factor impacted their outcome. The goal of the research is to guide future peacekeeping planning sessions and also cause the emergence for more discussions around the dynamics that influence peacekeeping missions.

UN Emergency Force

The first UN Emergency Force (UNEF I) was founded to supervise the retraction of French, Israeli and the UK forces from the Egyptian territory after the establishment of the ceasefire. The mission meant to serve as a buffer zone between the Egyptian and Israeli troops, oversee Suez Canal's cleaning operations, and ensure cooperation from the parties in implementing the armistice agreement.²¹

UNEF, as the original peacekeeping force, represented a significant innovation within the United Nations. This operation was a peacekeeping operation to be carried out with the

²¹ Middle East UNEF 1 Mandate, 2003, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/unefi.htm>.

accord and the cooperation of the parties to the conflict²² UNEF 1, stationed completely on Egyptian territory with the approval of the Government, guarded the Egypt-Israel armistice demarcation line and the international frontier to the south of the Gaza Strip and conveyed relative peace to a long-troubled region. The UN cleared the Canal, blocked as a result of the conflict. UNEF 1 was withdrawn in May-June, 1967, at the host government's request. According to Diehl this operation had several setbacks. This is because war started between Egypt and Israel in 1967, which happened immediately after Egypt insisted the UN to withdraw UNEF I from its territory²³ UNEF 1 introduced the term 'holy trinity' of traditional peacekeeping: consent, neutrality, and minimum use of force. The Headquarters of the mission were in Gaza, under the supervision of the Force Commander Lieutenant-General E.L.M. Burns. At its maximum the mission had 6,073 military staff, supported by international and local civilian staff, while at the end it had 3,378 military staff. The budget and expenses added to \$214.2 million. The total number of deaths was 110 people, out of which 109 were military personnel and one was local staff.

The safety of the environment where the mission took place could be rated as safe since the first objective of Secretary-General Hammarskjöld was to secure a ceasefire in accordance with the call of the General Assembly during the establishment of the resolution for deployment of UNEF1. Egypt, Israel and British and French troops all agreed to ceasefire. Moreover, the stationing of UNEF 1 in Egypt was in consent with the Egyptian government as per the references above. There was no inclusion of external forces during the UNEF1 deployment, in fact expulsion of external forces could be said to have been the case in this mission. Once external forces of bordering countries such as Jordan, Syria and Iraq were involved at the end of the term of UNEF1 tensions heightened. The funding of the mission exceeded around 200 million dollars throughout the entire decade as stated above with the reference provided. In terms of time management, the mission followed precise steps and time limits as such:

Between 1956 - 1957:

- 1) Negotiations with the Egyptian Government (on deploying UNEF 1 in Egypt)
- 2) Creation of the Good Faith Agreement
- 3) Creation of the Status of Faith Agreement
- 4) Negotiation with participating countries
- 5) Organisation of UNEF
- 6) Establishment of ceasefire
- 7) Withdrawal of Anglo-French forces
- 8) Initial withdrawal of Israeli Forces
- 9) Second withdrawal of Israeli Forces
- 10) Final Withdrawal of Israeli Forces
- 11) Deployment of UNEF 1
- 12) First Phase: Suez Canal
- 13) Second Phase: Sinai Peninsula
- 14) Third Phase: Gaza Strip and Sharm El Sheikh

²² Paul F Diehl, Daniel Druckman, *Evaluating Peace Operations*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.

²³ Shlomo Aloni, *Six-Day War 1967: Operation focus and the 12 hours that changed the Middle East*, 2019.

Between 1958 - 1967

- 1) Final Phase: Deployment Along the Borders
- 2) Withdrawal of UNEF 1

In conclusion the mission's success could be prescribed to the following factors: operating in a safe environment, not including external forces, obtaining precise time management of all steps and actions prior the deployment of peacekeepers, and sufficient yet frugal funding for around six thousand staff members over the course of a decade.

UN Protection Force

The UN Protection Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNPROFOR) had "to protect the delivery of humanitarian aid" during the Bosnian War²⁴ UNPROFOR's mandate was to ensure that the three "United Nations Protected Areas" (UNPAs) in Croatia were demilitarized and that everyone living in them were protected, although it was originally, established in Croatia as an interim arrangement to create the conditions of peace and security. In the course of 1992, UNPROFOR's mandate was expanded to include monitoring functions in certain other areas of Croatia. Later it also incorporated control the entry of civilians into the UNPAs and performance of immigration and customs functions at the UNPA borders at international frontiers. In June 1992, as the conflict intensified and extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNPROFOR's mandate and capacity were increased in order to maintain the security of the airport at Sarajevo, and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to that city and its districts. In September 1992, additional tasks were undertaken by UNPROFOR, including supporting the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to deliver humanitarian relief in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to protect convoys of released civilian detainees on the request of the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the supervision of the "no-fly" zone and the "safe areas" in Sarajevo and around several other towns. NATO acted as a support of UNPROFOR in self-defence, allowing UNPROFOR to use its power if any of these areas were attacked. In resolution 941, the Council demanded that Bosnian Serb authorities immediately end their campaign of ethnic cleansing in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The number of UN staff included 38,599 military personnel, including 684 United Nations military observers; 803 civilian police, 2,017 other international civilian staff and 2,615 local staff. The fatalities included 167 out of which 3 military observers, 159 other military personnel, 1 civilian police, 2 international civilian staff and 2 local staff. The expenditures amounted to about \$1.6 billion. Yet the mission was unable to prevent or mediate around the massacres and ethnic cleansing that went on. The UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia- Herzegovina is considered as unsuccessful, with great casualties suffered from the Blue Helmets, use of force from the peacekeepers' side and extensive financing that did not lead to the prevention of the human atrocities that took place during the war. The safety of the environment where the mission took place could be rated as unsafe, as the peacekeepers were deployed in the middle of an already heated war in Bosnia- Herzegovina and the mission was not carried out with much support from the host government at the beginning. The help of external forces, in particular NATO did not aid the outcome of mission and created more tension in the ongoing conflict and the countries involved. The time management of the actions of the deployed forces was being created as the

²⁴ Department of Peacekeeping Information, Former Yugoslavia United Nations Protection Force, 1996.

conflict was evolving and had many unexpected and unplanned turns such as the arrival of the UN Secretary General in Sarajevo. The initial involvement of UNPROFOR went from making sure the Sarajevo airport was safe to receive humanitarian aid and support of UNHCR to the peacekeepers being authorised to use force in the case of attacks on the safe areas, all within a year, which took strain on the already tumultuous time management. The UNPROFOR mission was one of the most financed in that period. Although for a force of around 39 thousand peacekeepers, a budget of around 1.6 billion dollars should be enough for the designated time period, the training of the staff and their discipline should be further examined to establish whether the funding would have played a key role in the potential success of this mission.

UN Preventive Deployment Force

The UN Security Council Resolution 983 divided UNPROFOR into three separate operations: UNPROFOR in North Macedonia became the UN Preventive Deployment Mission in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the history of United Nations peacekeeping, this was the first mission to have a preventive mandate. The mission's aim was to preclude disputes in its mandate region from turning into severe conflicts. Its mandate stayed chiefly unchanged, only additional tasks of monitoring and reporting on illegal arms flows and other prohibited activities were added. Although the UN was not selected to monitor the 2001 Ohrid Agreement that eventually terminated the conflict in Macedonia, the general success of UNPREDEP could be evaluated by two of its achievements. Moreover, the deficiency of fighting enabled the mission's mandate implementation and it conserved its freedom of movement and impartiality as well.²⁵ The budget for UNPREDEP amounted to approximately \$160 million. By encouraging dialogue amid the several political parties and ethnic communities in the country, the mission had a soothing effect in the region. On 25.02.1999 UNPREDEP's mandate failed to be renewed beyond 28.02.1999 as the Security Council did not adopt draft on six-month extension due to veto by China.

UNPREDEP assisted in the country's social and economic development along with other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system UNPREDEP maintained close cooperation with the Monitoring Mission in Skopje, of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and enjoys an excellent relationship with the host Government. The UNPREDEP mission was carried out in a somewhat safe environment and was supported by the host government. Although there was no official acting of any external forces as aid to UNPREDEP, NATO did stress its support for the country and it did have its own extraction forces there, but it did not become involved in UNPREDEP's work. The time management of the mission was quite compact and thought out with several extensions of the mission and a process of regional and international collaboration based on trade, economic, political and cultural relations and the rule of law. The budget of the mission equalled approximately \$160 million for 35 military observers, 1,050 troops, 26 civilian police, 76 international staff and 127 local staff. This proves that the mission's safe environment, well off budget and management as well as the minimal involvement of external forces, non-existent authorization to usage of force and full consent of the host government made the UNPREDEP successful.

²⁵ Henryk Sokalski, *An Ounce of Prevention*, Washington D.C, United States Institute of Peace, 2003.

UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) was founded as part of the post-war peacebuilding mechanisms. A ceasefire was agreed after the formal signature of the Dayton Agreement by the Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian Presidents. Consequently, UNMIBH played a vital role in establishing peace in the region and securing its status as a successful mission in this research. The Security Council extended the mandate of UNMIBH multiple times. Following the successful conclusion of its mandate, UNMIBH was terminated on December 31, 2002, in accordance with the Security Council.

UNMIBH started its mandate with 1,721 civilian police and 5 military liaison officers. Then it saw an increase to 2,057 civilian police personnel and 5 military liaison officers.

The fatalities included 12 people, 8 from the civilian police, 1 military personnel and three local civilian staff. Although an official budget is still not released the estimates are said to have amounted to \$141million.

The environment of the territory where the mission was deployed could be considered as safe as it was in the post war period, a few months after the Bosnian War had ended, and the host government was supportive of the peacekeeper's presence. The involvement of external forces was somewhat present. Compliance with the military provisions of the Peace Agreement was carried out by UNMIBH which closely cooperated with the NATO-led multinational Implementation Force (IFOR), authorized by the Security Council. The strict time management of the mission demonstrated its ability to complete a complex mandate in accordance with a strategic plan and within a realistic and finite time frame. The mission had several straightforward tasks carried out throughout a lengthy mandate in several areas including Humanitarian relief and refugees, demining Human rights; Elections; Rehabilitation of infrastructure and economic reconstruction. Although the budget of the mission is still not allocated on official sites, rough estimates are around 141 million dollars for sustaining the 2057 members of staff throughout the 7 years. It is seen repeatedly that the mission's strong time management and the safety of the environment amount to a larger part to the mission's success. The involvement of external forces although present, is still to a very small scale and conducted in a peaceful manner which in the past has proven to be helpful in reaching the mission's goal without creating tensions and irritations in the host country or the states involved.

UN Supervision Mission in Syria

UNSMIS's goal was to first and foremost promote dialogue between political parties and the individuals and groups involved in the conflict and also alleviate the crises, promote freedom of movement for journalists and also allow humanitarian relief to the region. Although the mission was unable to "systematically monitor and report" either the journalists' freedom of movement or peaceful protests, UN officials observing protests came under attack. Within a month UNSMIS had 278 military observers at its Damascus headquarters and eight team sites, in Aleppo, Homs, Idlib, Damascus, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama, Deraa and Tartus, and 121 civilian staff in charge of political and civil affairs and human rights matters, administration and support at Mission headquarters. UNSMIS supervising and reporting activities were disadvantaged, however, by several factors. As per the mission

background from the UNSMIS website, access to incident locations or conflict was, on multiple occasions, postponed as a result of security concerns or Government warnings or by opposition actors and groups of civilians. The last extension by UNSMIS for a final period of 30 days was decided on July, 20th by the Security Council and in order for the council to allow another extension of the mandate the UNSMIS would have to reach its goal – cessation of fire and violence of all involved parties in the conflict. As the Secretary General reported the conditions were not met. The fatalities included 1 local civilian and the budget of the mission amounted to \$16.8 million. The ongoing civil war and frequent attacks made the environment of the UN peacekeeping mission in Syria very unsafe. On top of this the rapid deployment of the UN peacekeeping staff and the insufficient amount of preparation of the staff, which led to hampering with some of the observation processes of the peacekeepers started pointing to a bad time management. The mission also failed to meet the conditions of the Security Council for reduction of the level in violence by all sides involved in the war and a cease of the usage of heavy weapons as well which ultimately prevented it from being extended. For its funding the mission received around 16.8 million dollars for about 300 members of staff in duration of only 5 months, however the well-off funding showed to be not that relevant when put to the test of well management and the volatile environment the mission was set in.

Conclusion

The research explained about the background of the UN peacekeeping missions, their origin through the creation of the UN, their organization, mandate, budget and financing. The research analysed five missions by classifying them as successful and unsuccessful. A successful mission is one that has successfully implemented a mandate, established order, and ensured lasting peace. According to those criteria 3 out of the 5 missions were successful and the rest were considered unsuccessful. The research continued to evaluate four hypothesized factors that could determine if a mission was successful or not: the safety of the environment, the inclusion of external forces, the time management and staff and the budgeting. Concurring from the research, the following has been noted: In the three successful missions, the environment where the peacekeepers were deployed was considered safe and in no current state of war. UNEF 1, UNPREDEP and UNMIBH were all deployed in regions prior to an escalation of an armed conflict or after the end of an armed conflict, giving the peacekeepers a safe enough environment in which to successfully apply its processes and operate. In these three missions there was also either a non-existent or minimal inclusion of external forces. Which leads us to believe that a solid proof cannot be found to show that an inclusion of a non-UN force can lead to a success outcome for a mission. Actually, the UNPROFOR mission whose outcome was a failure had a heavy inclusion of external forces such as NATO alongside the UN.

However, the UNMIS mission had no involvement of external forces alongside the UN and is marked as a mission with a failed outcome. Hence it is safe to conclude that when the involvement of external forces is present in UN peacekeeping dynamics it has no effect on the success of the mission. In terms of the time management and staff of the missions in all three successful missions there was a clear outline of the tasks of the peacekeepers and the time frames in which they needed to be done. The missions had an outline prior to their deployment of the specific actions that needed to be conducted, and the mission held an appropriate mandate or amended it in case of change of situation. In the duration of the

mandate, the peacekeepers in the missions were either asked to leave by the local government or had to withdraw without an extension due to disagreements in the UNSC, however this had little or no effect to the prior time management and the overall success or failure of the mission. The failed missions had signs of poor time management, premature deployment of forces and unclear task timeline, mostly due to the volatile or everchanging condition of the conflict that was happening in the region that they were deployed in. Another detail is the number of staff that had to be managed, which usually had little to no effect to the time management outcome along with the length of the mission itself. When evaluating the budget of the mission and its impact on the outcome there is insufficient evidence to determine whether a higher budget had a bigger impact on the success of the mission. The UNPROFOR mission that was the highest funded mission out of all five analysed of around had a failed outcome while missions such as the UNEF 1, UNPREDEP were successful even with a budget below 300 million dollars. The UNMIS mission had a budget below 20 million dollars and its outcome was not successful. Hence it is safe to conclude that at this point of the research there might be a lack of evidence as to whether the amount of budget determines the outcome of a mission.

With examining the several missions, we found that the peacekeeping planners' efforts should focus on generating a moderate mandate for a mission but understand that it will need to be adapted as soon as the peacekeepers get deployed to the conflicting environment. In conclusion this research expressed the importance of the following factors that lead to the mission's implementation of mandate, establishment of order, and ensuring a long-lasting peace. Those factors are a safe and secure haven for the peacekeepers to operate and well conducted time management with the mission's ability to adapt its objectives as soon as the situation changes in the region. In addition, the results showed that the conjoint operation with non-UN peacekeepers does not necessarily lead to the successful outcome of the mission due to possible conflicts of interest or failed communication. Budget wise, the question still stands of how much budget and finance affects the success of the mission. The obvious conclusion would have been that the more funded a mission is the more chances of success it has. Nevertheless, it seems that the budget was only among the decisive success factors if it was used rightly and accompanied by a safe environment and effective time management.

A further research is needed to examine which part of the budget is devoted to training and developing the skills of the people deployed prior to the deployment, and if the level of training and preparedness of the peacekeepers has an impact on the success of the mission. Another valuable section of that research would be to see what part of the budget goes into the attaining of appropriate equipment and technology for the peacekeepers and what is the impact of that on the mission's success. This research also shows that it is very important for the mission's success for the host government to be in complete coherence with the deployment of the mission as we could see from the successful missions UNEF 1 and UNPREDEP and UNMBIH. Although this research focused on the best and worst practices of the peacekeeping operations during their deployment, the succeeding events may change the outcome of the mission, as conflict can resume after. This was proven after the withdrawal of the peacekeeping forces in UNEF 1 with the Six Day War, as well as the armed conflict in 2001 in North Macedonia after the withdrawal of UNPREDEP, hence we need to know what are the conditions that will most reduce the probability of the resumption of a conflict? Today, around 110,000 military, police and civilian staff currently serve in 14 peacekeeping missions.

Furthermore, the political density confronting peacekeeping missions and the range of their mandates, counting the side of the civilians as well, continue to be extremely far-

reaching. Recently, the UN Secretary-General created a High-level Independent Panel consisting of seventeen members, on the UN Peace Operations to facilitate an all-encompassing assessment of the condition of UN peace operations and what they may need or how they may change in the future. The Peacekeeping process still remains highly dynamic and as expected it will hopefully continue to evolve and adapt in the face of new challenges, until a peaceful state and an opportunity for prosperity and cultivation of human rights is achieved all around the globe.

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NORWEGIAN CULTURAL VALUES EMERGING FROM THE DISCOURSE ON THE RUSSIAN INVASION IN UKRAINE

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Theoretical underpinnings

In the past two decades, the field of foreign language teaching has been guided by the acknowledgement of the intricate relationship between language and culture¹. This led to the emergence of an intercultural turn in foreign language teaching which was connected to a new type of competence that needed to be developed by a foreign language learner, i.e. intercultural communicative competence². As a result of this intercultural perspective, didactic practices in the formal educational environment were channelled towards creating a genuine context for foreign language learning so that cultural elements (literature, music, non-verbal language, norms, beliefs, etc.) would be incorporated in the teaching resources.

The literature on the topic of intercultural communicative competence is plentiful. Our paper makes reference to the model developed by Byram (1997) which comprises five *savoirs*: knowledge, attitudes, critical cultural awareness, skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction. This model focuses on the need to develop learners' both cultural general and culture specific knowledge, as well as an awareness of one's own culture; it requires learners to be able to adapt their discourse to a specific cultural context and to interact effectively with people from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds; to be open-minded, respectful of what is different, to be curious when encountering another culture.

"The socio-cultural component is inseparably melded with the linguistic component"³ in the context of foreign language teaching. The cultural representations depicted in the authentic resources (music, literature, newspapers, broadcasts, podcasts, etc.) expand the cultural and language awareness of learners of the target language. Current issues and news in the target language can be discussed and explored pedagogically in the classroom to bring authenticity in foreign language teaching and to "widen learners' sociolinguistic competence,

¹ Michael Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1997; Claire Kramsch, *Context and culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993; Claire Kramsch, "Teaching Language Along the Cultural Faultline", in Lange L. D. & Paige M. R. (eds.), *Culture as the Core: Perspectives on Culture in Second Language Learning Education*, USA, Information Age Publishing Inc., 2003; Anthony J. Liddicoat, Angela Scarino, *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning*. UK, USA, Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2013; Karen Risager, *Language and Culture Pedagogy. From a National to a Transnational Paradigm*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 2007.

² Michael Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1997.

³ Gerhard Neuner, Lynne Parmenter, Hugh Starkey & Genevieve Zarate, *Intercultural Competence*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2003, p. 35.

cultural awareness and linguistic competence”⁴. In the same line of thought, The European Commission⁵ concludes that foreign language learning can occur in various contexts, both formal and informal, and by making use of various resources, by “reading newspapers and books, by listening to the radio or viewing films or television”. Furthermore, referring to SKAM, a well-known Norwegian TV series, Mureşan and Pop⁶ propose that this authentic resource provides “an accurate picture of day-to-day current teenage discourse practices”. The language input put forth by this authentic resource can be explored didactically and various competence areas can be identified: pronunciation, spelling, stress, non-verbal language or syntax.

Because language is a marker of social and cultural identity⁷, the foreign language learner is urged to interpret *self* (intra-culturality) and *otherness* (inter-culturality)⁸ in diverse contexts of social and cultural exchange. Our current study focuses on this dual characteristic of language and aims to analyse one example of media coverage and a press release issued by the Norwegian Government. The aim is to explore didactic practices that could be used to improve learners’ language awareness, intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills and intercultural attitudes. By performing a discourse analysis of the targeted resources, we intend to highlight some of the most prominent Norwegian cultural traits: promoter of peace, equality and of international solidarity.

This paper is not intended to raise any political debates and discuss issues of international relations, but rather to cover the official discourse in Norway as regards the Russian invasion in Ukraine with the purpose of identifying Norwegian cultural values. The speeches that have been selected for analysis are reliable sources as they represent the point of view of the Norwegian Government. This is of particular importance if we consider the number and variety of unreliable sources that spread misinformation. Another relevant aspect to mention is that both authors of this article teach Norwegian as a foreign language and want to explore different authentic resources that can develop students’ cultural awareness and linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. Therefore, one direction of the contribution of the study lies in the didactic applicability of its findings.

Norway’s cultural values

Norway is best known for its fjords and wild landscapes, for its northern lights, petrol resources, high life standard and culinary tradition. Norway’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁹ indicates that the country has gradually become known for its global peace efforts. Beginning with 1993, Norway has been active in contributing to promoting peace and reconciliation strategies in various countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal, Israel/Palestine, The

⁴ Ioana-Andreea Mureşan, Raluca Pop, “The Use of English in SKAM. Exploring Authentic Resources in Learning Norwegian at BA Level at Babeş-Bolyai University”, in *Educația 21*, 2021, DOI: 10.24193/ed21.2021.21.19, p. 185.

⁵ ***, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, *European Label Awarded To Innovative Projects In Language Teaching And Learning European priorities for the 2016-2017 Label Campaigns*, 2006, <http://eupa.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ELL-Priorities-2016-2017.pdf>, May 5, 2021, p. 2, retrieved 30.03.2022.

⁶ Ioana-Andreea Mureşan, Raluca Pop, “The Use of English in SKAM. Exploring Authentic Resources in Learning Norwegian at BA Level at Babeş-Bolyai University”, 2021, p. 84.

⁷ Paul Gardner, *Teaching and Learning in Multicultural Classrooms*, Oxon, New York, Routledge, 2012, pp. 77-78.

⁸ Anthony J. Liddicoat, Angela Scarino, *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning*. UK, USA, Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2013, pp. 68-69.

⁹ ***, “Norges engasjement i fredsprosesser siden 1993”, Regjeringen, 2019, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utenrikssaker/fred-og-forsoning/innsiktsmappe/etter_1993/id732943/, retrieved 30.03.2022.

Philippines, Somalia, and Sri Lanka to name a few¹⁰. As a consequence, engagement in peace and reconciliation efforts is a key part of Norwegian foreign policy and has become an integral part of the very identity of the Norwegian nation¹¹. One of the priorities of Norway is to facilitate dialogue between parties that are in conflict. Therefore, due to its participation in complex peace processes, Norway has become a global leader in peace-making¹². Norway's global peace efforts are also grounded and demonstrated through the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize awarded in Norway beginning with 1901.

Norway values cultural diversity and protects this diversity in various domains (e.g. education, art and literature, etc.). It is relevant to refer to the multicultural Norwegian society, as foreigners from approximately 200 national countries live in Norway today, making the country ethnically diverse. Official data released by the Statistics Norway indicate that immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents make up 18.90% of the population¹³, whereas 29.90% of them and 4,5% of the entire Norwegian population has refugee background¹⁴.

As foreign language teachers, we are concerned with offering our students the possibility to acquire both a linguistic and a cultural competence when learning Norwegian. We always put an emphasis on the fact that language occurs in a social context and there the salient link between language and culture needs to be acknowledged and addressed from a didactic point of view. Taking these into consideration, we explore the possibilities to familiarise students with the ethnically diverse Norwegian society and the Norwegian cultural core values by using authentic resources such as the official position of the Government on the war in Ukraine.

Research methodology

By choosing a case study method, a researcher can examine in depth data within a specific context¹⁵. The case study research method is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context"¹⁶. The research in our article is based on a case study design and data was investigated qualitatively.

To achieve a comprehensive image of the discourse on the Russian war in Ukraine, we have selected the Norwegian Prime Minister's speech addressed to the Norwegian children (delivered on the 3rd of March, 2022), as well as the Prime Minister's address to the Norwegian Parliament on the situation in Ukraine (from the 26th of April, 2022). Both texts represent the official position of the Norwegian government towards the war in Ukraine, and are, thus, reliable sources of information concerning the war in Ukraine. Hansen¹⁷ (2006) suggests that for qualitative research, the corpus should be widely read, have formal authority and clearly

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Øystein Haga Skånland, "Norway is a peace nation. A discourse analytic reading of the Norwegian peace engagement", in *Cooperation and Conflict*, 45(1), 34-35, SAGE publications, 2010, pp. 34-35.

¹² ***, "Norges engasjement i fredsprosesser siden 1993", Regjeringen, 2019, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utenrikssaker/fred-og-forsoning/innsiktsmappe/etter_1993/id732943/, retrieved 30.03.2022.

¹³ ***, "Innvandrere og norskfødte med innvandrerforeldre", Oslo, Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2022, <https://www.ssb.no/statbank/table/09817>, retrieved 30.03.2022.

¹⁴ ***, "Personer med flyktningbakgrunn", Oslo, Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2022, <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/innvandrere/statistikk/personer-med-flyktningbakgrunn>, retrieved 30.03.2022.

¹⁵ Zainal Zaidah, "Case study as a research method", in *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, issue 9, 2007.

¹⁶ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Beverly Hills, Calif, Sage Publications, 1984, p. 23.

¹⁷ Lene Hansen, *Security as practice: discourse analysis and the Bosnian war*, London, Routledge, 2006.

articulate identities and policies. We consider both texts to possess these characteristics. The texts are also expressions of Norwegian culture that can enhance language and culture acquisition. Our main goal was to identify reflections on the core values of Norway and by drawing upon our expertise as teachers of Norwegian, to highlight values, concepts and meanings that might help students to become more knowledgeable of Norway's culture.

Research limitations

The two texts chosen for analysis represent a small-scale type of research. Future comparative research could explore other sources with formal or informal content (e.g., blogs, podcasts, etc.) that have been published or broadcasted in Norway between March and April 2022. Another limitation refers to the researchers who are not native speakers of Norwegian, but who are proficient users in this language. They navigate and mediate between their own cultural representations and the explicit and implicit cultural representations of Norway. Thus, their interpretation of the texts is grounded in an outsider's perspective.

Data analysis

We have chosen for our analysis two official speeches delivered by Jonas Gahr Støre, the Norwegian Prime Minister. As previously mentioned, these texts illustrate the official discourse on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and are, hence, reliable sources for our analysis. The first speech was addressed to all children of Norway, with the overt intention to reassure them that the country is safe, despite the European conflict, while the second was addressed to the Norwegian Parliament to highlight the evolution of the war and its implications for Norway. Both speeches will be analysed below by focusing on the elements that reveal the cultural values deriving from the discourse. The first of them is peace building, and it is of particular importance if we consider the large numbers of refugees that have become immigrants in Norway thanks to its asylum policies since the 1970s. For example, there are now nearly 35 000 Syrian immigrants in Norway, the fourth ethnic group in the country. In addition, we can pinpoint other cultural values that are highly praised in Norwegian culture: tolerance, kindness, equality, reliance, trust, solidarity, independence and justice.

By talking to the Norwegian children, the Prime Minister has made a gesture less common among politicians, but which shows how good public communication should work in sensitive moments for the collective mind. Thus, he recorded a short speech in which he addressed the children, to explain to them, in simple words, what is happening in Ukraine, if they should be afraid and especially how they should react to this event. This is not entirely new in Norway, as the previous Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, was the first to address the children in press conferences during the COVID 19 Pandemic. The aim of those conferences was to alleviate the impact of the tough restrictions imposed on the Norwegian population and enhance the children's understanding of the pandemic. This type of communication that targets children is an important instrument that reveals the Norwegian authorities' concern for all its citizens, no matter their age. At the same time, the speech reveals the concern of the Norwegian authorities to communicate at all levels in difficult times, such as the one Europe is experiencing since the 24th of February, 2022, when Russia, one of Norway's neighbours, attacked Ukraine.

The Prime Minister begins his speech by addressing the Norwegian children on the strange situation in Europe. By using the appropriate language, simple and short sentences, adapted for children to ease their understanding of such an important event, making reference to images that had been broadcasted, as well as to concepts familiar to children, stressing the impact the conflict has over families, Jonas Gahr Støre admits the war has a terrible impact, especially on children: "It is terrible that innocent people are suffering because of the war. It is particularly painful to see children suffering".¹⁸

There are several key ideas that the Prime Minister tackles in the discourse. First of all, he admits that it is natural to be scared, but highlights the fact that Norway is a secure country and its leaders do their best to ensure the safety of all its citizens. The speech further refers to how Russia has broken the international laws and how Norway will try to make sure Russia will be held accountable for the illegal invasion of the sovereign state of Ukraine. At the same time, he draws attention to the fact that Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, is to blame for the invasion and the atrocities, not the Russian citizens. As there have been situations of bullying of the Russian children in the Norwegian schools, the Prime Minister emphasises the idea that no one should be judged or accused simply based on their origin, no matter the circumstances: "Some of you who are listening may come from Russia or may know someone from Russia, either at school or in your neighbourhood."¹⁹ Quite the opposite, the Prime Minister considers the Russian should be supported during this period: "It is important that we take extra good care of them now. Most of the people who live in Russia or who come from there do not want this war. They want to live in peace with each other, just like you and me. Being unkind or bullying someone because of where they come from is never OK."²⁰ This last sentence is representative of one of the key values in Norwegian culture, namely kindness to one another, as Norwegians are encouraged to treat everyone kindly, to be tolerant and to try not to discriminate based on origin or ethnicity.

It is relevant to mention here that there are 18 518 Russian immigrants and 4 377 children with Russian parents registered in Norway in 2022, ranking as the 14th ethnic group²¹. The Russian aggression in Ukraine has influenced their lives in Norway, as elsewhere, and Jonas Gahr Støre addresses the children with Russian parents as well, as part of the community of Norwegian children. The conflict, he argues, should not account for inappropriate conduct or bullying.

The speech continues with an encouragement from the Prime Minister who advises children to discuss with their parents or teachers or someone else they trust about their fears concerning the war in Ukraine. These fears are augmented by the images and videos that are broadcasted or shared on social media, so the Prime Minister stresses the importance of communicating about this and of cautiously sharing information about the conflict: "I think it is important that we talk to each other about our fears and the distressing images we are seeing. Even if you don't find a video clip upsetting, it might upset others you share it with."²²

¹⁸ Jonas Gahr Støre, "Tale til barn om Ukraina" ("Speech to children about Ukraine"), 3.03.2022, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/tale-til-barn-om-ukraina/id2903362/>, retrieved 30.03.2022.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ ***, "Fakta om innvandring", Oslo, Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2022, <https://www.ssb.no/innvandring-og-innvandrere/faktaside/innvandring>, retrieved 20.03.2022.

²² Jonas Gahr Støre, "Tale til barn om Ukraina" ("Speech to children about Ukraine"), 3.03.2022, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/tale-til-barn-om-ukraina/id2903362/>, retrieved 30.03.2022.

Jonas Gahr Støre concludes that Norway is one of the safest countries in the world and its leaders will fight to help the Ukrainian people and to help establish peace in Europe. He reiterates Norway's role as a pacifying nation, as well as the support the country intends to offer to Ukraine to withstand the Russian invasion: "We will do everything we can to help innocent people in Ukraine. We will do everything we can to bring peace back to Europe. We have to make it together."²³ He also expresses Norway's solidarity and commitment to achieving justice, to standing together with Ukraine, with Europe and with NATO. Solidarity, peacekeeping and need for justice are again reflected in his speech as key values for the Norwegian culture.

We will now analyse the address delivered by the Prime Minister to the Norwegian Parliament (Storting) on the 26th of April, 2022, in which he focuses on the situation in Ukraine and the support given by Norway. Two words stand out: "help" and "support", reflecting Norway's commitment to provide aid to Ukraine.

The Prime Minister begins his address with an update on the recent developments of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. He mentions how Russia has failed to achieve its objectives, refers to the great losses suffered by the Russian army, and expresses his fears that the situation will become aggravated for the Ukrainian civilians. Furthermore, he refers to the peace-making efforts of all the European leaders and considers it is vital to maintain some channel of communication with the Russian authorities, although he admits that "none of us who have tried to reach out to President Putin – whether from New York, Berlin, Paris, Tel Aviv, Ankara, Helsinki or Oslo – have any illusions that a telephone call in itself will lead to change."²⁴ Russia's actions are harshly condemned and he reassures the President of the Parliament that Norway will do everything possible to make sure the war crimes are investigated and that those responsible are punished.

Along with these aforementioned efforts, the Prime Minister brings into discussion an intensely debated topic in the Norwegian media, the donation of weapons to Ukraine. As Norway has been considered a mediator for countries in conflict, it has never until now supported a party to a war with weapons, but a broad majority of the Storting has agreed to provide weapons to Ukraine. Jonas Gahr Støre reassures the Storting that the Government will regularly provide briefings on this matter and highlights the great importance of supporting such an endeavour. This represents a shift in Norway's role as a peacekeeping nation, but must be seen in accordance with the menace represented by Russia, one of Norway's neighbouring countries.

There is another important element in the address that is related to one of the core Norwegian values: freedom of expression. With reference to the EU's sanctions on Russia, the Norwegian Government's fundamental approach is to apply the same sanctions. Nevertheless, some assessments of these issues has been conducted by the Norwegian Government, and, despite the obvious war propaganda and disinformation that Russia Today and Sputnik use, the Norwegian Prime Minister highlights the fact that "the Norwegian Constitution gives particularly strong protection to freedom of expression, and this includes

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Jonas Gahr Støre, "Statsministerens redegjørelse for Stortinget om Ukraina" ("Prime Minister's address to the Storting on Ukraine", 26.04.2022, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/prime-ministers-address-to-the-storting-on-ukraine/id2910051/>, retrieved 15.09.2022).

a prohibition on prior censorship.”²⁵ In this particular matter, the Norwegian Government “has decided that Norway will not be aligning itself with these specific EU sanctions.”²⁶

Solidarity is another value that is essential for Norwegians. The situation of the Ukrainian refugees made it necessary for the Norwegian Government to take action to help alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by these innocent civilians who were forced to flee their country. Nearly 15 000 Ukrainians had sought protection in Norway at the time the address was delivered, namely until April 2022, but the Prime Minister estimated the numbers of refugees could mount to 60 000 or even 100 000, which could generate some challenges for the Norwegian authorities. He then refers to the need for coordinated efforts of all actors involved and of the whole of the society. This is of particular importance, as he emphasises “the hard work and determination of so many Norwegians to help vulnerable people seeking refuge in Norway.”²⁷, thanking them at the same time for their effort. Once again, Norway’s commitment to show solidarity with those in need, as it has demonstrated throughout the decades, is visible and acknowledged officially in the address delivered by the Norwegian Prime Minister to the Parliament.

An important part of the address focuses on the situation of the Ukrainian refugees. Solidarity is shown also by ensuring a safe environment for the women and children arriving from Ukraine, who are vulnerable, and by providing them with the possibility to study in the Norwegian schools and be rapidly integrated into Norwegian society. Jonas Gahr Støre lays emphasis on the children’s needs and gives examples of children he himself has met. This discursive element is essential when it comes to creating a bond with the audience. Thus, he mentions how a 13-year-old boy whom he first met, together with Mjøs Persen, the Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, at a reception centre for refugees, was shy and stood there looking at the ground changed attitude after a few weeks spent in Norway, and even learned Norwegian words such as ‘friend’ and ‘in love’. The Prime Minister admits “It is touching to hear about, and it gives us hope.”²⁸.

The last part of the address highlights the strength of democracies, despite previous claims that they might have become obsolete. The solidarity shown by the Western democracies, the EU and NATO, the close cooperation to assist Ukraine in this war, is stronger than ever. He considers that “Democracy can be messy. Uncomfortable. It can take a frustrating amount of time to get things done”²⁹. Yet, “there is also enormous strength in democracy”³⁰ and the development around the war in Ukraine has demonstrated that democracy can foster cooperation, solidarity and unity.

Discussions

Our analysis of these two speeches has revealed that the official discourse in Norway on the war in Ukraine reflects some of the key cultural values that are highly treasured in Norwegian culture: solidarity, unity, tolerance, kindness, and equality. The Norwegian Prime Minister reiterates Norway’s commitment to support peace efforts, as well as to provide assistance to those suffering from the war, whether they are Norwegian children or Ukrainian

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

refugees. Moreover, the war called for some changes in Norway's policies, such as the decision to provide weapons to the Ukrainian army, but without hindering the peacekeeping efforts.

From a didactic point of view, the two speeches represent authentic resources that are able to portray language in different discourses and contexts. The texts can be used with adult foreign language learners who demonstrate emotional maturity, critical thinking and have language competence that ranges between B1 and C1 level. The text could also be used to teach specialised vocabulary. By reading and analysing the texts, learners develop both their cultural awareness and language acquisition. According to the design model proposed by Byram (1997), learners of Norwegian as a foreign language would become aware of some of Norway's social and cultural norms, would be able to analyse the pragmatics of the language, understand discourses that are specific to a cultural context and relate to the Norwegian cultural values referred to in the two texts. The use of these resources brings authenticity in the formal educational environment and supports learners' curiosity for discovering a new culture.

Conclusion

Because students need much exposure to the target language and culture, it is advisable to supplement the use of textbooks with authentic materials that depict various cultural representations. We are confident that the two speeches selected for analysis in the present paper represent useful resources for developing learners' intercultural communicative competence. Learners are familiarised with various cultural dimensions and core values of Norway. Likewise, they are provided with an in-depth perspective of the key cultural values that are highly treasured in Norwegian culture.

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THE RHETORICAL PARADIGM, LANGUAGE USE, AND POWER CONTROL IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE MH370 DISAPPEARANCE

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1. Definition of rhetoric and its relationship with public relations

Rhetoric is advocated by Campbell¹ as “the study of what is persuasive” and “a humanistic study that examines all the symbolic means by which influence occurs”. Since the Ancient Greek days, rhetoric has laid the foundation for democracy that resolves “paradoxes and problems of the human condition through public contest”². In modern times, rhetoric offers principles and guidelines of structured arguments and messages that persuade, convince, and motivate³.

The rhetorical knowledge “draws on the rich heritage of Western civilisation that originated with the writings of ancient Greeks and Romans”⁴, especially the works of Aristotle. Such domain champions the human will and intellectual capability to discover facts, explicate values, and blend interests of members in the society. It also assumes a suasory process where good people articulate well to forge good agreement, and for the case of public relations, “good organisations communicate effectively” to achieve socially ethical goals⁵.

2. Public relations, the rhetorical paradigm, and its undervaluation

When described as a framework “for conducting enquiries and for analyses” in scholarship and practice of public relations and communication⁶, the rhetorical paradigm is

¹ Karlyn K. Campbell, *The rhetorical act* (2nd ed.), Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996, p. 8.

² Robert L. Heath, Damion Waymer, & Michael J. Palenchar, “Is the universe of democracy, rhetoric, and public relations whole cloth or three separate galaxies?” in *Public Relations Review*, 4, 39, 2013, p. 272.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 271-279; Charles U. Larson, *Persuasion: Reception and responsibility* (8th ed.), Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub, 1998.

⁴ Robert L. Heath, “A rhetorical perspective on the values of public relations: Crossroads and pathways toward concurrence” in *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1, 12, 2000, p. 69.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72; William N. Elwood (Ed.), *Public relations inquiry as rhetorical criticism: Case studies of corporate discourse and social influence*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995; Judith D. Hoover (Ed.), *Corporate advocacy: Rhetoric in the information age*, Westport, CT: Quorum, 1997; Elizabeth L Toth & Robert L. Heath (Eds.), *Rhetorical and critical approaches to public relations*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1992; Jacquie L. L'Etang, “Public relations and rhetoric”, in Jacquie L. L'Etang & Magda Pieczka (Eds.), *Critical perspectives in public relations*, London: International Thomson Business Press, 1996, p. 106-123.

⁶ Sonja Verwey, “Paradigms, perspectives and practice of public relations and communication: Implications for ‘disciplined imagination’ in South African scholarship” in *Communitas*, 20, 2015, p. 2.

one of the major streams in public relations knowledge⁷. Toth and Heath⁸ maintained that organisation is a rhetor, who takes part in the social construction of a good place to live in and that good public relations communicates “proved, structured, framed, purposed, and worded” messages⁹. Thus, this paradigm views organisation’s stakeholder relations as the nexus of contracts¹⁰. Relationship shapes and is shaped by a collection of contracts between parties, whose interests are communicated by “discourse, vocabulary, terministic screens – all means of social construction”¹¹. Such social constructivist perspective rejects an agentic view of public relations put forward by Bernays¹², which labels it as being able to engineer consent of the public to the benefit of a message source (usually the organisation). Instead, this paradigm believes that, socially responsible rhetoric, according to Heath¹³, helps make enlightened choices, for “rhetorical theory and discourse analysis can advance society through a better understanding of how discourse fosters or impedes rhetorical soundness”. Technically, examination of symbols, e.g., interpretations of text or image, is thus key to rhetorical research; methodology in such study of symbolic processes of organisational behavior was usually qualitative content analysis and sometimes case study¹⁴.

However, critics of the rhetorical paradigm of public relations stated that its focus on symbols and an impersonal view on stakeholder as passive, crated audience do not satisfy the pragmatic needs for managing the situation, which instead is high on the priority list of the later thriving paradigms such as management paradigm¹⁵ and relationship paradigm¹⁶. Researchers of these paradigms dispraised a rhetorical perspective of public relations for its asymmetrical worldview on the organisation and its publics, which resembles that of a mass communication perspective¹⁷.

This paradigm has also been misinterpreted as inherently unethical partly due to instances in which corrupt uses of public relations have led to bad ends¹⁸. The accumulation

⁷ John V. Pavlik, *Public relations: What research tells us*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987; Kirk Hallahan, “The paradigm struggle and public relations practice” in *Public Relations Review*, 2, 19, 1993, p. 197-205; also see Note 5 for Elizabeth L Toth & Robert L. Heath (eds.), 1992.

⁸ see Note 5 for Elizabeth L Toth & Robert L. Heath (Eds.), 1992.

⁹ see Note 2, p. 273.

¹⁰ Robert L. Heath, “External organisational rhetoric: Bridging management and sociopolitical discourse” in *Management Communication Quarterly*, 3, 25, 2011, p. 415-435; Edward R. Freeman, *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston, MA: Pitman, 1984.

¹¹ see Note 10 for Robert L. Heath, 2011, p. 418.

¹² Edward L. Bernays, *The engineering of consent*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955.

¹³ see Note 10 for Robert L. Heath, 2011, p. 420.

¹⁴ see Note 7 for John V. Pavlik, 1987.

¹⁵ James E. Grunig (ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management: Contributions to effective organisations*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992; David M. Dozier, Larissa A. Grunig & James E. Grunig, *Manager’s guide to excellence in public relations and communication management*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995.

¹⁶ Linda Hon & James E. Grunig, *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*, 1999 [www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Guidelines_Measuring_Relationships.pdf], 25 November, 2022; Yi-Hui Huang, “OPRA: A cross-cultural, multiple-item scale for measuring organisation-public relationships” in *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1, 13, 2001, pp. 61-90.

¹⁷ Yi-hui Huang, “Is symmetrical communication ethical and effective?” in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 4, 53, 2004, p. 333-352; James E. Grunig & Jon White, “The effects of worldviews on public relations theory and practice”, in James E. Grunig (ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management: Contributions to effective organisations*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992, p. 31-64.

¹⁸ Michael Pfau & Hua-Hsin Wan, Persuasion: An intrinsic function of public relations, in Carl H. Botan & Vincent Hazleton (eds.), *Public Relations Theory II*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006, p. 435-464.

of the bad results, along with uneven playing field of communication, especially in the corporate arena, where corporations are way more powerful than their publics¹⁹, contributed to an underestimated rhetorical paradigm of public relations. Grunig²⁰, who referred to the paradigm as “symbolic, interpretive”, asserted that it needs to be reinstitutionalised by scholars and practitioners. The inappropriate diagnoses of public relations problems plus the dominant influence of the Excellence Theory over the past 20 years, have further pushed the public relations scholarship and practice towards the devaluation of rhetorical paradigm²¹.

3. Rhetorical paradigm: An overview of its rationale, defense, contribution

The appeals for a power balance between organisation and publics and a sense of control over public perceptions, as Heath, Waymer, and Palenchar²² maintained, do not contrast with a “rhetorical rationale” of public relations, which views itself as capable of joining in constructive dialog rather than monopolising influence.

Management theorists who criticised rhetorical theory for being asymmetrical and unethical misunderstood the conceptualisation of rhetoric as manipulation and control²³. Heath²⁴ pointed out that such misunderstanding is built on a shallow assumption about disseminating information – even if different parties have the same information, it does not necessarily mean they will automatically draw the same conclusion resulting consensus. Such misunderstanding loses the rich heritage of rhetoric and the dynamics of narratives socially constructed through multiple voices – people make choices, not choices make them. Thus, a socially responsible approach to rhetoric and public relations is a rather suasive discourse that leads to enlightened choice²⁵.

Emphasising the unique value of rhetorical paradigm, Heath²⁶ counters some public relations and marketing professionals’ agentic approach to communication and their heavy reliance on “the logic of independent affecting dependent variable impact”, for such sense of control to the preference of one or more interests and the formulaic models from data analysis prevent the field of public relations from becoming more intellectually expansive and critically reflective²⁷. The challenge to communication scholars is to address the “the illusion of symmetrical dialogue, explicit and implicit corporatism, and Western managerial rationalism”²⁸.

¹⁹ Ralph D. Barney & Jay Black, “Ethics and professional persuasive communications”, in *Public Relations Review*, 3, 20, 1994, p. 233-248.

²⁰ James E. Grunig, “Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalization”, in *Prism*, 2, 6, 2009, p. 1.

²¹ David Phillips & Philip Young, *Online public relations: A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media*, London: Kogan Page, 2009.

²² see Note 2, p. 272.

²³ Johanna Hartelius & Larry D. Browning, “The application of rhetorical theory in managerial research: A literature review”, in *Management Communication Quarterly*, 1, 22, 2008, p. 13-39.

²⁴ see Note 10 for Robert L. Heath, 2011.

²⁵ Marie H. Nichols, *Rhetoric and criticism*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963.

²⁶ see Note 10 Robert L. Heath, 2011, p. 419.

²⁷ George Cheney & Lars T. Christensen, “Organisational identity: Linkages between internal and external communication”, in Frederic M. Jablin & Linda L. Putnam (eds.), *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, SAGE Publications, 2001, p. 231-269.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

4. Crisis communication, organisational self-regulatory discourse, and external organisational rhetoric

Coombs²⁹ defines crisis as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectations of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organisation’s performance and generate negative outcomes”. Crisis management is defined as “a set of factors designed to combat crises and lessen the damage inflicted”³⁰. Both the perceptual nature of a crisis and the designed response to reduce damage ask for organisational efforts to find alignments of different – sometimes opposing, interests from its stakeholders³¹. Such idea of interest coordination echoes with what rhetorical public relations scholars seek – “to understand how organisations engage in discourse to co-create reality with external publics needed to align interests rather than suffer disabling friction”³².

In face of a crisis, one option for organisations to put people’s mind at ease and to create quiescence – lack of opposition and/or tacit approval³³, is the employment of organisational self-regulatory discourse³⁴. Organisational or industrial self-regulation aims to “end public concern over a threat without the development of outside oversight”³⁵, such as government regulation, which is not preferred due to more cost and less autonomy. However, as one form of external organisational rhetoric, organisational self-regulatory discourse can be either beneficial or detrimental to society³⁶. To identify the genuine nature of this external organisational discourse, Coombs and Holladay³⁷ proposed that empowerment of stakeholders, or giving them tools to address the threat, should be the key criterion. In other words, beneficial self-regulatory discourse provides stakeholders with tools to tackle the threat to their concerns and expectations, whereas the detrimental one lacks proactivity to foster stakeholders’ benefits and focuses on organisational gains alone³⁸. Although Coombs and Holladay³⁹ offered an essential perspective to determine if an organisation’s self-regulatory discourse in crisis serves to enhance or limit the betterment of society, they did not elaborate on the linguistic process of delivering rhetorical skills by the organisations.

²⁹ Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (3rd ed.), Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2012, p. 2.

³⁰ see Note 29, p. 5.

³¹ Michael J. Palenchar, “Concluding thoughts and challenges”, in *Management Communication Quarterly*, 25, 2011, p. 569-575.

³² see Note 10 Robert L. Heath, 2011, p. 417.

³³ Lance Bennett & Murray Edelman, “Toward a new political narrative”, in *Journal of Communication*, 4, 35, 1985, p. 156-171.

³⁴ Timothy Coombs & Sherry J. Holladay, “Self-regulatory discourse: Corrective or quiescent?” in *Management Communication Quarterly*, 3, 25, 2011, p. 494-510.

³⁵ see Note 34, p. 507.

³⁶ see Note 10 for Robert L. Heath, 2011; also see Note 34

³⁷ see Note 34.

³⁸ see Note 34; Robert L. Heath, “Issues management”, in Robert L. Heath (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of public relation* (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage., 2005, p. 460-463.

³⁹ see Note 34.

5. Crisis communication as a social practice, discourse perspective, and linguistic theories

In Motion and Leitch⁴⁰'s conceptualisation of public relations from a discourse perspective, it is "a meaning creation process with ideational, relational and identity functions". To put it into the context of crisis communication, this process refers to presenting the managerial experience of crisis-handling organisations to be narrated, the stakeholder relationship to be maintained, and the institutional image to be reconstructed. Considering the role of discourse in dis/encouraging "rhetorical soundness" throughout public relations practice, Heath⁴¹ further noted that "[m]eaning, through language, however wholesomely shared or narrowly hegemonic, is the tool of discourse and the rationale of co-created enactment". Thus, public relations researchers can argue for the need to study the detailed use of language by organisations as well as other entities, not only to unveil their plain motivations, but also to find enactment of social reality behind communication practices⁴².

Theoretically, the discourse analytic approach also helps examine how analysing language use contributes to exploring power control in crisis communication, which has been categorised by Smudde and Courtright⁴³ into three dimensions: hierarchical power, rhetorical power, and social power. Specifically, exercising the hierarchical dimension of power means demonstrating leadership spirits and the administrative role of the organisation in tackling the crisis; the rhetorical dimension of power is implemented by highlighting the effectiveness in employing crisis communication strategies and tactics, which are realised via linguistic devices; the social dimension of power then refers to the relationships maintained by the organisation with the key stakeholders based on their "shared ethics and collective performances towards professionalism"⁴⁴.

Technically, analysing self-regulatory discourse as a crucial form of external organisational rhetoric involves utilising a series of linguistic theories, among which systemic functional grammar (SFG) has been heavily drawn in discourse studies. M.A.K. Halliday, the founder of functional linguistics who established the theory of SFG hold that people perform three metafunctions in their daily life, which are ideational metafunction (incl. experiential and logical functions), interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction. For instance, if they discuss their life experiences, they perform experiential function; while addressing their relationships with other social beings, they perform interpersonal function; in the process of organising messages including their clausal relationships, they perform textual and logical functions⁴⁵. Under SFG, there is a useful tool called "transitivity" to address the ideational meaning of experiences, i.e., the ideational function, specifically discussing the actions and behaviours of the actors and participants (stakeholders) in the communication events. Its

⁴⁰ Judy Motion & Shirley Leitch, "A toolbox for public relations: The oeuvre of Michel Foucault", in *Public Relations Review*, 3, 33, 2007, p. 264.

⁴¹ see Note 10 for Robert L. Heath, 2011, p. 428.

⁴² Loizos Heracleous & Michael Barrett, "Organisational change as discourse: Communicative actions and deep structures in the context of information technology implementation", in *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 2011, pp. 755-776.

⁴³ Peter M. Smudde & Jeffrey L. Courtright, "Chapter 12: Public relations and power", in Robert L. Heath (ed.), *The SAGE handbook of Public Relations* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2010, pp. 177-190.

⁴⁴ Huabin Wang, "To critique crisis communication as a social practice: An integrated framework", in *Frontiers in Communication*, 874833, 7, 2022a.

⁴⁵ Geoff Thompson, *Introducing functional grammar* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 30, 38-39.

analysis, according to Halliday and Matthiessen⁴⁶, is conducted via different process types narrating the specific actions. These include “material process” (e.g., I eat an apple), “mental process” (e.g., I’ll think about it), “relational process” (e.g., I am terribly sorry), and “verbal process” (e.g., I told you). Apart from SFG, Martin and White⁴⁷ established the appraisal theory to address the interpersonal meaning of experiences, i.e., the interpersonal function, conveyed via the categories of attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude refers to the emotions, judgement, and evaluation of the responsible actors in the events, which is further divided into affect (e.g., I am happy), judgement (e.g., This is wrong), and appreciation (e.g., He is wonderful). Engagement refers to the stance-taking strategy of these actors (e.g., In my opinion, this is wrong), while graduation examines the degree to which these categories take effect (e.g., This is totally wrong). To sum up, counting the process types employed in different response strategies and actions (transitivity analysis) contributes to demonstrating how they are realised in a linguistic fashion, while the attitude, engagement, and graduation analyses touch on the crisis communicators and other stakeholders’ emotions, positions, and the rhetorical effects.

6. Research questions, data collection, and research methodology

Under the guidance of rhetorical communication research, the present study aims to investigate the linguistic realisations of crisis response strategies proposed by Coombs⁴⁸ in the Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Inspired by Smudde and Courtright⁴⁹’s discussion on PR and power, the research selects Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 disappearance (2014-2018) as a case study, elaborating how the use of response strategies motivates the crisis team to exercise their power on controlling the crisis. The research questions are:

(1) How are the crisis response strategies realised linguistically as reflected in the official statements by the organisational and political communicators handling the MH370 disappearance?

(2) How does the employment of crisis response rhetoric reveal the ideological motivations and power control of the organisation (MAS) and the Malaysian establishment (GOV)?

The analyses are text-based, whose data were collected from a series of response statements issued by Malaysia Airlines (www.malaysiaairlines.com/mh370), the national carrier of Malaysia and the Malaysian establishment (www.mh370.gov.my) during the MH370 crisis (2014-2018). Since the crisis occurred, Malaysia Airlines has issued 45 media statements. After the incident, the Malaysian government intervened and responded by holding press conferences and releasing statements to redefine and update the situations.

⁴⁶ Michael A.K. Halliday & Christian Matthiessen, *Halliday’s introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.), London & New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 173.

⁴⁷ James R. Martin & Peter R.R. White, *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*, Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

⁴⁸ Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1999; Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (2nd ed.), Los Angeles: Sage, 2007a; see Note 29 for Timothy Coombs, 2012; Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (4th ed.), Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2015.

⁴⁹ see Note 43 for Smudde and Courtright, 2010.

Table 1. An overview of crisis response statements: MAS and GOV

o.	Category: Institutional and Political Agents	N
		umber of texts
	Malaysia Airlines	45
	Ministry of Defense	23
	Ministry of Transport	12
	Prime Minister's Department	2
	Ministry of Communications and Multimedia	1
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2
	The Malaysian ICAO Annex 13 Safety Investigation Team	5
	Ministerial Tripartite Communique	3
	Total	93

The study is qualitative in that the analyses focus on the response patterns employed by the organisational and political communicators, specifically concerning how different response strategies and actions are realised linguistically during the crisis. The event-based research also studies the use of these strategies, underlying ideological motivations and interests of MAS and GOV as reflected in the public relations practices. Two analytic tools are adopted: Systemic Functional Grammar (“transitivity” and “appraisal”), and crisis response strategies, with four postures (denial, diminishment, rebuilding and bolstering) and nine sub-strategies proposed by Coombs⁵⁰. Three sub-strategies are categorised under the denial posture: attacking the accuser, denial, and scapegoating; two strategies are under the diminishment posture: excusing and justification; another two are under the rebuilding posture: compensation and apology; the other two are under the bolstering posture: reminding and ingratiation.

7. Analysis and discussion

On 8 March, 2014, the Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 was scheduled en route from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to Beijing, China, when suddenly the aircraft lost contact with the air traffic control center. During the period of immediate response, MAS, mostly owned by the Malaysian government, was criticised for its corporate management performances in the MH370 crisis, which, however, escalated to the national level in the search and rescue operation when GOV came in to handle the situation. The goals of crisis communication in the MH370 case thus are: for GOV, crisis response strategies are intended for achieving their political objective to rebuild image; for MAS, information update and logistic support are prioritised. Due to the time and research limitations, the following section only discusses typical cases of crisis responses made by GOV and MAS, who collectively exercised their power on controlling the crisis and meanwhile spread out institutional and political images to the key stakeholders.

⁵⁰ see Note 48 for Timothy Coombs, 1999, Timothy Coombs, 2007a; see Note 29 for Timothy Coombs, 2012; see Note 48 for Timothy Coombs, 2015.

7.1 Hierarchical dimension of power analysis

7.1.1 Strategy 1: Attacking the accuser

Example 1

I am surprised and disappointed that a reputable media such as the Huffington Post UK could publish unproven claims by a New Zealand-based air accident investigator that the pilot of flight MH370 committed suicide, ultimately killing everyone on board the plane. Ewan Wilson's theory regarding Captain Zaharie Shah's mental condition has no basis whatsoever but only manages to create more anxiety and trauma for the families and friends of the deceased. (20 September, 2014)

The hierarchical dimension of power is exercised via employing the strategy of attacking the accuser to argue for the institutional credibility of the organisation. The linguistic use of negative affect (i.e., “surprised” and “disappointed”) plus negation (i.e., “unproven” and “no basis”) contribute to denying the false claim about the pilot-in-chief of the company and conclude its leadership role in eliminating the rumour during the immediate period.

7.1.2 Strategy 2: Denial

Example 2

These allegations include the extraordinary assertion that Malaysian authorities were somehow complicit in what happened to MH370. I should like to state, for the record, that these allegations are completely untrue. (05 April, 2014)

Similar to the strategy of attacking the accuser, using denial also helps argue against the allegations about the organisation. The linguistic use of negation and a high degree of graduation, as witnessed in the phrase “completely untrue”, aims to convince the stakeholders and the audience about the invalidity of the message, which is recognised as part of the administrative role of the company in terms of information update.

7.1.3 Strategy 3: Compensation

Example 3

With regard to the level of compensation available pursuant to the Montreal Convention, or similar applicable legal regime, the airline has made it very clear that payments are determined by law to take account of proven passenger and family circumstances and will be assessed accordingly. (10 December, 2014)

Unlike the strategies mentioned above, narrating compensation relies on the device of endorsement (i.e., “pursuant to the Montreal Convention”), which usually applies when reliable sources are available in presenting the necessary information for reference. By acknowledging the legal practice of airline accidents, the company has further shouldered its good sense of responsibility in handling the compensation issue, linguistically via a mental process (i.e., “has made it clear”).

7.2 Rhetorical dimension of power analysis

7.2.1 Strategy 4: Excusing

Example 4

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, up until the time the aircraft left military primary radar coverage, its movements were consistent with deliberate action by someone on the plane. I cannot comment on speculative theories as to what might have caused the deviation from the original flight path, as I do not wish to prejudice the on-going investigation. I understand the hunger for new details. But we do not want to jump to conclusions. (16 March, 2014)

The rhetorical dimension of power has to do with the effectiveness of handling crisis communication and management, for which making excuses is one of the most common strategies employed, especially when the crisis cannot be dealt temporarily. By quoting/endorsing the authoritative remarks (i.e., “As ... said”), the government intended to update the crisis truth and postponed elaboration in a series of mental processes (i.e., “cannot comment”, “do not wish”, “do not want”). However, the linguistic choice of making no comments is equal to avoiding major responsibilities of the progress, which fails to uphold the principle of professionalism in this context.

7.2.2 Strategy 5: Justification

Example 5

The objects were located approximately 2,557 kilometers from Perth. We will issue handouts relating to this new information, after this press conference. MRSA’s findings were immediately forwarded to the Australian Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Perth yesterday. It must be emphasised that we cannot tell whether the potential objects are from MH370. Nevertheless, this is another new lead that will help direct the search operation. We have now had four separate satellite leads, from Australia, China and France, showing possible debris. It is now imperative that we link the debris to MH370. This will enable us to further reduce the search area, and locate more debris from the plane. (26 March, 2014)

Apart from making excuses, the government negotiated the crisis responsibility by justifying its responses. A case in point can be found here, when the search and rescue team focused on verifying the pieces of debris found on board. The use of concession (i.e., “Nevertheless”) gives the audience a sense of hope for new findings, while the positive appreciation of attitude (i.e., “imperative”) suggests that the search team led by the Malaysian government achieved a favourable outcome. Considering the loss of a full wreckage and other sources of criticism against MAS and GOV, the government was still unable to prove its efficiency in search for the truth.

7.3 Social dimension of power analysis

7.3.1 Strategy 6: Apology

Example 6

Malaysia Airlines would like to sincerely convey our deepest sorrow to the families and friends

of the passengers onboard Flight MH370 on the news that the flaperon found on Reunion Island on 29 July was indeed from Flight MH370. (06 August, 2015)

The social dimension of power can be implemented via employing different strategies to maintain or improve a positive relationship with the stakeholders and the affected group. Making an apology only occurs when MAS declared officially the loss of the victims on board MH370 and reproduced a caring image, which is realised obviously through a verbal process (i.e., “convey”). As for other ill behaviours, neither MAS nor GOV issued any concession or apologised.

7.3.2 Strategy 7: Reminding

Example 7

At this point, I would like to stress that Malaysia has been co-operating with the FBI, Interpol and other relevant international law enforcement authorities since day one. (17 March, 2014)

The stakeholder relationship has also been maintained via another strategy of reminding, employed to re-emphasise the commitments of the organisation so that the key stakeholders would be better convinced of its ongoing efforts. Similarly, the use of a verbal process (i.e., “stress”) acts to retell and impress the target audience about the collective interests and the best performances which have already been produced by the entire crisis management team.

7.3.3 Strategy 8: Ingratiation

Example 8

At this difficult time, Australia has proven an invaluable friend. The Australian authorities, like so many others, have offered their assistance without hesitation or delay. I would like to sincerely thank Australians for all they have done, and are doing, to find the plane. (03 April, 2014)

Not only did the crisis management team reiterate their positive traits and empathetic feelings, but they also acknowledged the key stakeholder, linguistically via a relational process (i.e., “has proven”), positive appraisal (i.e., “invaluable” as judgement), and another material process (i.e., “have offered”). In this way, the relationship with Australia was narrated into a close relative (“a friend”), which is accompanied by an open appreciation about its assistance as well.

7.3.4 Strategy 9: Victimage

Example 9

The airline shares the pain and anguish of family members in having to deal and come to terms with this situation [...]. Every party involved in this complex operation is as determined as the families and Malaysia Airlines to find answers to our many questions. (10 December, 2014)

Interestingly, the use of victimage also occurs during the MH370 disappearance, when both MAS and GOV confessed about the shared pains and negative emotions repeatedly. Both mental and relational processes were employed in this context, i.e., “shares the pain and

anguish" (mental) and "is as determined as" (relational), combined with the negative affect (about the crisis loss) and positive attitude (towards the self-built confidence) to solidify the team and the affected group, and to reestablish its image as a victimised organisation.

8. Summary and conclusion

As it is mostly owned by the Malaysian government, MAS's interests as a corporation in crisis aligned with that of GOV, thus driving it to have similar motivations as GOV when it comes to communication practices to reduce reputational damage. The analyses of typical cases above suggest that, regardless of the level of professionalism and effectiveness, MAS and GOV managed their institutional control mainly in three ways. First, they exercised their hierarchical power via the strategies of attacking the accuser, denial, and compensation. In this process, their efforts were spent in clarifying the rumours and claims and thus justifying the administrative role of the organisation and the credibility of its response behaviours. Second, they exercised their rhetorical power via the strategies of excusing and justification, though both were employed unsuccessfully due to the failure to shift away major responsibilities. Third, they exercised their social power via the strategies of apology, reminding, ingratiation, and victimage. In this way, both MAS and GOV endeavoured to rebuild their image as a caring, appreciative yet victimised institution. With linguistic analyses of crisis response rhetoric, the present study does fill the gap in external organisational discourse – how linguistic devices are used in crisis response rhetoric not only elaborates in a visible manner the beneficial, or detrimental, nature of organisational discourse, but also unveils the underlying motivations of an organisation.

As indicated in the discussions above, as a way of demonstrating a caring and victimised image to stakeholders, MAS and GOV condoled and arranged compensations for the families of MH370 passengers. However, it should also be pointed out that the defensiveness – mainly achieved through the poor use of excusing and justification strategies, rather than accommodativeness⁵¹, shown in the external discourse during the aircraft disappearance, still came from an organisation-centric position, which might stem from a desire to resist the troubles and possible loss of gains⁵². Therefore, such defensiveness was detrimental to the expectations and preferences of the external publics, e.g., media and involved families, as the organisation side failed to give stakeholders tools to address the threat⁵³. From an empowering perspective of public relations, they held the power to explain things too tightly to neglect voices and expectations of external stakeholders, disabling the betterment of society⁵⁴.

Despite the findings, the present study has its limitations: (1) insufficient control on external stakeholders' adoption of the organisation's frame for the crisis, due to lesser focus on other technical aspects of communication, such as media relations and public perception⁵⁵;

⁵¹ Otto Lerbinger, *The crisis manager: Facing disasters, conflicts, and failures* (2nd ed.), New York: Routledge, 2012.

⁵² Timothy Coombs & Sherry J. Holladay, *PR strategy and application: Managing influence*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010; see Note 34 for Timothy Coombs & Sherry J. Holladay, 2011; see Note 38 for Robert L. Heath, 2005.

⁵³ see Note 34 for Timothy Coombs & Sherry J. Holladay, 2011.

⁵⁴ see Note 10 for Robert L. Heath, 2011; see Note 2 for Robert L. Heath, Damion Waymer & Michael J. Palenchar, 2013.

⁵⁵ Timothy Coombs, "Protecting organisation reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory", in *Corporate Reputation Review*, 3, 10, 2007b, p. 163-176; Craig E. Carroll,

and (2) less emphasis on the process of crisis management in a chronological manner, as it is not the present study's intention to critique the effectiveness of crisis management during the MH370 incident. For more details, see Wang⁵⁶ for a comprehensive analysis of the entire process of crisis communication and management.

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⁵⁶ Huabin Wang, *A critical public relations approach to crisis communication and management: A case study of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 disappearance*. Singapore: Springer, 2022b.

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HOW CAN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ENHANCE PEACE PROCESSES? LESSONS LEARNED FROM SIERRA LEONE

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1. Introduction

The paper provides an overview of the success of the peace process and a comprehensive outline of the challenges posed by the distinct evolution of the conflict to the peace efforts in Sierra Leone. To begin with, we establish a conceptual framework that represents the foundation of our study. Accordingly, our analysis uses various concepts related to peace processes and peace studies, such as “new wars”, “peace making”, “peacekeeping”, “peace enforcement” and “peacebuilding”. Building on these concepts, we will present the involvement of international structures, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN), throughout the conflict and especially in the peace process and peace negotiations, while also exploring their cooperation and impact.

In addition, the paper identifies and details certain obstacles that impeded the intervention and the efficient evolution of the peace process in Sierra Leone. Moving on, our analysis focuses on the most important lessons that the intervention provided. Lastly, through this case study, we will explore the timeframe of a peace processes, focusing on long-term development and moving away from short and mid-term achievements.

2. Conceptual framework

The case of Sierra Leone displays specific characteristics regarding the interplay between international and regional organizations. The idea of “the division of labour” was discussed by scholars¹ and supported by UN officials and refers, in this context, to the cooperation between the UN and ECOWAS. The UN’s focus on (and trust in) collaborations with regional organizations stemmed from the observations, during the 1990s, of both scholars and UN officials (like Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali) regarding the transformation of warfare, the proliferation of internal armed conflicts (rather than the waging of inter-state or international wars) which required the attention and intervention of regional bodies, rather than great powers or international structures. Most often, this belief was built on the following arguments: the United Nations Security Council is often impaired in taking decisions regarding intra state armed conflicts by sovereignty and states’ reluctance to

¹ W. Ofuatey-Kodjoe. “Sierra Leone,” in Jane Boulden (ed.), *Dealing with Conflict in Africa: The United Nations and Regional Organizations*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 127.

undertaken actions against another government or to interfere in other states' internal affairs. Secondly, regional bodies would be more ready to engage in peace efforts (due to proximity), would be more interested in solving such internal conflicts (fearing spill over effects and destabilization of the region), and would design more suitable peace strategies given the knowledge about the history of the conflict, local political culture, local expectations etc.

The phrase *new wars* prompted a large and interesting debate in the academic *milieu* and is the centrepiece of most scholarly works tackling the transformation of war. On the one hand, several scholars (Mary Kaldor², Herfried Münkler, Martin van Creveld³, Mark Duffield⁴, Michael Ignatieff⁵) focused on the main differences between conventional, Clausewitzian, trinitarian warfare (associated with the rise of the modern state) and the novel aspects of post-Cold War armed conflicts. The general observation of scholars concerned with the new wars is that after the Second World War, the classical, Clausewitzian pattern of *inter-state* war was gradually replaced by various dynamics of *intra-state* violence. Despite obvious regional peculiarities, recent and contemporary armed conflicts share certain structural features: the asymmetrical configuration of the belligerents, lack of respect for the *jus in bello*, and violence directed against civilians. On the other hand, a series of scholarly works argued against the "newness" of contemporary wars. Siniša Malešević⁶, Mats Berdal⁷, E.A. Henderson and D. Singer⁸ are adamant to demonstrate that characterizing features of contemporary wars (like massacres, banditry, population displacement, or sexual violence as tactics of war) are in fact not new, but have a long history; hence, "many of the 'new wars' are simply amalgamations of various interstate, extrastate, and intrastate wars - i.e., the 'old wars' - that have been lumped into a single category."⁹ Theses of new wars were revisited and certain scholars, such as Mary Kaldor, addressed the issue in response to criticism and re-articulated main arguments by showing that "'new wars' should be understood not as an empirical category but rather as a way of elucidating the logic of contemporary war that can offer both a research strategy and a guide to policy."¹⁰

The theorists of war, experts in conflict resolution, political scientists and theorists in international relations do not agree upon a single definition of the attributes that characterize certain transformations of warfare. Since a unanimously acceptable conceptual framework is lacking, we can observe an emergent terminology in the last decades which is meant to

² Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001; Mary Kaldor; Basker Vashee (eds. on behalf of UNU World Institute for Development Economic Research), *Restructuring the Global Military Sector. Volume I: New Wars*, London, Washington: Pinter, 2001. See also, Mary Kaldor, "In Defence of New Wars", *Stability*, 2(1): 4, 2013, pp. 1-16.

³ Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York, 1991.

⁴ Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars. The Merging of Development and Security*, London, New York: Zed Books, 2001.

⁵ Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour. Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, New York, 1997. See also Dietrich Jung; Klaus Schlichte, "From Inter-State War to Warlordism: Changing Forms of Collective Violence in the International System", in Håkan Wiberg; Christian P. Scherrer (eds.), *Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflict*, Brookfield USA: Ashgate, 1999, pp. 35-51; Bjørn Møller, "The Faces of War", in Håkan Wiberg; Christian P. Scherrer (eds.), *Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflict*, Brookfield USA: Ashgate, 1999, pp. 15-34.

⁶ Siniša Malešević, *The sociology of War and Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

⁷ Mats Berdal, "How 'new' are 'new wars'? Global economic change and the study of civil war", *Global Governance*, vol. 9, no. 4, Oct.-Dec. 2003, pp. 477-502.

⁸ E.A. Henderson; D. Singer, "'New wars' and rumours of 'new wars'", *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations*, Vol. 28, issue 2, 2002, pp. 165-190.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Mary Kaldor, "In Defence of New Wars", *Stability*, 2(1): 4, 2013, pp. 1-16.

encompass the forms and features of new armed conflicts: “new wars”, “asymmetric wars”, “small wars”, “hybrid wars”, “privatized wars”, “neo-Hobbesian wars”, “irregular wars”, “dirty wars”, “future wars”, or “ragged wars”.

The main arguments of theorists of “new wars” are: transformations in belligerence became visible at the end of the Cold War period; new wars are internal, usually fought between the government and sub-state actors, such as irregulars, secessionist groups, insurgents, ethnic or religious groups; they are asymmetric (the insurgents are in a weaker position, never able to match the government’s military force); they display barbarity and violence perpetrated against civilians, caused by lack of accountability of various groups, the insurgents’ need to recruit civilians, but also, sometimes, the government forces’ retaliation against civilians, suspected of supporting the rebels/secessionists. Also, the fact that lines between combatants and non-combatant become blurred in these new wars and that strategies include cruelty and increasing violence against civilians (ethnic cleansing, sexual violence, forceful recruitment of child soldiers) are prevailing in new wars ‘scenarios.

The ending of such brutal wars are often called peace processes, because it takes a lot of time, given the war economy which does not encourage some warlords to start negotiating with the government, and entail two main phases: the reaching of a ceasefire and a peace agreement, on the one hand, and the implementation of provisions included in the peace agreement, on the other hand.¹¹ In the early 1990s, Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued his *Agenda for Peace*¹² and warned the international community about the dynamics and nature of intra-state turmoil which threatened the new international order, by stressing the need to formulate and design efficient means to address such risks; he also emphasized the transformative role of the UN in international politics and emphasised the role of preventive diplomacy, peace keeping, peace-making, post-conflict peacebuilding.

Peace-making refers to several diplomatic efforts undertaken by states, state leaders, but most often in world politics by the UN in order to compel parties to a conflict to end hostilities, each a ceasefire and start negotiating a peace settlement. Roderick von Lipsey showed that “UN peace-making brings hostile parties to agreement through diplomatic means” and emphasized the crucial role of the UN Secretary General in this sense. Also, Roderick von Lipsey argues that “in its most narrow interpretation, peacekeeping is the use of neutral forces between, and with the consent of, previously warring parties for the maintenance of an existing cease-fire or cessation of hostilities.”¹³ According to the International Peace Academy, the chief role of peacekeeping operations (PKOs) is “the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states, through the medium of a peaceful third-party intervention organized and directed internationally, using a multinational force of soldiers, police, and civilians to restore and maintain peace.”¹⁴ Post-conflict peace building is a term meant to capture the entire set of processes and changes at the end of violent conflicts (such as return of refugees and internally

¹¹ See Jean Arnault, *Good agreement? Bad agreement? An implementation Perspective*, Center of International Studies, Princeton University; Desirée Nilsson, *The Significance of Signing. Who Fights after Peace Agreements in Civil Wars?*, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University; Fen Osler Hampson, *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail*, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1996; John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000.

¹² Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An agenda for peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping: report of the Secretary-General*, 1992, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/145749>.

¹³ Roderick von Lipsey, *Breaking the Cycle*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997, pp. 9, 15.

¹⁴ *Apud* Dennis C. Jett, *Why Peacekeeping Fails*, New York: Palgrave, 1999.

displaced, monitoring the organizations of free and democratic elections, justice reforms, security sector reforms, disarmament, de-mobilization, de-mining, reintegration of former soldiers, monitoring institutional capacity building etc.)

3. The Peace Process in Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone Civil War broke with the 1991 invasion led by Foday Sankoh, a former military man heading the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Due to the extremely weak state capacities and the domination of personal interests over a common good, the Sierra Leone government was not prepared to fight and defend against the RUF, which had been extensively supported by Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), who overthrew the Liberian government in 1989. The conflict turned into guerrilla warfare, as it manifested through localized violence, without impressive conquests by the RUF and a lack of capacity by the government to fully stop the rebels. The proliferation of the armed groups, paired with the extensive phenomenon of 'sobels' (soldiers by day, rebels by night) further enhanced violence, especially against civilians.

After five years of conflict, national elections were organized in 1996 and Kabbah, leading the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), became president. In 1997, the conflict had again escalated following the coup orchestrated by Johnny Paul Koroma who established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), seized the authority of the government, and invited RUF as part of the governing process, declaring that the civil war had finished.

The overthrow of a democratically elected government generated reactions on the international arena, prompting the intervention of the ECOWAS, while UN intervention remained limited. Peacemaking attempts represented the first major efforts, as ECOWAS created the Committee of Four (Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire) in 1997 which became the Committee of Seven by 1999 (Liberia, Togo and Burkina Faso)¹⁵. Nonetheless, the new government was not officially recognized by the international actors and the Committee agreed to impose economic sanctions and an embargo on the military regime led by the AFRC and RUF. At the same time, Nigeria undertook heavy efforts to directly intervene and restore the elected government, but it did so unilaterally, characterizing "its intervention as an ECOMOG initiative" while "ECOWAS had not authorized the military action"¹⁶. Despite Nigeria's intentions, ECOWAS had to officially authorize a military intervention as the situation on the ground was spiraling out of control. The peacekeeping mission deployed in 1997 is officially known as ECOMOG II and, while the sustained peacemaking efforts were hitting barriers and restrictions yielded insignificant results, the peacekeeping body was plagued by regional rivalries, especially between Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire.

Throughout 1998, the Nigeria-dominated ECOMOG II maintained its more aggressive stance through peace enforcement operations and succeeded in recapturing strategic territories. Nonetheless, even though the mission was the main security provider, violence continued. This was mostly due to the collapse of the Conakry negotiation rounds, where Koroma promised to organize elections but refused to do so and cede power. By the relative

¹⁵ Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, p. 87.

¹⁶ Eric Berman and Katie E. Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Capabilities and Culpabilities*. Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2000, pp 113-114.

success of peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations on the ground, the peacemaking efforts materialized in 1999 in the Lomé Agreement.

These peace talks represented a complex and extensive agreement, paired with an expansion of the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), which offered a somewhat adequate power-sharing scheme, blanket amnesty and increased efforts on DDR operations. However, it soon collapsed, being criticized both by the civil society (as it offered too much for the RUF and other rebels) and by the warring sides. Violence had been reignited in 2000, with the gradual disengagement of ECOMOG II (especially Nigeria), which meant that the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL – which replaced UNOMSIL) became the primordial peacekeeping and peacebuilding body.

However, “Sankoh announced publicly that UNAMSIL was a threat to the security of the people of Sierra Leone”¹⁷. As UNAMSIL almost collapsed and violence and instability expanded, rounds of negotiations and harsher actions on the ground led to the Abuja I and II Agreements which signaled the first steps towards a transition to peace.

4. Obstacles to the Peace process

From the very beginning, the ECOWAS and UN intervention in Sierra Leone has been affected by various issues due to the complexity of the war. Concretely, the Sierra Leone war “was not an inter-state conflict with conventional armies willing to abide by established rules of war”¹⁸.

Plainly put, when these institutions and bodies intervened in Sierra Leone, “the barely discernible outlines of a new kind of intra-state conflict was emerging”¹⁹.

4.1. Regional Destabilization

The regional context accentuated all the social and political grievances and factors in a myriad of ways, proving that the fate of Sierra Leone and Liberia may be tied together. West Africa was dominated by an air of insecurity and instability towards the end of the Cold War, as numerous changes within these political systems were occurring.

Colonial patterns of domination and rule have fundamentally impacted these systems, which led to high waves of internal discontent related to human rights abuses, inefficient and corrupt governance, ethnic or factional favoritism, patronage networks, clientelism, warlordism and the weakening of security assets, which, most of the time, were personalized and privatized around the leader, and proved insufficient in countering rebellious forces. Accordingly, the countries in West Africa “have been embroiled in an interconnected web of conflicts that have seen refugees, rebels, and arm spill across porous borders”²⁰.

In other words, the spill-over effect and the growing regional tensions had deep reverberations among local strongmen (both within Liberia and Sierra Leone), while the disenfranchised youth became a fruitful exploitation ground for military groups, such as the RUF and the NPFL. Accordingly, it was extremely difficult to intervene efficiently, as the

¹⁷ W. Ofuatey-Kodjoe, “Sierra Leone”, in Boulden, *Dealing with Conflict in Africa*..., p. 136.

¹⁸ Funmi Olonisakin and Emmanuel Kwesi Aning, “Humanitarian Intervention and Human Rights: The Contradictions in ECOMOG,” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 3, no. 1, 1999: p. 19.

¹⁹ Funmi Olonisakin and Emmanuel Kwesi Aning, *art. cit.*, p. 19.

²⁰ Adekeye Adebajo, “Introduction,” in Adekeye Adebajo and Ismail Rashid (eds.), *West Africa’s Security Challenges: Building Peace in a Troubled Region*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 1.

warring sides were continuously 'diluted', the porous borders amplified violence and the civil war in Liberia was raging on. These represented significant challenges prior to and during the intervention.

4.2. Financial limitations

ECOWAS was plagued by financial problems, as West Africa was a region of fragile economies, with internal developmental shortcomings. This had an impact on the capabilities of ECOMOG and ECOMOG II, on logistic issues and poor, outdated military equipment. Furthermore, it gave rise to another fundamental issue, that is 'sobels', namely soldiers who, due to insufficient wages and irregular payments, resorted to illegal and illicit activities. This issue was more visible in Sierra Leone, where "the economic fruits to be derived from the conflict reduced incentives for the factions to reach a negotiated settlement to the war"²¹.

The financial imbalances also manifested in terms of competition and even intimidation, as UN personnel received much higher wages in comparison to their ECOWAS counterparts, in spite of their extremely limited role throughout the peace process. Accordingly, aside from affecting the efficiency of the intervention on the ground (through the limited military capabilities), it also posed a problem in terms of credibility and legitimacy. In addition, human rights abuses and accusations of sexual misconduct (influenced by the issue of 'sobels') further augmented these operational and financial shortcomings and problems.

4.3. Regional rivalries

The regional rivalries and the lack of unity and cohesion within ECOWAS had a significant impact on the peace processes. The main issue of contention came from the Anglophone and Francophone division, which prompted rivals to assert their own ambitions. These suspicions and antagonisms deeply affected ECOMOG II capabilities on the ground and ECOWAS' peacemaking efforts, by affecting its entire credibility due to the lack of consensus. Nigeria represented the major regional actor who coordinated and funded ECOMOG initiatives on the ground and its competition with other actors (especially Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso) posed problematic for the peace process.

However, from a certain point of view, Nigerian dominance also proved somewhat beneficial. Basically, Nigeria's power strive represented a relevant factor for the intervention, as it acted as a legitimate platform (distinct from a unilateral and hegemonic interference) to assert its ambitions, aspects that are supported by Nigeria's considerable support in terms of funding and personnel.

4.4. Complexity of the conflict

This peculiar conflict represented a war of confusion or 'new war', as we categorized it. Accordingly, such military confrontations require a complex reaction, something that ECOWAS, without an adequate framework and lacking experience and international guidance and support, was not able to provide. In addition, various factors ranging from intra-organizational rivalries to particularities relating to the warring sides prolonged the conflict and impeded the peace process in numerous ways. Due to the predatory nature and saleability of these new wars, prolonging violence and armed conflict proves beneficial for

²¹ Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa*, p. 82.

certain groups, as the advantages of war overwhelm the disadvantages and punishments of peace.

Furthermore, another major issue is related to operational mistakes, specifically the constant shifts between peacekeeping and peace enforcement actions, strategy that “while able to control or halt (even if temporarily) the massacres and other atrocities, was unable to bring about sustainable peace”²². The alternation further delegitimized the mission, ultimately proving that it was non-neutral and less credible. Moreover, the intervention was deeply affected by abuses and excesses of peacekeepers, who engaged in dubious activities. Subsequently, suspicions and questions arose regarding the legitimacy, credibility, efficiency and ultimately the very establishment of various missions.

5. Lessons learned from the intervention in Sierra Leone

Aside from bringing an end to violence and promoting a framework for peacebuilding (short-term effects), the peace process in Sierra Leone also provided several future lessons in peace operations and regional security structures.

5.1. The need for an efficient monitoring body

The first major lesson is the necessity of an efficient monitoring body and the division of labour to ensure smooth collaboration between institutions and missions. The intervention in Sierra Leone was deeply affected by abuses and excesses of peacekeepers, who engaged in dubious activities (such as, ‘sobels’). What is more, it also displayed a more or less rigid collaboration between UN and ECOWAS and even between the peacemaking and peacekeeping and enforcement bodies. For example, we can observe the case of UNOSMIL, which, from its very deployment was in the shadow of ECOMOG, with a very limited purpose and even more limited outcomes.

Therefore, a smoother cooperation is necessary to ensure stability and peace. In this sense, regional structures and their reaction is fundamental in conflict prevention and peace operations. What is more, they should not act alone or in competition with the international community, but they should rather be backed by the UN, in terms of strategies and operational capabilities and in relation to legitimacy and credibility.

Moreover, the intervention displayed the essential requirements of neutrality and impartiality in peacemaking and peacekeeping operations. ECOMOG II “displayed a complete disregard for the principles of impartiality, and thus violated one of the key principles of peacekeeping”²³. ECOMOG II fundamentally became a party in the conflict, adopting a partisan position against another side.

Therefore, fighting alongside rebel and militia groups, while ECOWAS members supported and supplied certain factions due to personal ambitions had a serious impact on the efficiency of peace operations. Ultimately, ECOWAS learnt its lesson and through the ECOWAS Mission in Côte D'Ivoire (ECOMICI) successfully restored stability and security in 2003.²⁴

²² Funmi Olonisakin and Emmanuel Kwesi Aning, *art. cit.*, p. 21.

²³ Peter Arthur, “ECOWAS and Regional Peacekeeping Integration in West Africa: Lessons for the Future,” *Africa Today* 57, no. 2, 2010: p. 16.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

5.2. The importance of a security mechanism and the need for a clearly defined framework

Fundamentally, these aspects are linked to the rising importance of regional bodies in peace processes, as they can provide first-hand reactions to crises and prevent spill-over and destabilization. Accordingly, “ECOMOG became the basis through which ECOWAS sought to establish its collective security mechanism to deal with regional destabilization”²⁵. In this sense, a legitimate intervention should address pragmatic needs (on the ground) and define a security mechanism and framework.

Consequently, the intervention in Sierra Leone thoroughly exhibits the fact that peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace enforcement are just elements pertaining to a wider security context. Accordingly, they are important but not sufficient on themselves in bringing long-lasting peace. In terms of peacekeeping and peace enforcement, both of them are essential actions on the ground to restore the atmosphere of security, but they should not be continuously alternated and mixed. Peace enforcement, despite various controversies, is fundamental for creating the necessary conditions for a sustainable peace that has to be reinforced through peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts. In addition, they also need to be complemented with peacebuilding initiatives to foster sustainable development, which again are dependent on peacekeeping.

On the one hand, we can see that in the case of Liberia, the 1997 elections did not bring peace, as Charles Taylor selectively conducted DDR efforts, which meant that the security framework did not improve and the conflict reignited. On the other hand, UNAMSIL successfully completed the DDR process in Sierra Leone by 2001, which brought stability and the prospect of durable peace. Plainly put, this intervention showcases the fact that there are stages throughout a peace process, in which certain actions might overlap and complement each other (the case of peacemaking – peacekeeping and peacekeeping – peacebuilding) or they should be used sequentially and should not be abused (the case of peace enforcement – peacekeeping).

5.3. Insight into the timeframe of a peace process

‘Peace’ represents an elusive concept that has been imbued with a plethora of meanings and practical valences. Fundamentally, everything related to human life is filtered through this concept. Accordingly, the literature distinguishes between ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ peace. Negative peace represents “an overt absence of war and other widespread violence in a particular culture, society or nation-state, but in which there is also pervasive justice, inequity and personal discord and dissatisfaction”, while positive peace represents “a condition in which there is relatively robust justice, equity, and liberty, and relatively little violence and misery at the social level”²⁶. Subsequently, these are not absolute delimitations but rather an axis, a continuum on which a certain society or state evolves or devolves based on various factors.

Nonetheless, numerous researches and analyses of the civil war in Sierra Leone focus on mid-term developments. However, peace studies should go beyond limitations of such time frames. As one International Crisis Group (ICG) report formulated in 2004 stated, “the international community needs to make genuinely long-term commitments – not two to five

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

²⁶ Charles Webel, “Introduction: Toward a Philosophy and Metapsychology of Peace,” in Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (eds.), *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 11.

years, as at present, but on the order of fifteen to 25 years – to enable new political forces to develop”²⁷. Given the magnitude of the civil wars, reaching towards the farthest point on the axis of positive peace proved extremely difficult. In addition, the same ICG report drew attention to the fact that “the interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone are failing to produce states that will be stable and capable of exercising the full range of sovereign responsibilities on behalf of their long-suffering populations”²⁸. As we have shown through our previous analysis of the intervention of ECOWAS and UN in Sierra Leone, the peace process was successful in limiting and ultimately stopping violence (negative peace), while the road for progress and development is dependent on achieving significant milestones related to positive peace. In this paper, ‘progress’ represents a complementary element of (negative) peace that comprises of two elements: the changes within the system, institutions and governance structures (also known as state building) and the shifts in human behavior and action (part of nation building). Progress, as a concept that encapsulates reformist values of economic, social, societal and political development and the material benefits that these bring, is related to the interaction and interplay between structure and agency. Accordingly, both are fundamental for the development of sustainable peace.

Subsequently, the intervention in Sierra Leone was efficient in reducing and ultimately bringing an end to systemic violence and widespread human rights abuses associated with civil wars (such as child-soldiering and sexual slavery). Moreover, in 2014, with the end of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praised the peace efforts and considered that Sierra Leone represents “one of the world’s most successful cases of post-conflict recovery, peacekeeping and peacebuilding”²⁹. As we have seen, there are positive factors that can somewhat back such a remark, however, ultimately, Sierra Leone remained a fragile state, with numerous drawbacks and issues.

The 2018 Sierra Leone United Nations Development Programme³⁰ (UNDP) focused on several major problems: Sierra Leone ranked 179 out of 188 on the Human Development Index, it was the ninth country in relation to infant mortality rate, 51.9% of the population was illiterate, 41% of male teachers and 28% of female teachers lacked formal qualifications, 70% of the youth were unemployed or underemployed, only 20% of the population had access to electricity, the country as a whole was deemed vulnerable to climate change impact and it ranked 129 out of 180 on the Corruption Perception Index.

Consequently, social problems and economic challenges continue to be present within these societies. Moreover, one might even argue that at least several of such factors are similar to those that impacted the outbreak of violence in these states at the end of the Cold War (growing poverty, unequal development, corruption and lack of basic resources).

In spite of all these, extensive efforts are being concentrated by the UN, ECOWAS, other international actors and NGOs on sustainable development initiatives. It is primordial to understand that reforms of peoples’ mentalities, behaviors and actions take a significant timeframe and they must occur through small steps. Accordingly, given that most of these

²⁷ “Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States,” *International Crisis Group Africa Report No. 87*, December 8, 2004, p. I.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

²⁹ “Feature: Drawing down – the End of UN Peace Operations in Sierra Leone,” UN News, April 18, 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/03/465102-feature-drawing-down-end-un-peace-operations-sierra-leone>. Accessed September 24, 2022.

³⁰ “UNDP Sierra Leone 2018 Annual Report,” December 11, 2019.

milestones and achievements fall outside the general expectations (especially in terms of a Western perspective), they are usually overlooked or undervalued.

One example is a significant milestone (on the positive peace continuum) related to the Sierra Leone 2018 elections. Concretely, it the first time when post-war elections have been organized without UNIPSIL support (or other external actor), which were deemed 'free and fair' and the results were not violently contested. Finally, based on our findings, peace operations are long-term even spanning generations. Accordingly, peace studies should not stop with the end of wars or with institutional consolidation. Such approaches reveal an incomplete image of the peace process. Our case study is a perfect example of this perspective as, despite being consistently labelled as a successful peace operation, the situation is much more complex with numerous persistent challenges. Moreover, the change comes at a slow pace and, thus, it should not be underestimated or overlooked.

6. Conclusions

Overall, we concluded that the early phases of the peace process (namely the short, limited timeframe) represented a relative success by enhancing the security framework and providing adequate structures for durable peace building initiatives. Moreover, through the irregularities that were present at all the stages along peace operations, we analyzed fundamental lessons that, from another point of view, can be interpreted as a 'successful' side of the peace processes.

One major such practical lesson was the fact that peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace enforcement represent elements of the wider peace context and, if used isolated and without complementary measures, they are highly inefficient and might even prompt harsher reactions among those involved.

Throughout our efforts, we untied a conceptual intricacy, namely 'negative' and 'positive' peace. Accordingly, rather than being absolute traits, these factors represent an axis on which states move from one side to another. Sierra Leone is far from achieving a durable positive peace, due to numerous fundamental issues throughout the socio-political and economic domains. Progress and development, as complementary concepts to peace, encapsulate two major dimensions related to change: human behavior and mentality and structural factors. In addition, both are fundamental in bringing significant changes that would augment various domains, ranging from politics to society and societal considerations (such as identity). Finally, we concluded that peace studies should not stop at mid-term initiatives, as they paint an incomplete picture. Thus, actual changes on the road to progress are made up of narrow and small stages that might seem insignificant at first

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DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION DISCOURSES OF LARGE IT COMPANIES FROM CLUJ-NAPOCA DURING THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

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1. Introduction

Digital transformation was a relevant phenomenon even before the outbreak of pandemic Covid19 in 2020. During the period of the health crisis, the migration of economic, social and everyday life into the digital space put the need for digital transformation on the agenda.¹ Businesses legitimize their operations and interests through their communications and discourses. They represent the nature of their relationship with the world, the essence of their operations, the outcomes and consequences of their activities in discourses that best serve their economic and political goals.²

The importance of these discourses lies in the power they give to new economic sectors, such as the IT sector, to gain power in the economic and political arena, which they can use to advance their own interests. The large-scale social and economic integration of digital technology has economic and political benefits for the IT sector.³ In framing digital transformation, large IT companies play a catalytic role and as such have a major impact on the social and economic uptake of digital transformation processes. Digital transformation started as a business process, but now also involves social and cultural relationships and processes. Discourses on digital transformation by large IT companies are characterised by linking the use of digital technology with economic growth and social development.⁴

A fundamental aim of discourse research is to explore the means of discourse production through which different actors realize diverse interpretations based on the rules

¹ Twilio, *Covid-19 Digital Engagement Report*, 2020 [<https://www.twilio.com/covid-19-digital-engagement-report>] Date consulted: 20/04/2020; McKinsey Digital, *The new digital edge: Rethinking strategy for the post-pandemic era*, 2021 [<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-new-digital-edge-rethinkingstrategy-for-the-postpandemic-era>] Date consulted: 20/04/2022.

² Sidney A. Rothstein, *Toward a discursive approach to growth models: Social blocs in the politics of digital transformation*. MPIfG Discussion Paper 20/8, Cologne: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, 2020 [<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/222274>]; L. Peter Berger, Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, London: Penguin Books, 1996; Loizos Th. Heracleous, "Interpretivist Approaches to Organizational Discourse" in D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick, L. Putman, (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Discourse*. London, New Delhi: Sage, 2004; Marianne Jorgensen & Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2002.

³ Rothstein, *op. cit.*, 2020. Rafał Maciąg, "Digital Transformation: Panorama and Specific Issues" in Jolanta Kowal, Anna Kuzio, Juho Mäkiö, Grażyna Paliwoda-Pękosz & Piotr Soja (eds.), *ICT Management for Global Competitiveness and Economic Growth in Emerging Economies (ICTM): International Conference O ICT Management for Global Competitiveness and Economic Growth in Emerging Economies: Wrocław, Poland, October 22-23, 2018: Innovation Capability for Socioeconomic Development: Proceedings*, Wrocław: University of Wrocław, 2018, pp. 143–151.

⁴ Rothstein, *op. cit.*, 2020. Chrisanti Avgerou, "Discourses on ICT and Development", 2010 [<https://itidjournal.org/index.php/itid/article/view/560>] Date consulted: 20/04/2020.

of social institutions, contextual factors and the resources at their disposal. Discourses constitute the world, and vice versa, the world constitutes them; they (re)produce and transform society; they form the basis for the formation of social identities, the formation of relations between actors, and the construction of knowledge and belief systems.⁵

In this study, we followed the evolution of the digital transformation discourses of Cluj-based IT corporations during the first phase of the Covid19 pandemic (March-December 2020). The analysis was part of a research project exploring the digital transformation discourses of IT corporations.⁶ The research method was thematic content analysis; the sample was the textual content related to the Covid19 pandemic published by IT large companies in Cluj on their websites during the period under study.

The theoretical part of the paper describes the phenomenon and discourses of digital transformation, discussing the altering effect of the Covid19 pandemic on the discursive space of digital transformation.⁷ The third chapter of the paper describes the research methodology, and the fourth chapter presents the changes in the discourses of digital transformation of IT large companies in Cluj-Napoca in the impact of the Covid19 pandemic. The paper concludes with the interpretation of the results and the conclusions.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Digital Transformation

The phenomenon of digital transformation can be traced at two levels, namely as a collection of facts and empirical processes, and as a collection of discourses that are manifestations of knowledge about those facts and processes.⁸ The phenomenon of digital transformation has been mainly studied at the organisational/company level. Company-level studies have interpreted digital transformation as the impact of digital technology on the transformation of companies' business models. Digital transformation is not a simple phenomenon and encompasses different areas of reality. It is necessary to extend the dimensions of digital transformation to issues beyond the economic and technological domains,⁹ but the mapping of the societal implications of digital transformation is still incomplete.¹⁰

In recent years, companies in almost all industries have made efforts to take advantage of digital technology. Digital transformation goes beyond the general company use of digital technology or the partial digitisation of business processes.¹¹ Digital transformation refers to the reorganisation of key business operations, affecting the way products and services are

⁵ Reiner Keller, *Doing Discourse Research. An Introduction for Social Sciences*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2013.

⁶ *Discourses of digital transformation*. A comparative analysis of the digital transformation discourses of global, Hungarian and Romanian owned software and IT companies based on the content published on their websites. Domus Fellowship Programme, Hungary, 2019.

⁷ Maciag, *op. cit.*, 2018.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Ana Paula Tavares, Luiz Antonio Joia, & Marcelo Fornazin, "Digital Transformation for Development: a Multilevel Conceptual Framework", in *Proceedings of the 13th Annual AIS SIG GlobDev Pre-ICIS Workshop*. Austin: 2021, 13.

¹¹ Lauri Wessel, Abayomi Baiyere, Roxana Ologeanu-Taddei, Jonghyuk Cha & Tina Blegind Jensen, "Unpacking the Difference Between Digital Transformation and IT-Enabled Organizational Transformation" in *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, Issue 1, Volume 22, 2021. [<https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00655>]

produced, as well as the structure of the company and management thinking.¹² A prerequisite for digital transformation is the acquisition of digital technology, which in itself is challenging enough for companies, but is not identical to this.¹³ Digital transformation is the renewal of companies through technological integration.

Digital transformation is a complex issue that affects all segments of the company.¹⁴ Hess et al. developed the Digital Transformation Framework (DTF), in which they distinguish four dimensions of digital transformation, namely:

- Technology use, which reflects the company's vision of how to use digital technology,
- Value creation, which refers to the value creation potential of digital transformation,
- Structural change, which refers to changes in the company's structure, processes and capabilities,
- Financial change, which refers to the ability to cover the costs of digital transformation.

Successful digital transformation requires companies to develop a wide range of competences, the composition of which varies depending on the business context and specific business needs. According to the capabilities-based approach to digital transformation, there are core competencies that serve as the starting point for digital transformation and lead to the development of additional digital competencies over time.¹⁵ Carcary et al.¹⁶ highlight four core competences that are essential for successful digital transformation:

- The creation of an agile digital culture, which refers to the development of a mindset and behaviour that is conducive to digital transformation at all levels of the company. This requires digital advisors who can help senior executives identify relevant digital trends and their impact on business.
- Development of effective digital leadership competences. Leaders managing digital transformation must have a vision of how technology integration will transform the business and be able to deliver that vision.
- Building a digitally competent workforce. In addition to having the right leaders with the right digital skills, it is equally important to attract the right talent to implement a digital strategy.¹⁷ Companies are using a variety of methods to attract a digitally talented workforce, such as recruiting digital natives, acquiring digital companies or start-ups, or even lending digitally skilled workers.
- Defining and implementing a business strategy that leads to digital transformation. Traditionally, digital strategy has been subordinated to the overall business strategy of the company. This is now reversed, with the integration of digital technology

¹² Christian Matt, Thomas Hess & Alexander Benlian, "Digital Transformation Strategies" in *Business and Information Systems Engineering*, Issue 5, Volume 57, 2015, pp. 339–343.

¹³ George Westerman, Didier Bonnet, Andrew McAfee, *Leading Digital. Turning Technology into Business Transformation*, Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press, 2014.

¹⁴ Thomas Hess, Christian Matt, Alexander Benlian & Florian Wiesböck, "Options for Formulating a Digital Transformation Strategy", *MIS Quarterly Executive*, Issue 2, Volume 15, 2016, pp. 123–139.

¹⁵ Marian Carcary, Doherty Eileen & Gerry Conway, "A dynamic capability approach to digital transformation: a focus on key foundational themes" in Silva, Paulo, Quaresma, Riu & Guerreiro, Antonio (eds.), *The European Conference on Information Systems Management*, England: Academic Conferences International Limited, 2016, pp. 20-28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Rupert J. Baumgartner, & Thomas Winter, "The sustainability manager: A tool for education and training on sustainability management" in *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Issue 3, Volume 21, 2014, pp. 167-174.

shaping overall business strategy as global and digitised business processes transform the organisation of work.¹⁸

Digital transformation is not always gradual and the result of evolution, but can also take the form of disruptive change. Competitive leaders in the market tend not to cover less profitable market needs, leaving room for disruptive solutions that enable different companies to generate high revenues by serving less profitable segments of the market. In these circumstances, the integration of digital technology is leading to a disruptive transformation.¹⁹

Large firms, start-ups, firms in the knowledge-intensive and services sectors, firms operating in highly competitive environments are leading the implementation of digital transformation, both in terms of the integration of general-purpose technologies, industry-neutral ICTs and sector-specific production technologies. SMEs are at a disadvantage in the process of digital transformation, as most of them do not have the financial resources to invest in the technologies that underpin digital transformation. Likewise, they do not have a highly skilled workforce to operate these technologies.²⁰ Normative pressures to adopt digital technologies are stronger for larger companies in competitive economic sectors, as they are more engaged in the digital transformation discourse and more dependent on the legitimacy provided by their current activities.

Particular attention should be paid to the IT sector, which is characterised by a high level of digital transformation. Most digital technologies are emerging in this sector and IT companies are more often early adopters of these technologies because they have the knowledge and interest to do so. Large IT companies are often the main drivers of digital innovation and transformation.

Less is known about the downside of digital transformation in developing countries, namely whether digital transformation efforts in developing countries mitigate or rather reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities.²¹ The literature points out a number of factors that tend to hinder the contribution of digital transformation to social development, such as the dominance of global corporations over local firms, the lack of legal regulation of the operations of global corporations, the digital under-education of local labour, information poverty, the deepening of global digital inequalities, etc.²²

2.2. Digital Transformation Discourses

The way companies talk about themselves, their activities and their relationships with the world cannot be considered neutral.²³ IT companies are important creators of the

¹⁸ Anandhi Bharadwaj, Omar A. El Sawy, Paul Pavlou & Venkat N. Venkatraman, "Digital business strategy: Toward a next generation of insights" in *MIS Quarterly*, Issue 2, Volume 37, 2013, pp. 471-482.

¹⁹ Clayton M. Christensen, Michael E. Raynor & Rory McDonald, "What is Disruptive Innovation?" in *Harvard Business Review*, Number 12, 2015 [<https://hbr.org/2015/12/what-is-disruptive-innovation>] Date consulted: 20/04/2020.

²⁰ Clemens Ohlert, Oliver Giering & Stefan Kirchner, "Who is leading the digital transformation? Understanding the adoption of digital technologies in Germany", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12244>.

²¹ Thanh Nguyen Hai, Quang Nguyen Van & Mai Nguyen Thi Tuyet, "Digital transformation: Opportunities and challenges for leaders in the emerging countries in response to COVID-19 pandemic", *Emerging Science Journal*, Number 5, 2021, pp. 21-36.

²² Ana Paula Tavares, Luiz Antonio Joia, & Marcelo Fornazin, *Digital Transformation for Development: a Multilevel Conceptual Framework*, 2021.

²³ Marianne Jorgensen & Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 2002.

legitimation discourses of digital transformation, as the rapid development and widespread economic and social integration of digital technology strengthens their power and economic role.²⁴ The specificity of the development-oriented discourse of digital transformation is the association made between digital transformation and increasing productivity.²⁵ The evidence supports the emergence of the development-oriented discourse, as research shows that the integration of digital technology provides companies with efficiency and competitiveness.²⁶ Discourses that associate digital transformation with economic efficiency do not take into account the operational, sectoral and contextual heterogeneity of companies.²⁷

The IT sector has been able to link its discourse of digital transformation to the promise of economic and social growth to such an extent that national and international policy actors have embraced the case for supporting the idea.²⁸ And although empirical evidence does not necessarily support this promise, there is a politics of digital transformation that revolves around an imagined future where a non-existent technology drives economic growth once the proposed economic policy is adopted.²⁹

Two major theoretical perspectives collide in understanding the relationship between digital technology and society, namely technological determinism and an emphasis on the social embeddedness of technology. Technological determinism over-simplifies the relationship between technology and society, giving a dominant role to the transformative role of technological development. The social constructivist approach sees technological development as an integral part of social life as research and development decisions mark social priorities and certain technologies emerge from these value judgements.³⁰

A controversial aspect of the relationship between digital technology and society is whether the high social diffusion of technology is a natural evolution or a breakthrough. Social development advocates see the diffusion of digital technology as a driver of positive social and cultural transformation and economic growth. Other researchers see the diffusion of digital technology in society as a process that contributes to the intensification of social conflicts of interest and the deepening of inequalities, and ultimately to the clear exclusion of certain social and economic segments.³¹

Discourse research has been particularly effective in examining some aspects of organisational life, such as identity building, institutionalisation, strategy making and organisational change. The discourses of digital transformation that companies create can be studied by considering the socio-cultural-political context in which they operate.³² A discursive analysis of corporate change highlights the way in which the process and outcome of transformation is interpreted by the owners and managers of companies to their target

²⁴ Maciag, *op. cit.*, 2018.

²⁵ Ohlert, Giering, Kirchner, *op. cit.*, 2022.

²⁶ Samson Owoyele, "Website as a Marketing Communication Tool", Centria University of Applied Sciences, 2016 [<https://goo.gl/5ZZk7k>] Date consulted: 20/04/2020; Jean Noel Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management. Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term*, London: Kogan Page, 2008; Bharadwaj, El Sawy, Pavlou & Venkatraman, *op. cit.*, 2013.

²⁷ Ohlert, Giering, Kirchner, *op. cit.*, 2022.

²⁸ Rothstein, *op. cit.*, 2020.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ Frank Webster, "Information and the concept of the information society" in R. Angelusz, R. Tardos, T. Terestyéni, (eds.) *Media - public - public opinion*. Budapest: Gondolat, 2007.

³¹ Chrisanti Avgerou, "Discourses on ICT and Development", 2010.

³² Cynthia Hardy, "Researching Organizational Discourse" in *International Studies of Management & Organization*, Issue 3, Volume 31, 2001, pp. 25–47.

groups, thereby giving meaning to corporate operations and strategy.³³ The context of digital transformation discourses is the information society and the knowledge economy, in which the phenomenon is interpreted. In this context, certain discourses of digital transformation seem so reasonable that they are repeated by others, transcending their creators. Thus dominant discourses emerge.³⁴

Taking into account the specificities of the integration of digital technology in the company, the economic growth associated with digital transformation and the inherent nature of the information society, the following discourses of digital transformation emerge:

- The general development-oriented discourse, according to which digital technology is at the service of the human development;
- The general disruptive discourse, according to which technology is revolutionizing the lives of humanity;
- The professional development discourse, which sees digital transformation as an economic value creator and efficiency enhancer;
- The professional disruption discourse, according to which digital transformation is a corporate tool to break into the market and gain a competitive advantage.

2.3. The Impact of the Covid19 Epidemic On Digital Transformation Discourses

According to surveys by global business agencies, the Covid19 pandemic has accelerated digital transformation.³⁵ According to Twilio's survey of large global companies with more than 500 employees, the Covid19 epidemic has greatly accelerated digital transformation and increased spending on technology. The restrictions on freedom of movement caused by the Covid19 pandemic have forced companies in many industries to find alternative solutions to reach customers and consumers, and to ensure employee safety overnight. The introduction of teleworking has necessitated a digital transformation of internal company processes. According to 96-97% of global companies, this situation has accelerated the implementation of their digital transformation strategy by 6-7 years, as it was their key response to the epidemic.³⁶

Recovering from the Covid19 pandemic required a reorganisation across multiple dimensions of companies. Successful technological transformation requires alternative skills from both managers and workforce. The lack of these skills at both managerial and employee levels is a major challenge for companies. Companies that are performing well economically are abler to address this problem by recruiting new employees or retraining existing staff. The companies that are most successful in digital transformation are those where technology development managers play a more prominent role in shaping overall corporate strategy.³⁷

³³ Nelson Phillips, & Cliff Oswick, "Organizational Discourse. Domains, Debates, and Directions", *The Academy of Management Annals*, Issue 1, Volume 6, 2012, pp. 435–481.

³⁴ Hardy, *op. cit.*, 2001.

³⁵ Twilio, *Covid-19 Digital Engagement Report*, 2020; McKinsey, *op. cit.*, 2021.

³⁶ Twilio, *Covid-19 Digital Engagement Report*, 2020.

³⁷ McKinsey, *op. cit.*, 2021.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Research Question

The research being presented was an exploratory study. The research question concerned how the digital transformation discourses of large IT companies based in Cluj-Napoca changed in the context of the Covid19 pandemic. The hypothesis of the research was that the digital transformation discourses of large IT companies based in Cluj-Napoca would be amplified in the context of the Covid19 pandemic and that digital transformation would be presented as a normalization option in the context of the pandemic.³⁸

3.2. The Sample of the Research

The research included 15 Cluj-based IT companies with more than 250 employees and operating in 2020 according to the RISCO business data site.³⁹ Content analysis was conducted on the websites of these large IT companies. The content analysed was selected using the search terms "Covid" and "Covid19". The content of the search results published by large IT companies between 11 March and 31 December 2020 was studied. The analysed web content was downloaded in April 2021. The number of retrieved website entries was 107, which were collected from 9 company sites, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The sample of the research

Name of the company	Year of establishment	Number of employees	Country of origin	Number of retrieved entries
Endava Romania	1997	2559	England	29
Cognizant Technology Solutions	1998	1613	USA	18
NTT Data Romania	2000	1052	Japan	8
Nagarro iQuest Romania	1998	602	England	7
MSG Systems Romania	2008	519	Germany	6
3Pillar Global Romania	2006	482	USA	11
Yonder Romania	1993	334	Netherland	8
MHP Consulting Romania	2014	265	Germany	3
Altran Romania	2011	253	France	17

3.3. The Content Analysis Framework

For discourse research, an important component is the study of the actors who create discourse and the process, situations and contexts of discourse production.

The discourses of digital transformation in Cluj-based IT companies were explored based on the mission and vision statements published on the companies' websites, following the following criteria:

³⁸ Twilio, *Covid-19 Digital Engagement Report*, 2020; McKinsey, *op. cit.*, 2021; Renata Gabryelczyk, "Has COVID-19 Accelerated Digital Transformation? Initial Lessons Learned for Public Administrations" in *Information Systems Management*, Number 4, Volume 37, 2020, 303-309, DOI: 10.1080/10580530.2020.1820633.

³⁹ <https://www.risco.ro/>

- What terms companies use to describe digital transformation in their mission and vision statements,
- What benefits companies associate with the phenomenon of digital transformation in their mission and vision statements,
- How large IT companies define their role in facilitating the digital transformation.

The content analysis of 107 web entries for the search terms "Covid" and "Covid19" was carried out according to the following criteria:

- The placement of the Covid19 pandemic-related entry on the website,
- Identification of the actors creating and receiving the discourse,
- The topics of the discourses: the theme of the entries related to pandemic Covid19, the naming of the health epidemic, the mapping of the proposed solutions to the pandemic,
- Linking corporate discourses on the health pandemic to the discourse of digital transformation.

4. Findings

4.1. Digital Transformation in Romania

Even before the Covid19 pandemic, the IT sector was showing significant signs of digital transformation in the developed countries of the US and the European Union.⁴⁰ In the transition (former socialist) economies, the IT sector was also booming, and IT large companies in these countries were following the digital transformation patterns of the US and Western Europe. In developing countries, the integration of digital technology is the bridge to global markets. The use of digital technologies seems to be the most expedient way to increase the competitiveness of local IT firms.⁴¹

In the European Union countries, digital development is measured by the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). According to the DESI 2020 index, the adoption of digital technologies by businesses in Romania was lagging behind, and this situation has not changed by 2022. The country's relative annual digital transformation lags significantly behind other EU Member States. At European level, large enterprises are leading the digital transformation, while the majority of small and medium-sized enterprises have not yet adopted digital technologies. In 2022, Romania ranked 27th out of 27 EU countries in terms of business integration of digital technology. 17% of Romanian businesses share information electronically, while only 12% of Romanian businesses use social media.⁴² In Romania, there is a large gap between the digital communication of large companies and SMEs: 79 percent of large companies have a website compared to 45 percent of SMEs.⁴³ The share of the workforce working in the IT sector is an important indicator of the take-up of the sector. In Romania, the share of professionals working in IT is 2.6 percent, and the share of IT-qualified graduate students is 6.7 percent of all graduate students. The share of IT professionals at EU level is 4.5

⁴⁰ Shqipe Gerguri-Rashoti, Veland Ramadani, Hyrie Abazi-Alili, Leo-Paul Dana, & Vanessa Ratten, "ICT, Innovation and Firm Performance: The Transition Economies Context" in *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Issue 1, Volume 59, 2015, 92–103. DOI: 10.1002/tie.21772

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² European Commission, *Digital Economy and Society Index*, 2022, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi>, Date consulted: 20/04/2022.

⁴³ Eurostat, *Digital economy and society*, 2019 [<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/digital-economy-and-society>] Date consulted: 20/04/2020.

percent, and the share of IT graduates is 3.9 percent.⁴⁴ These figures indicate the ambition of the IT sector in Romania to increase its weight and role among the economic sectors.

The intensity of digital transformation varies by economic sector. According to OECD,⁴⁵ digital transformation has been most intense in telecommunications, finance and insurance, transport, legal and accounting services, IT services, advertising and business services, scientific research and development, public administration services, so thus in knowledge-based and services sectors in general. The IT sector in Romania also compares favourably with other economic sectors in terms of digital transformation.⁴⁶ The sector's contribution to GDP in 2021 was 4 percent, with a contribution rate that has been growing rather slowly over the years, while the advocacy organisation representing IT companies in Romania has regularly overestimated the sector's contribution to GDP.⁴⁷

4.2. Digital Transformation Discourses of Large IT-Companies in Romania

Companies' discourses on digital transformation are driven by the language they use. We looked at the terms used by the nine large IT companies to describe digital transformation. The web content studied was the content on the About Us page of the company websites, and here the conceptual vocabulary of digital transformation was not very specific. The terms related to digital transformation were digital world, digital future, better future, rapidly changing environment, digital revolution, modern business, information world, innovation, disruption, and challenge.

Table 1. Elements of Digital Transformation Discourses of Large IT-Companies in Romania

Place of the content	Nomination of digital transformation	Benefits of digital transformation	Role in facilitating digital transformation
Endava Romania Mission Vision	Technology is central to life and work Technology revolution Digital world	Take advantage of the new business model Become disruptor within the marketplace	To help clients become digital To accelerate this technology revolution Reimagining the relationship between people and technology To help people succeed, to enable people to be the best
Cognizant Technology Solutions Mission Vision	Transform business in Modern Business: reimagine foundational elements—technology, talent, ESG Respond to the evolving needs of business, workforce and customers	To get ahead of challenges, sense opportunities sooner and outpace change Stay relevant today and ready for tomorrow	To help helps companies modernize technology, reimagine processes and transform experiences To help transform the companies the world relies on

⁴⁴ European Commission, *Digital Economy and Society Index*, 2022.

⁴⁵ OECD, *Measuring Digital Transformation, A Roadmap for the Future*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019.

⁴⁶ European Commission, *Digital Economy and Society Index*, 2020 [<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/digital-economy-and-society-index-desi-2020>] Date consulted: 20/04/2020.

⁴⁷ ANIS, *Studiu privind impactul industriei de software și servicii IT în economia României*, București: ANIS, 2021.

			<p>To keep clients aware and responsive</p> <p>Accelerate the shift to digital</p> <p>Engineer modern businesses</p>
NTT Data Romania Mission Vision	Digital future Digitally dynamic world Rapid changing environment	To create new paradigms and value, a more affluent and harmonious society	<p>To help clients meet their goals and digitally transform</p> <p>To realize the dreams of clients</p> <p>To keep clients a step ahead</p> <p>To provide tangible business results</p> <p>To create a brighter future for society and enable society to move confidently into the digital future</p>
Nagarro iQuest Romania Mission Vision	Innovation, disruption or transformation Quickly changing and evolving world	--	<p>To accelerate clients vision with technologies</p> <p>To accelerate technology-led innovation</p> <p>To excel at digital product engineering and deliver breakthroughs</p>
MSG Systems Romania Mission Vision	World of information Digital world	To offer competitiveness and profitability	<p>To provide IT solutions, and digital innovation</p> <p>To bring value to the digital world</p>
3Pillar Global Romania Mission Vision	Changing market and new business conditions Digital innovation Digital transformation	<p>To transform the economics of digital innovation</p> <p>To deliver results, foster growth, and provide opportunity</p> <p>To steward investments, maximizes returns, and build long-term value</p>	<p>To build breakthrough software products</p> <p>To help companies innovate and compete in the digital economy</p> <p>To deliver extraordinary outcomes for extraordinary clients</p> <p>To help clients to grow revenue, increase market share, and boost customer engagement</p> <p>To help clients win</p>
Yonder Romania Mission Vision	--	To create added business value	To help clients to realize their ambitions

MHP Consulting Romania Mission Vision	A Better Tomorrow Today's world is shifting at an undreamt-of dynamic Challenges	To boost performance and create value To make tomorrow's world an even better place to live in	To implement transformation and solutions for customers To help clients to reach their goals
Altran Romania Mission Vision	"Innovate or abdicate" new paradigm Digital disruptions IoT and Big Data revolution	Competitive advantage Intelligent businesses Inclusive and sustainable future	To support the convergence of the physical and digital worlds To help clients to accelerate their journey to intelligent industry

In the process of digital transformation, large IT companies have emphasised their facilitating role, which is to develop digital solutions for customers that lead to success, higher economic performance, competitive advantage, efficiency, responsiveness, business value creation and intelligent business operations for customers. The target audiences of large IT companies' digital transformation discourses are primarily customers and investors. Digital transformation discourses are based on an emphasis on benefits at the company level, but some companies have also argued for the social impact of digital transformation. The benefits of digital transformation are the integration of the physical and digital worlds and the creation of a more affluent, harmonious, sustainable and inclusive society. In the corporate discourse, large IT companies highlight the benefits of digital transformation, but do not talk about the difficulties that customers face in the process of digital transformation or the potential negative impacts that may arise.

The most frequently used verb among large IT companies is "help". The purpose of help is to bridge the gap between technology and people and to make smart businesses a reality. IT large companies are helping their customers to accelerate their digital transformation process, transform their business processes, connect with their customers, and increase their efficiency and competitiveness in the digital economy by embracing digital technology. Where the client had a vision for its own digital transformation, IT large enterprises offered partnership in the transformation process. They associated digital transformation with a positive vision that was shared at company and societal level. The promise was delivered through the expertise and knowledge of the IT large companies, supported by the testimonials of their respected customers and successful projects.

4.3. Digital Transformation Discourses of Large IT-Companies in Romania during the First Phase of Covid19-Pandemic

Given the state of digital transformation in Romania, a thematic analysis of the content related to the Covid19 pandemic on the websites of large IT companies based in Cluj-Napoca was considered appropriate. A summary of the content found is presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Website Content Characteristics Related to the Covid19 Pandemic of Large IT-Companies Based in Cluj-Napoca

Place of the content	Audience of the content	Topic of the content	Definition of the pandemic	Main challenge of the pandemic	Solutions to the pandemic
Endava Romania Blog Services Social responsibility	Workforce Customers	New work processes Boosting competitiveness	The age of digital necessity The age of uncertainty	Flexibility Adaptability Competitiveness	Catalyse the digital transformation that has become a necessity
Cognizant Technology Solutions News Services Social responsibility	Workforce Customers Community	Teleworking advantages, disadvantages Webinar: ways to adapt Community building Donations for doctors	--	Customers and society need help	--
NTT Data Romania News	Public	Steps of digital transformation	--	Empowering communities	Closer cooperation with clients
Nagarro iQuest Romania News	Workforce Customers	Teleworking Safety at work Digital transformation	Crisis	Overcome the crisis	Creating the new normal with technology
MSG Systems Romania News	Workforce Public	Strengthening communication Donations for health	Crisis, uncertainty	Adaptation	Implementation of the new normal, the new working order by digital transformation
3Pillar Global Romania News Insights Services	Customers	Webinar: ways of adaptation	Crisis, uncertainty, trigger for change	Adaptation	Accelerating the shift to digital commerce
Yonder Romania Insights Blog Annual report	Customer	Innovation	Year of abnormal, radical change, challenge	Change	New world, new normal, new reality through innovation
MHP Consulting Romania Services Social responsibility	Customer	The situation could improve with an innovation explosion	Crisis, paradigm shift	Change, sustainability	Better normal, new work schedule, digital responsibility
Altran Romania Insights Blog News	Customer	Back to business development	Crisis Renewal Growth	Join the global fight against viruses	Accelerating digital transformation through innovation

An overview of Table 2 shows that in the first phase of the Covid19 pandemic, companies had not yet developed a strategic position on the issue, and therefore the relevant content was mixed in news and professional blogs or insights sections. The content was mainly targeted at customers and the workforce and conveyed a set of rules of conduct in the new situation. The Covid19 pandemic was defined as a crisis, a period of renewal, a digital must and a time to stimulate change. They all saw one solution to the crisis situation that had emerged, namely digital transformation at an accelerated pace. A powerful digital transformation will lead to the emergence of a new normal, a new normal that is better than the one we have had so far. Digital transformation holds the promise of a “new world” that responds to the crisis by replacing old practices with more effective and flexible solutions based on digital innovation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The research presented in this paper traced the changes in the discourse on digital transformation in Cluj-based IT large companies in the context of the Covid19 pandemic. Most of the research conducted put emphasis on the factual analysis of digital transformation, focusing on summarising the state of digital transformation in companies and the factors influencing their progress. The IT sector is an emerging sector of the economy, which is seeking to consolidate its role and interests alongside its economic objectives. There is a lack of research on the discourses of digital transformation in the IT sector, and therefore mapping the discourses that shape the reality of this knowledge-based economic sector is a missing gap. Based on the data from previous research and surveys,⁴⁸ our research hypothesis was that discourses about digital transformation on the websites of large IT companies have been amplified by the Covid19 epidemic, and that digital transformation is presented as a way to normalise the epidemic situation.

The sampled content appeared on companies' professional blogs, news or service sections. Communications about pandemic Covid19 targeted mainly the customers and employees. Companies identified the pandemic with uncertainty, crisis and the need for change. In their messages, they stressed that the status quo is no longer sustainable and that to overcome the crisis, change is needed, underpinned by digital transformation. One out of nine companies called for disruptive change. Large IT companies saw flexibility, adaptation and innovation as the solution to the pandemic challenge. Resilience and adaptation can help to overcome the adverse consequences of Covid19 health crisis, while digital transformation can help to overcome the crisis.

Companies assured both employees and customers of their responsibility. The majority of messages were addressed to customers on two topics: on the one hand, they confirmed their commitment to continue to provide quality services in all circumstances and, on the other hand, they offered their professional support in the form of advice on the transition to adopt a digital work schedule. Posts included advice on challenges and steps to implement digital transformation, how to telework and motivate employees, and how to strengthen collaboration between companies and the wider community.

During the first month of the epidemic period, the nine companies included in the survey informed their stakeholders about the compliance with national epidemiological measures and the shift of their workforce to teleworking. At the same time, they stressed that

⁴⁸ Rothstein, *op. cit.*, 2020; Twilio, *Covid-19 Digital Engagement Report*, 2020; McKinsey, *op. cit.*, 2021.

the transition to digital operations does not disadvantage customers, as the steps taken are precisely at the service of customers. The health safety of employees was also a priority and efforts were made to create the right conditions for teleworking. The issue of responsibility in the digital environment and the possibility for employees to access company systems securely was emphasised.

Responses to the Covid19 pandemic were defined as attempts to create a “new normal” by catalysing and accelerating digital transformation. The new normal has transformed the way the whole business operates, but has been more pronounced for customers and the workforce. For eight out of nine large IT companies, their communication on digital transformation was part of a professional development-oriented discourse, with one company (MHP Consulting) considering it a disruptive step towards necessary innovation. The discourses of the large IT companies remained at the corporate or sectoral level and therefore can be classified as professional development discourses. The large companies studied framed digital transformation as being at the service of social progress in the Covid19 pandemic; at the same time, for the companies, the integration of the latest technological developments and solutions has an economic value-added and efficiency-enhancing role, which also brings with it the opportunity to adapt to the new normal.

The discourse of digital transformation in the IT sector fits into the discourse of social change and social development. The discourses of the information society and the knowledge economy rely heavily on the potential of digital technology and project visions of a society in which technology plays a transformative role. The situation of both human societies and the planet requires urgent intervention, as the current processes of globalisation and over consumption, if left unchanged, could lead to the collapse of humanity. In response to a global demand, the discourse of digital transformation has been embraced by national and international political leaders and has become one of the dominant discourses in today's society. Digital transformation discourses inadequately portray possible futures as determined entirely by technological opportunities and have not addressed the problems arising from unequal access to digital transformation.⁴⁹

The shortcomings of the research include the small number of large IT companies surveyed, but the research has achieved its aim by providing insights into the impact of the coronavirus outbreak in 2020 on the digital transformation discourse in the Romanian IT sector. The hypothesis of the research can be considered as verified, as companies saw digital transformation as the solution to the emerging healthcare crisis, although the discourses remained at the sectoral level for the time being. The presented research could be continued in several ways: on the one hand, it would be worthwhile to follow the digital transformation discourses of companies in the IT sector on a larger sample of Romanian companies, and on the other hand, to compare digital transformation discourses at the level of different economic sectors. It would be worthwhile to carry out a double research on the phenomenon, i.e. to carry out an evidence-based analysis of the digital transformation phenomenon on the one hand, and to examine how the empirical results relate to the digital transformation discourses of the Romanian IT sector on the other hand.

⁴⁹ Ohlert, Giering, Kirchner, *op. cit.*, 2022; Tavares, Joia, & Fornazin, *op. cit.*, 2020.

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“SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG STICK.” 2020 AS A LANDMARK IN ROMANIA’S POLITICAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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Introduction

The present article was inspired by the changes visible in Romania’s political communication strategy at the level of political diplomacy and on security issues, discernible on two axes: the emergence of a new narrative for Romania’s foreign policy after 2014, and the manner this change is reflected in the political communication of the strategic State institutions: Presidency, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Hence the title, inspired by these very transformations, echoing the famous like dropped by the future US President Theodore Roosevelt (back then still Governor of New York) to Henry Sprague, on January 26, 1900: “I have always been fond of the West African proverb: ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.’”¹ While its meaning can certainly remind emperor Marcus Aurelius’ *Si vis pace, para bellum*, its origins are very different and were gradually transformed into what Roosevelt himself defined as “the exercise of intelligent forethought and of decisive action sufficiently far in advance of any likely crisis”². Under the scrutiny of analysts, this doctrine of foreign policy seemed to possess five components:

- 1) ownership of significant military capabilities, forcing the adversary to pay close attention;
- 2) acting justly toward other nations;
- 3) suppression of bluffing;
- 4) strikes meant to be hard, exclusively, and meaningful;
- 5) willingness to allow the adversary to save face in defeat (implying moderation)

Such an approach is designed on one sole purpose: to acquire credibility as a political and diplomatic player.

It is for this reason that Romania’s political communication strategy at the level of political diplomacy and on security issues can be usefully analysed by profiling Romania’s foreign policy through two documents, issued in 2020: the November op-ed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, offering a framework and indicative of a certain diplomatic mindset, and the National Defence Strategy of 2020-2024, issued by the Ministry of Defence and the Romanian Presidency.

¹ See the archived website, “American Treasures of the Congress Library”, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20160908212906/http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm139.html>, (accessed August 2022)

² David G. McCullough, *The path between the seas: the creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977, p. 382.

Yet, this analysis could not be performed without including geopolitical elements that determined the shift in Romania's management of foreign policy and the rise of a new vocabulary defining its positioning.

The first is the undeniable rise of autocracies, the strengthening of dictatorships and of illiberal regimes (already signalled by the rather disheartened concept coined at the 2020 Munich Security Conference: Westlessness).

The second is understanding the need to rebuild equilibrium by bringing together functional democracies and parliamentary regimes; this leads to a project initially mentioned during Joseph Biden's presidential campaign of 2020, the creation of an Alliance of Democracies, itself a third element influencing Romania's approach of foreign policy. These aspects, reunited, were destined to lead to an international ecosystem based on the increased participation of middle Powers as balancing actors in a new international society that, next to becoming multipolar, was gradually fractured between democracies and authoritarian regimes; their participation would enhance the global relevance for NATO and their ability to contribute to the defence of a rules-based order. By 2020-2021 (before the invasion of Ukraine by Russia), these new developments were expected to reorganise the world order from the rather unilateralist and hegemonic approaches expressed by various regional powers in Asia, Eurasia and the Middle East to substantial multilateralism, with polyilateralism³ serving as a maximiser of influence and impact.

Such a world system creates both greater opportunity and greater incentive for middle powers to assert their interests and influence global norms; they would be critical components of any balance of power in the international system. In the ecosystem designed to function on democratic principles, a middle size country like Romania has to appropriate what defines middle powers to their best: laws, norms and a certain type of behaviour.

- 1) Normatively, middle powers can be potentially wiser, virtuous, trustworthy: they prefer diplomatic influence to force; are more proactive when taking responsibility for the creation and maintenance of the global order.
- 2) Behaviourally, middle powers tend to engage in middlepowermanship⁴, meaning the pursuit of multilateral solutions to international problems, embracing compromise positions in international disputes, adopting notions of "good international citizenship" to guide their diplomacy.

In what was the foreseeable new context Romania had an incentive to maximise the benefits of its middle power configuration and turn it into a constructively assumed status, with regional projection, according to its capabilities. Accordingly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reframed Romania's position, best illustrated by the two aforementioned documents. Both stress on the importance of values in foreign policy and express external agency based on conviction.

³ Pascal Lamy, "Polyilateralism as the way forward, a conversation with Pascal Lamy", in *Le Grand Continent*, December 7, 2020, available at <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2020/12/07/polyilateralism-as-the-way-forward-a-conversation-with-pascal-lamy/> (accessed September 2022).

⁴ For various definitions and nuances, see: Michi Yamasaki, *A Study of Middle Power Diplomacy: As a Strategy of Leadership and Influence*, PhD thesis, University of Waterloo, Canada, 2009, available at <https://uwaterloo.ca/handle/10012/4811> (accessed September 2022); Ronald M. Behringer, "The Dynamics of Middlepowermanship", in *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, South Orange, vol. 14, iss. 2, Summer 2013, pp. 9-22.; Charalampus Efstathopoulos, "Middle Power Diplomacy in International Relations", in *Middle Powers in World Trade Diplomacy. Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015 (https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137381767_2).

Reframing Romania's Foreign Policy as a Value-Based Narrative

When the concept of “strategic autonomy” became the most active vector of what the French President Emmanuel Macron described as Europe’s sovereignty, the reaction of the Romanian diplomacy was of initial deep silence. With its typical moderation (both a virtue and an impediment), Bucharest took time and searched for supplementary clues, hints and indirect definitions of the much-invoked label.

It was therefore only in November 2020—after the “braindead NATO” comment by Emmanuel Macron in the previous year, after steps taken by the same to initiate a unilateral dialogue with Russia for a “new architecture of trust and security”, the eruption of the pandemic and the publication of the 2020-2024 National Security Strategy (where Russia’s aggressiveness was identified as a threat)—that Romania’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, published an op-ed offering the country’s take on strategic autonomy⁵.

The extensive text started with a trilateration of Romania’s foreign policy pillars: the bilateral partnership with the USA, the NATO membership and the EU membership, described in terms of values, not only of circumstantial benefits. Aurescu rhetorically indicated Romania’s attachment to a free and democratic society, the rule of law, acceptance of international law and support for multilateralism.

The text was a polite rejection of any suggested alliance with a country that embraces opposite views; Russia could not be seen as a partner in any architecture of trust and security if the Kremlin does not change behaviour. Bucharest thus discarded France’s initiative. But this led to a more wide-ranging analysis of what the strategic autonomy could mean in terms of outcome, if the Elysée project was eventually embraced.

First, it was excluded by principle that Romania diminishes connections with NATO or the United States. Instead of acting in favour of a transatlantic divorce—as unequivocally suggested by Emmanuel Macron at the time when Donald Trump was still acting president—, Bucharest expressed preference for a process of negotiations addressing the divergent topics in order to attenuate differences and integrate them into a new approach of NATO’s role, with a different distribution of responsibilities on the two sides of the Atlantic. It is why Romania supported discussions about an improved strategic concept of the alliance and the future of Europe: “it is in the interest of Romania to generate an adaptation of the two organisations to present and future challenges, but also maintain the fundamental elements making them viable”⁶.

This value-based state-building epiphany started with Romania holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2019; a time when Bucharest mobilised expert human resources into a European direction that has been long eclipsed by the transatlantic priority and by a limited, technic-economic understanding of the EU membership. It was a premiere, because, since 2007, the country has largely been a passive member, focused on domestic affairs, on economic growth (yet not coherent and not aiming

⁵ Op-ed Calea Europeană, November 23, 2020: Bogdan Aurescu, *Valorile comune în spațiul transatlantic – Coerență în politica externă a României și contribuția la rolul global și reziliența strategică ale UE* [Op-ed Bogdan Aurescu: Common values in the transatlantic area - coherence in Romania's foreign policy and the contribution to the global role and the strategic resilience of the EU], online at <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/op-ed-bogdan-aurescu-valorile-comune-in-spatiul-transatlantic-coerenta-in-politica-externa-a-romaniei-si-contributia-la-rolul-global-si-rezilienta-strategica-ale-ue/>, accessed March 2022.

⁶ Aurescu, *op. cit.* All quotations in this part have the same source.

at convergence), little interested in (and therefore incapable of) shaping European policies⁷. After 2019, traditional band-wagoning was abandoned; proactivity seemed *de rigueur*, coinciding with changes in the national political landscape⁸ and a new dynamic in the relations with the US. The substance of the latter influenced the understanding of how the Atlantic alliance should evolve, and consequently on the amount of interest generated by the strategic autonomy concept⁹.

Minister Aurescu insisted on the reinforcement of the transatlantic alliance as a community of values and security, underlining elements of division were only temporary and stressing on the personal role that Joseph Biden—winning Democrat President in 2021—, had in shaping a US policy at the Black Sea during his vice-presidential mandate from 2013-2017.

Aurescu underlined that the concept *per se* was left undefined, involving the use of several indicators such as autonomy, sovereignty, or responsibility. In security and defence areas, “despite the extensive interpretations of some”, Romania will understand autonomy as an indicator of the EU’s “capacity to act, whenever possible, in coordination, cooperation and complementarity with its partners, the US and NATO (...), and, when necessary, on its own.” Bucharest rejected all institutional framework that would challenge or double NATO’s.

Beyond these aspects, Aurescu considers that “subsequent developments, not least the crises (...) have shown that (...) other fields are of interest, perhaps even more so, for the debate on strategic autonomy: such are the financial, economic-industrial, scientific and technological or health fields.” The minister extended his judgement:

*We are in fact talking about two sides of the same coin, and the concept of autonomy must be discussed both from the EU’s internal perspective and from that of the Union’s external action. From the internal perspective, the concept is linked to that of resilience, insofar as it is about avoiding massive dependence on external actors that do not share our values and interests in areas such as strategic industries, defence, supply chains, digital, connectivity, and strengthening links with like-minded partners and actors. (...) The Union should be resilient enough to maintain the functionality of the economy and the Single Market even in adverse global conditions (...). From this point of view, I think we should rather talk about the **EU’s strategic resilience, a concept that can partially replace that of autonomy.***

Therefore, Romania assumes that the effectiveness of promoting these interests depends on the solidarity of EU Member States and their concerted action, which in turn depends on each Member State’s feeling that European interest can be identified with and reflects its own national interest, based on a process of negotiation completed in good faith and leading to an integration of interests. A strong transatlantic partnership and NATO’s augmented capacity to perform its tasks are central and non-negotiable interests, a reality that

⁷ Romania largely perceived as a country which is punching below its weight, in: Claire Busse, Ulrike Franke, Rafael Loss, Jana Puglierin, Marlene Riedel, Pawel Zerka, *EU Coalition Explorer*, European Council for Foreign Relations, July 2020, special report online at: <https://ecfr.eu/special/eucoalitionexplorer/>, accessed February 2022.

⁸ At the end of May 2019, Liviu Dragnea, leading figure of a Social-Democrat-led governmental coalition—that was getting closer to illiberal patterns of governance—was arrested in a civil case opened against him.

⁹ The Presidency never addressed the subject, which was tacitly set aside as excessive. None of the former or incumbent presidential counsellors on defence and security supported, in public or private, the project of European autonomy, nor the rapprochement with Russia; none of the leading political parties in the country included the concept on their agenda, except for a few voices in USR, a centrist political group temporarily part of the government coalition (December 2020-September 2021). The consensus on a strong, privileged relationship with the USA is bipartisan.

Romania considers to be also relevant in the European context. Romania does not refute however that the EU is entitled to assume a leading role in international relations—based on economic weight, population size, military strength held by some Member States, and, above all, “because of a system of values that underpins the Union”, defined by the defence of human rights, the rule of law and the democratic model.

For this reason—Aurescu emphasised—

. . . the construction of a distinct European profile must take place without accentuating differences with close partners, and within the broader framework of actors that are part of what we have called the political ‘West’.

Putting in opposition, as was done by the promoters of the strategic autonomy, the two shores of the Atlantic, “risks ultimately reducing the chances of success of [Europe’s] own solutions and, further, undermining the very framework that is being sought.” Strategic autonomy, whichever might be its outline, “can only be the result of a process of evolution involving all Member States”, with Romania being “interested in participating in this process by expressing values that define us and by pursuing our national interests.” But these interests must be subsumed to a normative global order, underlines Aurescu:

For a country with Romania’s geography, the means and responses to challenges are not limited but enhanced by the European frame. The credibility of the voice of an EU Member State receives added value because it is multiplied by the EU membership and by the set of values coming with a global order based on rules.

In terms of communication of values, the op-ed translates into a few key points, emphasised from the very beginning when the author embraces a position opposed to the no-limits realism once illustrated by Lord Palmerston’s famous phrase (“We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow”)¹⁰. It was a prudent step to take, based on lessons learned during the Second World War, and which are directed against the efforts deployed by a part of self-styled realist analysts (more or less anchored in their respective epistemic community) to accept a hierarchical structure of the international society based on force¹¹. In metaphorically rejecting Palmerston, Romania rejection an attitude of surfing on circumstances, contrary to the interests of the country as it generates unpredictability and instability. Romania therefore expresses a preference for a system of values embodied by international law, multilateralism, with “emphasis of enduring convictions, not transitory positions”.

The new values narrative sends a message that Bucharest understands transatlantic relations in terms of solidarity and complementarity with the European Union, not as an element of division. Minister Aurescu’s op-ed was focused on answering Emmanuel Macron’s strategic autonomy which resulted in Romania proposing an alternative interpretation (the

¹⁰ Dating from 1848 and quoted in Chas W. Freeman, Jr., *Diplomat’s Dictionary*, Institute for Strategic Studies, Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1994, p. 186.

¹¹ E.g. from academia: John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin” in *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2014, 1-12 (one of the earliest examples of post-Crimean anti-Western, anti-Liberal stances by a US scholar), available at <https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Why-the-Ukraine-Crisis-Is.pdf> (accessed September 2022).

above-mentioned “strategic resilience”) centred precisely on the idea of sending a message of solidarity: values first.

It is also the first time that Romania expresses an official, (more) comprehensive opinion on the process of European integration—largely neglected before 2019, when Bucharest held for six months the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union—and based on experience and specific choices. Accordingly, the EU is perceived as “unquestionably in transition”, and that is why EU “needs to start acting based in solid ground, a global, normative order”¹².

The New Narrative reflected in the National Defence Strategy 2020-2024

The second document worth taking into account is the National Defence Strategy. It is useful to start by saying that Romania’s need for security, covered by the NATO membership, derives from the perception of a series of vulnerabilities, factors of risk and threats surrounding the country’s territory. The National Defence Strategy¹³ is by far the most illustrative document examining these. It structures a list of national strategic interests, starting with the defence of sovereignty, of the national character, the independence, the territorial integrity, unity and indivisibility of the State, as well as defending and strengthening constitutional democracy and the rule of law¹⁴. These interests are partitioned in three categories, of which the most visible pertains to territorial defence and security; the other two are dedicated to the efficient functioning of state institutions and subsequent policies¹⁵ and to “strengthening Romania’s profile within the transatlantic system of alliances, partnerships and collective defence”¹⁶, including by effectively using the advantages derived from Romania’s geostrategic position.

In real terms, Romania brings 238,000 km² of European territory in the defence and security system of NATO, centred on the natural fortress of the Carpathian Mountains and the control of half of EU’s largest river, the Danube. The tripartite opening of the country’s territory towards Eurasia and the Caucasus via the Black Sea, towards South-eastern Europe

¹² One of the latest and usefully comprehensive articles on this topic, Thorsten Thiel, “The Normative Order of International Politics: Critique and Legitimacy” in Matthias C. Kettemann (ed.) *Navigating Normative Orders: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Frankfurt/M.: Campus Verlag, 2020, pp. 25-45.

¹³ National Defence Strategy (hereafter NDS), available in Romanian at https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf, website of the Presidency of Romania (accessed March 2022). All quotations in this chapter originate in this document.

¹⁴ Implying the safeguard, defence and guarantee of the fundamental rights and liberties of citizens, with their individual and collective security.

¹⁵ I.e. guaranteeing the right to preserve, develop and express the ethnic, cultural and religious identity of national ethnic groups, according to the existing laws and constitutional democracy; sustainable economic development by judiciously managing the resources in order to provide well-being for the citizens; guaranteeing the right to education and health care; bridging development gaps and upgrading the major public systems (health, education, social care and transport), in order to ensure the provision of high-quality services to citizens, etc. Source: NDS, ut supra.

¹⁶ By actively participating in the reinforcement of the EU and the development of the EU integration processes; by strengthening NATO’s capacity to efficiently respond to current and future security threats and challenges, based staying committed to a “strong transatlantic relationship and the indivisible security of the allied states”; the enhancement of EU’s contribution to security and defence in complementarity and synergy with NATO (once more underlined) “in order to ensure the security and stability of Europe”; and strengthening multilateralism and an international order based on the rules, such as consecrated by the UN Charter and by the OSCE founding documents. Source: NDS, ut supra.

and the Eastern Mediterranean (via the same), next to Central Europe (through Transylvania), makes it crucial for NATO logistics.

The document is defined as “strategic-applicative instrument”, but is also destined to address the public opinion as it aims to “strengthen the citizens’ support for the state institutions’ action [by] cohesively rallying them to it”. To this, NDS adds an extended definition of the previously introduced national security concept; to the armed defence (“understood from two perspectives: as national defence and collective defence”), the Strategy integrates areas such as “foreign policy, public order, intelligence, counterintelligence and security, crisis management, education, culture, health, economy, demography, finance, environment, energy security or cyber security, critical infrastructure security and the security of the historic and cultural heritage”. The overall result is what the authors call a “multi-dimensional security concept, based on the security-prosperity-rule of law-democracy-identity relationship”, stressing on the balance between the state and the individual “as beneficiaries of national security”, “the integrated management of security and the idea of a security community”.

Consequently, taking into account the new aspects integrated in the document and in its fundamental concepts, the type of language and the mode of communication is adjusted in ways compatible with the authors' intention to reflect Romania's repositioning and to capture the attention of civil society elites interested in the country's strategic security. The authors refer to “*fundamental values* and *principles* for defining national security interests and objectives”. These values can be categorised as:

1° Quantifiable (“national values, interests and objectives are paramount for defining the national defence strategy, thus granting its legitimacy” or “national interests and objectives are based on adherence to values similar to those shared by the other EU and NATO member states”)

And

2° Behavioural (implying values that can be translated into principles): commitments characterized by continuity, high degree of readiness to cooperate, coherence within the EU, NATO and strategic partnerships.

It serves the transmission of key concepts that are censed to be reflected in Romania’s foreign policy, such as predictability, responsibility, trustworthiness, efficiency, pragmatism/adaptability, prevention/anticipation, proactive stance¹⁷.

The new vocabulary is shaped not only around concepts, but also provides more comprehensive definitions. The following are relevant:

- (a) efficiency (“aiming at continuously adapting the response to the existing security threats and challenges”);
- (b) trust (defined internally as the citizens’ trust in the Romanian State’s institutions, the trust of these very institutions in their own mission, and externally, as Romania’s trust in its partners, alliances and communities of values to which it belongs, and the allied trust in Romania in terms of responsibilities and obligations);
- (c) pragmatism (entailing decisions tailored to the concrete nature of a situation, bringing together all institutional actors in order to efficiently implement defence and security policies);
- (d) professionalism and compliance with the experts’ knowledge;

¹⁷ NDS, pp. 14-15.

- (e) prevention and anticipation (focused on identifying and employing the necessary means to counter risks, threats and vulnerabilities through an integrated civilian-military approach);
- (f) a pro-active attitude (aiming to identify and take responsibility for choosing the appropriate response in accordance with the threats, risks and vulnerabilities, addressing them as early as possible);
- (g) the judicious management of national wealth (referring to “the entirety of the material and spiritual values of Romania, including our cultural heritage”).

In themselves, these concepts and definitions are not necessarily unique, as they can be identified in the security strategies of other NATO member states; but what is rather remarkable when compared to previous editions of the NDS is the desire to adjust the type of security perception to the latest standards in the field, and to express it in a public document which—in addition to ensuring transparency—, is an indicator of the confidence that a military institutions have in the public opinion’s ability to comprehend it, especially, under the impact of the positive concepts enumerated. The text is destined to built trust in Romania’s foreign policy options and partners, at a time when exogen and endogen anti-NATO or anti-EU propaganda is on the rise.

Intrinsically, the National Defence Strategy brings to the attention of the public what is catalogued as threats (a total of 17). They could be partitioned in three classic categories—(1) geopolitical (most known and discussed), (2) cyber-threats, and (3) economic (plus, circumstantially, the pandemic¹⁸).

Dominating the list, six concerns. Of these, two are related to Russia’s post-2014 posture: the strengthening of the military potential in the vicinity of Romania and NATO’s Eastern Flank (militarisation of Crimea and in general of the Black Sea area by the Russian Federation, with military exercises and reinforcement of military capabilities destined for offensive and defensive operations); the (yet not named, now indisputably Russia’s) offensive/aggressive behaviour, labelled “adversary of our country”, whose behaviour creates “economic instability [that] may result in negative developments with security impact in the vicinity of Romania and in the Black Sea Region”. Romania did not refrain from underlining that the delays in NATO’s adaptation to these threats, “the imbalances along the Eastern Flank” and “the positions of some allies regarding the Russian Federation”, negatively influencing Romania’s security situation, were admissible as a threat. Bucharest showed restraint in nominating those pro-Russian EU governments who professed a concerning degree of openness towards Russia: France and Hungary, Italy and Germany, Austria and Bulgaria, with Czechia and Slovakia still on the list back then. This explains the rejection of Emmanuel Macron’s designs for an “architecture of trust and security” in Europe based on a Russian alliance, and the resulting “autonomy” that was a purported outcome.

Romania also acquiesced that instability in the Middle East and North Africa projects a “major security threats in the European and particularly Western areas, mainly associated with Islamic radicalisation¹⁹”, adding a worried regard upon the volatile situation in the

¹⁸ This is mentioned only in one article (§ 118) as capable of severely affecting the world economy and test transatlantic and EU cohesion. President Trump was still in the White House at that time.

¹⁹ Separately, Romanian authorities consider that “the terrorist threat features a menacing and diversifying dynamic that generates persistent risks to civilian and military personnel deployed in theatres of operations, in accordance with Romania’s Euro-Atlantic commitments”; thus, the country is concerned by the consequences of potential retaliation against civilians or in situ military forces. “In Romania, the terrorist phenomenon maintains

Western Balkans. This one is correlated with “the limited prospects for solving the frozen conflicts in the region [= Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo-Serbia], the South Caucasus included”, factors of regional instability just like those from the Middle East and North Africa that project “security threats in the European Western areas, associated with Islamic radicalisation”.

The list is completed with state and non-state entities (information entities, interest groups or pressure groups etc.) attempting to exploit the limited capacity of the society in general to react when confronted with hostile interference; this “hostile intelligence” is reflected by propaganda channels targeting Romania’s strategic projects and state decisions, especially partnerships and policies related to the country’s EU and NATO membership. Despite no names being given, Russia is portrayed indirectly.

Cyber-attacks launched by state and non-state entities on critical information and communications infrastructures, disruptive technologies multiplying the sources of threat, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organised crime (Romania being a transit space for illegal migration and international trafficking of high-risk drugs), financial cybercrime: all constitute a class of threats of its own. So are the “actions, facts, strategies, intentions or plans of states and non-state actors, aimed at undermining Romanian state’s authority and affecting its fundamental attributes”²⁰ or “incitement to acts that could negatively affect the rule of law”. Subsequently, here are included the distortions in energy markets and the actions (or their lack) damaging Romania’s strategic economic interests, and the undesirable interference and hostile foreign takeovers of national interest economic operators and vital processes such as telecommunications, energy and ports. The identity of Russia and China can be read between the lines.

Naturally, these enumerations are specific to a document concerning state security. But it should be noted the option for formulas that do not allow ambivalent or ambiguous definitions, which assume the values aforementioned as defining Romania’s foreign policy, and which support of the comprehensive criteria applied to the definition of multilevel security (referred to in the document).

Conclusion

A few aspects can be underlined.

Per se, the National Defence Strategy manages to reunite continuity and stability with flexibility, adaptability and resilience, based on extended security concepts, with a liberal approach that places the citizen at the core of security endeavours. This construct is championed by a new narrative determined by a new geopolitical context and by the impact of several crises since 2015. It would be however recommendable to also include something that can constitute a substantial vulnerability, and which is absent from the strategy both as a concept and as a type of narrative: the political security. This concerns the absence of criteria—and subsequent communication—applied to the human resource involved in political practice, affecting leadership models, political processes and the quality of democracy, with risks and threats related to corruption, partitocracy, illiberalism and improvisation, leading to

its circumstantial character influenced by the evolutions abroad. Indirectly exposed, our country remains a target of opportunity by its relation to NATO, EU, the USA and the European states involved in combating the scourge”, the document adds.

²⁰ Source: NDS, *ut supra*.

deeper fractures between political institutions and society. The 2025 edition should therefore be completed with a new chapter.

Conclusively, a shift in political communication at diplomatic level can be emphasised in Romania, with a noticeable change in the following directions:

- 1) A foreign policy that assumes values (*vs* previously only supporting norms or *acquis*);
- 2) Expression of the will to generate values (trust, peace, stability, reliability);
- 3) Expression of the will to act on the respective values;
- 4) Romania endeavours to assume more responsibility as a key regional player.

Overall, this is the best illustration of a simple and mostly true saying: “You are what the words you use make you become.”

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SOCIAL NETWORKS BETWEEN MANAGING AND TRIGGERING CRISES: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT DURING THE COVID- 19 PANDEMIC AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Introduction

Communication is crucial for human survival and the development of a society. For this reason, communication is present in any activity, in order to avoid the errors of misinterpretation of information, but also to frame the behaviour of all the members of society.

For thousands of years communication has taken place in physical space, meaning verbal, written or sign discussions. But technology has brought another dimension to communication by introducing a new communication tool, namely social media. It allows the exchange of information and the negotiation of knowledge at a much faster speed than the old methods of communication such as letters or telegrams.

In the case of social media, technology created a virtual space for communication where information circulates at high speed. Although this is largely a positive aspect for development, the greater the amount of information received, the greater the chance that at least some of that information will be incorrect. Hence the problem that gave rise to this study, namely the social problems created by social media, like, disinformation and crisis creation through misinformation, half-truths, and fake news. In this context we ask ourselves if social media must be considered a good tool for managing crises and conflicts, or a tool that triggers them.

Methodology

To discover the potential of social media in solving crises and its role in triggering crises, we begin this research with a historical and contextual analysis of two major crises of the 2020s: the health crisis triggered by COVID-19 virus and the security and humanitarian crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine.

Then, we identify the aspects that social media can influence in a crisis, such as: public opinion, social behaviour and the degree of social intervention in solving a crisis. Starting from these, we apply the social media listening method to evaluate the social dialogue in social media during the two crises. And because these crises have a different nature, we perform separate content analysis of posts and discussions on Facebook during each crisis.

In the end, we elaborate a comparative analysis, in order to outline the differences in social behaviour and the impact of social media on the two crises management.

Communication and social media

Social media was defined by Kent¹ as “any interactive communication channel that allows for two-way interaction and feedback”. In his opinion, the modern social media is about the speed of communication and about the way in which the participants in the discussions are present. The new social media are more accessible, they give to participants the opportunity to build a sort of virtual identity, and to interact with people from different continents and time- zones based on common interests.

In our daily life, however, we understand social media as being a bunch of “websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone”². This definition coincides with the one for social networks, which in the opinion of some authors is a different concept.

For example, Froehlich³ believes that social media is about broadcasting information while social networks are about communication between people. Meaning, social media is a communication platform while social networks are about two-way communication. However, in this paper we will not focus on this difference and we will use these terms interchangeably, as we do in everyday life.

Now, returning to social media- its main purpose is about connecting people by sharing contents, discussing, participating into someone's life⁴. But, the social media lacks the physical dimension in which people were accustomed to apply different ethical and moral norms which allowed the existence of democracy through rights ensured by law and responsibilities ensured by moral obligations. Once technology gave us a virtual environment for communication, it also opened ways for communication where some instincts and social constraints disappear, as do fears and prejudices, which deprive the new communication space of responsibilities. So, social media is not just about communication but also about influencing our lifestyle and the principles on which we live and act. Thus, it is a tool for settling, modifying and maintaining a social reality. From this perspective, social media is a vital tool for maintaining a lifestyle, for improving it, for refreshing knowledge about the values and ideas that underlie this reality. But how real is a reality that cannot be seen with the naked eye or whose veracity is difficult to verify, especially in a world where we are invaded with information?

¹ Michael Kent, "Directions in social media for professionals and scholars" in Heath Robert (ed.), *The SAGE handbook of public relations*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles, London: SAGE, 2010, pp. 643- 656.

² Cambridge Dictionary, "Social media", in *Cambridge Dictionary*, 2022. Available at: dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/social-media, Accessed at 25/03/2022.

³ Andrew Froehlich, "What's the difference between social media and social networking?" in *Tech Target*, 2020, Available at: techtarget.com/searchunifiedcommunications/answer/Whats-the-difference-between-social-media-and-social-networking, Accessed at 29/03/2022.

⁴ Michael Kent, Maureen Taylor, "Putting the social back in social media: a longitudinal, meta-analysis of social media research" in *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, no.1, vol.5, 2016, pp. 62-75.

Social media characteristics

Social media, as described by Kent⁵, is characterized by several aspects such as: moderation, interactivity, interchangeability, propinquity, responsiveness, and dialogue. Each of these mechanisms is meant to manage human relationships. For example, moderation is a feature available on certain communication platforms to restrict access to discussions and comments of those who comment abusively, who try to disintegrate a person's identity, or those who violate the rules of a platform. This feature has been adopted by all known social network platforms such as facebook, tik-tok, instagram, popular gaming platforms, and so on. But there are also limits to this function, namely when the moderation is not done correctly. As a result, this can lead to different situations, such as dissemination of wrong information, assault on person, psychological and verbal violence, distortion of reality, triggering crises.

For this kind of situations in face-to-face conversation we have the dialogue, which usually includes two types of information: the verbal information and the one collected through non-verbal communication. The latter is quite important and we used it for thousands of years to identify additional information, including the veracity of information. In social media, however, aspects such as responsiveness, dialogue, interactivity, interchangeability, and propinquity do not help us gather enough information to classify something as true or false. So, how does communication and information on social media influence our daily lives if the information we receive may be false?

The big crises of the 2020's

The COVID-19 pandemics and the social media response

In 2019, Asia faced a new virus that only in a few months triggered a Global Pandemic, the COVID- 19 Pandemic. It is not until the spring of 2020 that the World Health Organization declared a pandemic⁶, an example followed by Europe, the United States and most countries in the world. The first decision of the authorities was to declare a state of emergency and to impose some immediate measures to prevent the virus dissemination. But once the virus mutated, what we knew about it was mostly inapplicable to its new form, which got to be more contagious and presented other symptoms. By consequence, the number of fatalities increased significantly and this crisis was not anymore about national response, nor about the medical capacity to face the situation, but about the social welfare, the socioeconomic difficulties, and the psychological impact of the disease⁷, for which the whole world had to mobilize and respond.

The difficulty of this crisis was about the uncertainty of the tools for handling the medical crisis and the unknown. As the Coronavirus had different consequences for human health, it was difficult to establish a treatment scheme, a common solution, and a general approach from the very beginning. So it was necessary to mobilize the national public health

⁵ Kent, "Directions in social media", 2010, pp. 643- 656.

⁶ World Health Organization, "WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020" in *World Health Organization*, 2022, Available at: [who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020](https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020), Accessed at 29/03/2022.

⁷ Joy Osofsky, Howard Osofsky, Lakisha Mamon, "Psychological and Social Impact of COVID-19" in *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*, no.5, vol.12, 2020, pp. 468 – 469.

systems, to develop research, to identify particular solutions, but also to adapt them to each variant of the virus that brought even more insecurity.

This health crisis, with all its uncertainty, with its gravity and danger, has transformed COVID-19 from a health crisis into a social, economic, political, cultural and environmental crisis. It affected all aspects of our daily lives and could be found in all our public speeches and social media discussions. From a social point of view, this pandemic has sparked debates on various forums and social media pages. Just as the knowledge about the new virus was a scattered puzzle, the researchers kept silence and only when they had certain information they published it. In the meantime, the panicked society tried to propose solutions, to debate the government's decisions, to struggle in a fight between protecting the human rights and the desire of being certain about the public health. From here arise a lot of socio-economic problems of COVID-19, like: "social distancing and self-isolation, travel restrictions, reduced workforce across all economic sectors, job loss, school closure, disruption of normal life of children, decreased demands for commodities and manufactured products, increased need for medical supplies, increased demand in food sector, panic-buying and stockpiling of food products, domino effect on health, healthcare and nutrition, "infodemic": spread of panic and fear through social media, xenophobia against specific ethnic/ geographic groups, "covidization" of the academic research: undermining other areas and scholarship, poor people, homeless people, refugees, migrants disproportionately affected by the health and economic impacts of COVID"⁸.

In addition the COVID-19 crisis had a huge impact over the increase of illiteracy. According to the November 2021 World Literacy Foundation report, 42% of children between the ages of 3 and 6 have been deprived of learning and reading skills due to the pandemic, the main reason being the lack of access to books and other materials for learning at home⁹.

In an even more worrying way, UNESCO warned us in July 2020 about the impact of the interruption of education due to COVID-19. The result in West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are about 24 million students in pre-primary and university education that are at risk of not returning to school because of other problems caused by the pandemics such as mass layoffs that caused financial problems, early and forced marriages or unexpected pregnancies, etc.¹⁰

Finally, the impact of the pandemic has been felt in various areas of daily life, but especially on the psychological health¹¹. The human being needs security and certainty about the future for survival. This is because we need to be sure about the knowledge we have¹². Thus, any insecurity and the unknown makes us worry, panic for the future, which impacts our psychological health, and our immune system as well¹³. Therefore, a crisis that enveloped

⁸ Sanjay Bhattacharya, "The social impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic" in *ORFISSEA BRIEF*, no.406, 2020, 1-14.

⁹ World Literacy Foundation, "Spike in illiteracy due to the pandemic" in *CISION PR Newswire*, 2021, Available at: prnewswire.com/news-releases/spike-in-illiteracy-due-to-the-pandemic-301432835.html, Accessed at 29/03/2022.

¹⁰ UNESCO, "How many students are at risk of not returning to school?" in *UNESCO UNESDOC Digital Library*, 2020, Available at: unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000373992, Accessed 30/03/2022.

¹¹ Valeria Saladino, Davide Algeri, Vincenzo Auriemma, "The psychological and social impact of COVID-19: new perspectives of well-being" in *Frontiers in psychology*, vol.11, 2020, pp. 1- 6.

¹² Jason Stanley, "Knowledge and certainty" in *Philosophical Issues*, vol.18, 2008, pp. 33- 55.

¹³ Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, Ronald Glaser, "Depression and immune function. Central pathways to morbidity and mortality" in *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, vol.53, 2002, pp. 873 – 876.

society in the unknown generated to some extent the human predisposition to diseases and suicide¹⁴.

In this discussion, social media played a special role. Although it is a tool for communication and rapprochement of people, in the case of COVID- 19 Pandemic it was also used for social division, triggering mass fear, misinformation, social movements, and so on.

Social media impact on the COVID -19 pandemic

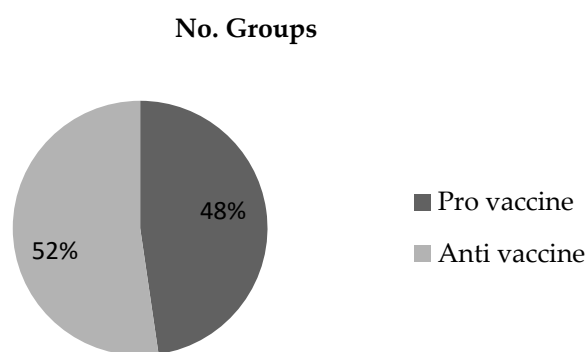
In crisis situations, the most important aspect for a society is the dissemination of knowledge about the factor that caused the crisis and potential solutions. In this context, social media seemed to be a promising tool that allowed the rapid dissemination of information. Moreover, starting from the way social media works, it guaranteed the coverage of a large part of society, and the transmission of information in different languages. For these reasons, communication through social media has also been adopted by organizations with an important role in crisis management such as the World Health Organization.

One of the first steps we notice on social media during the COVID-19 pandemics was the creation of special groups where were discussed different concerns about the virus. For example on facebook were created 95 groups with posts related to anxiety, depression and other psychological problems triggered by the pandemics, the evolution of the disease and the pandemic in different countries: Romania, Spain, Moldova, Canada, etc. On these groups we also find jokes and positive posts to help people laugh, information for pregnant women who were afraid of the virus or who asked an advice on vaccination or overcoming the disease, as well as groups discussing the new mutations of the virus. In all these groups we see lots of experience sharing, the dissemination of ideas and recommendations of specialists in health.

Thus, the main arguments in favour of using social media during the COVID-19 crisis was about ensuring that the knowledge is conveyed to the society and that no additional resources are wasted to reach society. Social media allowed a rapid dissemination of information, the transmission of information between the medical staff around the world and the adoption of best practices while facing the pandemics (Chan, et al., 2020). However, we find different information and positions towards the subject on social media. On Facebook, for example, we have both groups discussing COVID-19 and solutions against it, but also groups with people who have not faced the virus and do not believe in its existence or those who have been asymptomatic and promote the fight against the governmental measures proposed during the crisis (see figure 1).

¹⁴ Acharya Binod et al, "Association between COVID-19 pandemic and the suicide rates in Nepal" in *PLoS ONE*, no.1, vol.17, 2022, pp. 1-13.

Figure 1: Facebook groups for and against the COVID-19 vaccine



Source: Author's figure

With this in mind, Bridgman and others¹⁵ argued that the exposure to social media during the pandemic had rather a negative effect on social information, and even encouraged a social behaviour that "magnified the lethal impact of COVID-19".

Their study has shown that exposure to social media lead to misinformation, misinterpretation of information, and often resulted in less social distance and non-compliance with the government recommendations for the pandemic management. The study showed that public information has yielded better results in the cases when people got informed from regular media channels. There we had informational campaigns organized by the governments in order to manage the pandemic. Yet, here we are not spared of fake news too, because the exaggeration of the facts and the presentation of news in an alarming way for audience triggered mass fears and unnecessary crises.

A similar phenomenon is found in social media where opinion formers and most of those active in disseminating information sought to be original, to win the public's sympathy, and revenue. This led to the spread of false information about the virus and to the development of a social attitude against the crisis management measures. As a result of misinterpretation and fake news dissemination through social media we had countless protests against wearing masks and vaccines in various countries like the USA,¹⁶ ¹⁷ Austria, Croatia, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Finland, Romania, Switzerland, UK¹⁸, Spain¹⁹, Japan²⁰, etc. Thus, social media also contributed to the dissemination of false information and misinterpretation in the context in which those without expertise in the field

¹⁵ Aengus Bridgman et al, "The causes and consequences of COVID-19 misperceptions: understanding the role of news and social media" in *The Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, vol.1, 2020, pp. 1-18.

¹⁶ Emily Stewart, "Anti-maskers explain themselves" in *Vox*, 2022, Available at: [vox.com/the-goods/2020/8/7/21357400/anti-mask-protest-rallies-donald-trump-covid-19](https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2020/8/7/21357400/anti-mask-protest-rallies-donald-trump-covid-19), Accessed 29/03/2022.

¹⁷ Taylor Steven, "Negative attitudes about facemasks during the COVID-19 pandemic: The dual importance of perceived ineffectiveness and psychological reactance" in *Pub Med Central*, no.2, vol.16, 2021, pp. 1-15.

¹⁸ Julie McCarthy, "Protesters Across Europe Clash With Police Over COVID-19 Lockdowns" in NPR, 2021, Available at: [npr.org/2021/03/21/979653125/protesters-across-europe-clash-with-police-over-covid-19-lockdowns?t=1648581984612](https://www.npr.org/2021/03/21/979653125/protesters-across-europe-clash-with-police-over-covid-19-lockdowns?t=1648581984612), Accessed at 21/03/2022.

¹⁹ Neuman Scott, "'We can't live like zombies': protesters in Spain decry COVID-19 mask mandate" in NPR, 2020, Available at: [npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/08/17/903282953/we-can-t-live-like-zombies-protesters-in-spain-decry-covid-19-mask-mandate](https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/08/17/903282953/we-can-t-live-like-zombies-protesters-in-spain-decry-covid-19-mask-mandate), Accessed at 23/03/2022.

²⁰ Keith Bradsher, Daniel Victor, Tiffany May, "Hong Kong Banned Masks at Protests. Masked Crowds Protested the Ban" in *New York Times*, 2019, Available at: [nytimes.com/2019/10/04/world/asia/hong-kong-emergency-powers.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/04/world/asia/hong-kong-emergency-powers.html), Accessed at 30/03/2022.

expressed their opinion and disseminated them as reliable information, which led to a more difficult management of the COVID-19 crisis instead of easing it.

Another aspect of the social media impact on crisis management is the political theatre, which tended to divide social opinion and the whole society with the intention to win voters. An example in this direction is the US former president Donald Trump that through his statements about the vaccine allowed interpretations and triggered a phenomenon of social division when people choose to follow the ones that represent them. The interpretation of public and social media declarations of the political leaders, especially of the presidents, turned many people against the vaccine and encouraged the adoption of public statements as solutions against virus, like the bleach injection scandal²¹.

Throughout Europe, including Romania, the social division was triggered especially by the nationalist parties. In order to win the sympathy of the voters, they organized protests that happened without respecting the government rules against the spread of COVID-19, and even more, the protests were organized against many measures proposed by the government. All this was possible through the use of social media, which allowed the communication of political leaders with the society and the dissemination of truths that did not illustrate the objective reality, and which did not necessarily follow the social welfare, but the interests of those who disseminated the information. Starting from this picture of the reality, we notice that in the case of the COVID-19 crisis, social media had both a positive and a negative impact (see table 1).

Table 1: The social media impact on crisis management during COVID-19 pandemics

Positive impact	Negative impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick dissemination of information • Sharing diagnostics, treatment, and approaches from different countries of the World • Surveillance of the social response to the crisis • Monitoring the results of the solutions adopted for the crisis management • Medical education • Peer review • Dissemination of scientific information • Contribution to the social sense of security • The potential of reducing the fatality of a crisis • Avoiding additional crises through planning, discussing and applying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misinterpretation • Psychological problems • Myths • Fake data • Aggravation of the crisis by disseminating false information and pursuing personal interests • Pessimist information • Mass fears • Misinformation • Social division • Distortion of reality • Triggering unnecessary crises • Social confusion

Source: Author's table after Tsao et al.; Goel, Gupta; Cuello-Garcia et al.

As we can see, although social media is a tool with enormous potential in solving crises, when misusing it social media can serve as a trigger of crises.

²¹ Meredith McGraw, Sam Stein, "It's been exactly one year since Trump suggested injecting bleach. We've never been the same" in Politico, 2021, Available at: [politico.com/news/2021/04/23/trump-bleach-one-year-484399](https://www.politico.com/news/2021/04/23/trump-bleach-one-year-484399), Accessed at 20/03/2022.

The war in Ukraine and the social media response

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the negative impact of social media on the government's capacity of managing the crisis was very clear. However, in 2022 social media shows a different face and its true potential in influencing positively the crisis management through handling the public opinion, keeping people with up to date information, and encouraging the whole world to take joint action against the immoral and unjust that affect or can affect us.

It all started on February 24, 2022, when the Russian forces invaded Ukraine and attacked some of the largest cities in Ukraine: Berdyansk, Chornobyl, Kharkiv, Odessa, Sumy, and Kyiv²². From the very beginning, both the Moscow leadership and the European society believed that this war would be a short one, because from the very beginning it was known that the purpose of the invasion was not destruction, but a change of power in Kyiv, which especially in the last 10 years has shown its admiration for the Western lifestyle and its desire to join the EU and NATO.

Ukraine is resisting to the attacks longer than expected, thus, the war continued but in a different tone. If at the beginning Russia invaded Ukraine with old military equipment, then in early March Russia started to use vacuum bombs, with immense destructive power²³. Yet, the Ukrainian resistance in this war with the help of military equipment delivered by the West, has changed the terms and the note in which the negotiations are held, as the losses are significant on both sides involved in the war. For this reason, in order to put even more pressure in negotiations, in the middle to the end of March, Russia started to use hypersonic weapons that trigger "the bloodiest phase of the war"²⁴. In addition, are used phosphorus bombs, kinzhal missiles, cluster bombs, javelin missiles, Bayraktar TB2 drones, Next Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapons, etc.²⁵

After a months of war now, negotiations between the parties directly involved in the conflict are still going on. All this time, social media played a crucial role in spreading information about the war, the damage it caused, the position of the Russian people towards this war, the errors in military strategies, and so on.

The social media impact on the war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine gave to social media the opportunity to show its true potential in solving crises and conflicts. Since the beginning social media had a tremendous impact on disseminating information about the evolution of the war, but also about potential actions that could help stopping it. Shortly after the war started, Europe faced a humanitarian crisis, at just 6 years after the Syrian immigrant crisis from 2015-2016. This humanitarian crisis is the

²² Statista Research Department, "Russia-Ukraine war 2022 - statistics & facts" in *Statista*, 2022, Available at: [statista.com/topics/9087/russia-ukraine-war-2022/#dossierKeyfigures](https://www.statista.com/topics/9087/russia-ukraine-war-2022/#dossierKeyfigures), Accessed at 29/03/2022.

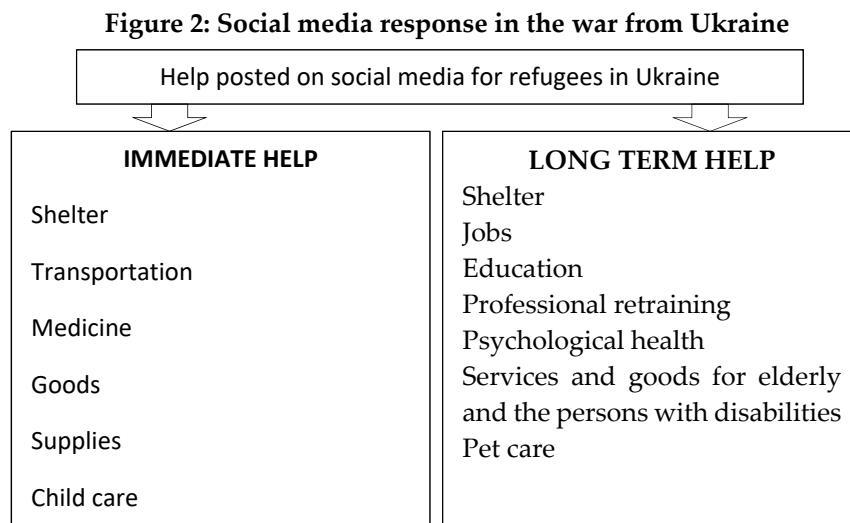
²³ Marcus Lütticke, "Is Russia using vacuum bombs in Ukraine?" in *DW*, 2022, Available at: [dw.com/en/is-russia-using-vacuum-bombs-in-ukraine/a-61001817](https://www.dw.com/en/is-russia-using-vacuum-bombs-in-ukraine/a-61001817), Accessed at 21/03/2022.

²⁴ Alan Crawford, "Russia Uses Hypersonic Weapons as War Enters Bloodier Phase" in *Time*, 2022, Available at: time.com/6158929/russia-hypersonic-weapons/, Accessed at 30/03/2022.

²⁵ Amit Chaturvedi, "Weapons Used by Russia and how Ukraine is countering them" in *NDTV*, 2022, Available at: [ndtv.com/world-news/russia-ukraine-war-weapons-used-by-russia-and-how-ukraine-is-countering-them-2841204](https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/russia-ukraine-war-weapons-used-by-russia-and-how-ukraine-is-countering-them-2841204), Accessed at 27/03/2022.

largest in proportion since World War II, given that 3.8 million Ukrainians fled into the EU countries.

Social media played a crucial role in the management of this crisis by contributing to the quick exchange of information, dissemination of ideas and solutions. An example in this direction is the posts on facebook of the people that put at the refugees disposal their homes for shelter, of different organizations that raised funds, organized free hot meals for the refugees and founded information platforms for the refugees, etc (see figure 2).



Source: Author's figure

Everyone empathized with Ukraine and spread information about aid to refugees as well as methods for those who wanted to help. At the same time, we see a mobilization of social media in restricting access to the social platforms of those who supported the conflict. Although this method restricts the freedom of expression, it prevented partially the dissemination of false information about this conflict and did not allow pro-war propaganda to reach the public.

At an analysis of the facebook activity in english, we find that 85 groups have been founded on Ukraine war, discussing updates, promoting peace and advocating for an international response to stop the war against Ukraine. We note that many other groups are being formed to solve the humanitarian crisis caused by this war, such as: Support Ukrainian Refugees in Romania and Medical Supplies For Ukraine, Solidarity with Ukraine (Belgium), Stand With Ukraine, Ukraine Animal Rescue Information, Help Ukraine! (Hungary) and many others.

However, in this crisis the social media was not spared from false information too. For example, we have fake news both in the media and on social networks, with images and videos that amplified the gravity of the conflict and triggered various crises. An example is the fake posts and news with images and videos from other past conflicts, which were presented as current. The posts with a huge impact on the social wellbeing and the crisis management were those with fake news or opinions about a nuclear war²⁶. The immediate impact of social media on the society and the crisis management translated in a growing

²⁶ Alistair Coleman, "Ukraine conflict: Further false images shared online" in *BBC*, 2022. Available at: [bbc.com/news/60528276](https://www.bbc.com/news/60528276), Accessed at 28/03/2022.

demand for iodine pills and staple foods. In the same way, we stepped into a fuel crisis with people queuing at gas stations to refuel.

Thus, the war in Ukraine highlighted the power of social media in quickly disseminating information and the involvement of masses in solving a problem, but also the shortcomings of social media in managing a crisis. The positive contribution of the social media in Ukraine crisis management was also about disseminating information about the negative impact of the war on those directly involved in the conflict and the whole world. The ideas we find in social media dialogues are related to topics like human consciousness, cultural empathy, multiculturalism, diversity and humanity (see table 2).

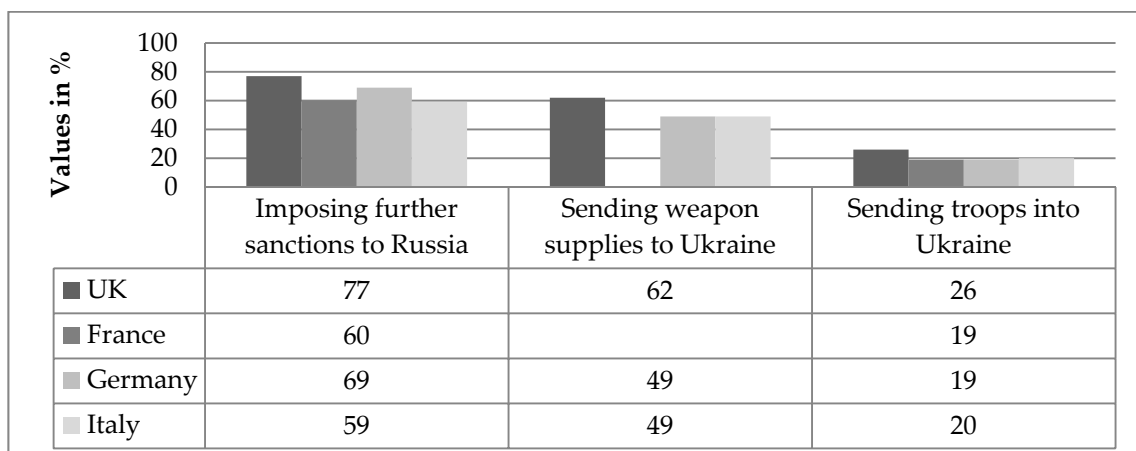
Table 2: Topics in social media regarding the war in Ukraine

Social media topics on	
Fears and worries	Intervention and needs
- Solidarity vs escalating a conflict	- Just vs unjust wars
- Creating a precedent, but of what kind?	- United humanity
- The future of Europe	- International law
- Energetic security	- Humanitarian help
- Military preparation	- International solidarity
- NATO solidarity	- Unjust invasions
- The destruction power of war	- International measures against war
	- History and justice
	- Scientific approaches to war

Source: Author's table after social media dialog and publications analysis

Discussions on social media between specialists in international relations and society led to the mass dissemination of scientific reasoning and the development of the general culture of society. Social media also influenced the public opinion regarding the conflict in Ukraine encouraging specific governmental actions to stop the war (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Social attitude in the Russia-Ukraine war



Source: Author figure after Statista Research Department

This way we realize that social media has two major roles in crisis and conflict management, namely, a positive and a negative one. The first one is related to the fast dissemination of information, introducing the society to current issues, the dissemination of social values that encourage multiculturalism, equality, human rights and democracy as a social regime. On the other hand, because there is no authority to control the dynamics of socialization and social media discussions, those seeking fame and profit disseminate false information and distort reality by generating new social crises.

Social media as a governmental tool for crisis management

The model of communication found in social media is beneficial in managing crises and emergencies; however this way of transmitting information is not new as shown in 1977 by Quarantelli and Dynes. The way people react in different situations easily turns them into "digital volunteers" or "physical volunteers" that embrace different roles and participate in one way or another in crisis management²⁷.

Starting from the nature of crises, social media can be a tool for conflict and crisis prevention, resolution, or a tool to gather up to date information from eye witnesses²⁸ to assess the impact and respond in an appropriate manner. One of the hallmarks of crises and conflicts is unpredictability. This makes them dangerous for development and social welfare. In this context social media came as a tool for enabling rapid communication of social masses for information distribution and decision making.

Since social media is present more than ever in our daily lives, it must be treated as a tool whose use is a priority in solving conflicts and crises. But, it was only in the crises of the 2020s that we noticed the presence of both political officials and other national and international authorities on social media. Their presence and activity translates into the transmission of official, verified information that people trust. This counterbalances the impact of fake news on social behaviour and social involvement in crisis management.

Governmental use of social media

Since the year of the pandemic in which freedom of movement has been substantially reduced, the national and EU authorities and officials understood the importance of their presence on social media, in the new space where people socialized, discussed daily problems and negotiated meanings. The governments' presence on social networks encourage their participation in the process of social information, in directing social dialogue, but also in the inclusion of society in the crisis management process²⁹. As we mentioned earlier, the governments' presence in social media was recently recorded. Until 10 years ago, governments did not seem to understand the benefits and costs of using social media. And even more, they did not manage to come with an efficient tool for managing the flow of information and for processing it so that it can be used in crisis management.

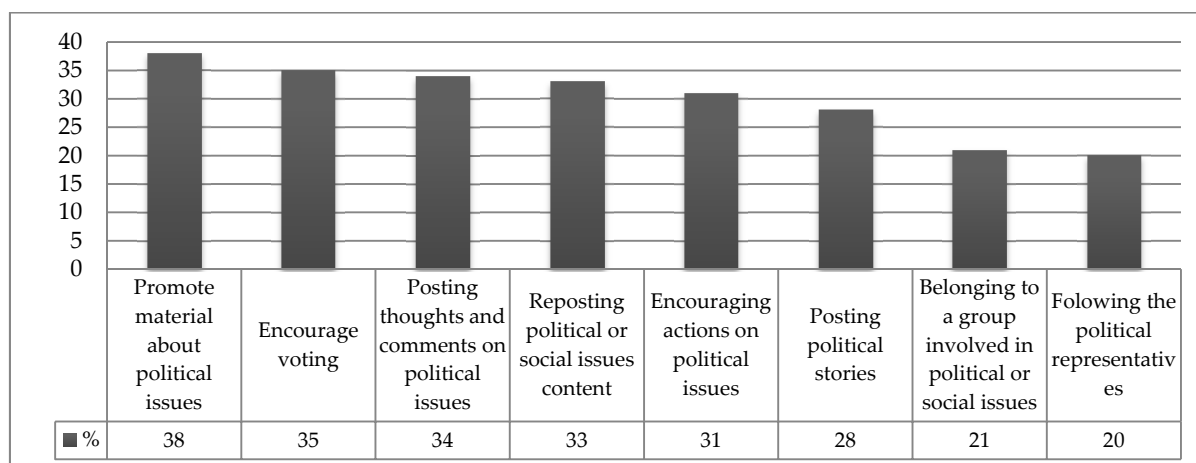
²⁷ Christian Reuter, Amanda Lee Hughes, "Social Media in Crisis Management: an Evaluation and Analysis of Crisis Informatics Research" in *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 2018.

²⁸ Marianna Sigala, "Social media and crisis management in tourism: applications and implications for research" in *Information Technology & Tourism*, vol. 13, 2012, pp. 1-16.

²⁹ Melissa Graham, Elizabeth Avery, Sejin Park, "The role of social media in local government crisis communications" in *Public Relations Review*, no.3, vol.41, 2015, pp. 386-394.

The problem of managing the flow of information on social media, of sorting and processing it is also a social issue, which hinders the crisis and conflicts management³⁰. With all this, the governments should take into account the social preferences in social media, meaning, in the US for example, most of the people prefer to post, disseminate information, and to follow their political representatives (see figure 4).

Figure 4: USA people preferences on social media



Source: Author's figure after Rainie et al.

As shown in figure 4, people are on social media to disseminate official information whether it is about political conflicts or new government measures regarding a crisis, but also to follow the information and the posts of the officials they voted for. But, in the meantime, another study shows that the officials prefer to be social media consumers than content producers³¹. And this is exactly what keeps people in a crisis of information on topics that affect their daily lives and makes them fall into the trap of fake news.

Conclusions

We started this study with an analysis of social media impact on public opinion in the two crises of the early 2020s. As a result, we understood that social media is a valuable tool to be used in crisis management. It contributes to the rapid and efficient dissemination of information, to social mobilization and to overcoming other crises that may be caused by lack of information.

But at the same time, if social media is not used correctly, it can worsen a crisis, as we saw in the COVID-19 pandemic. It can trigger mini-crises like the staple one, the toilet paper, iodine, cold medicines and many others that happened during COVID-19 pandemics and the Ukraine war because of false information and fear promoted on social media.

³⁰ Andrea Kavanaugh et al, "Social media use by government: from the routine to the critical" in *The 12th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research*, 2011, Maryland, USA: Association for Computing Machinery, pp. 121-130.

³¹ Monika Djerf-Pierra, Jon Pierre, "Mediatized local government: Social media activity and media strategies among local government officials 1989- 2010" in *Policy & Politics*, 2015, pp. 1-19.

Considering the way social media works and people's preferences in social media activity we suggest the following measures for turning social media into a positive tool for crisis and conflict management:

- strengthening the presence of political officials on social media;
- coordinating the official posts on social media in crisis situations, so people can have a clear and short information they can rely on;
- avoiding the use of social media for political manipulation and orienting social media activity towards solving emergencies, otherwise the credibility of official sources would be lost and an important tool for the crisis management would be lost too.

Finally, starting from this study, we argue that social media should be used as a means of managing crises and conflicts, but also as a tool to prevent them by analyzing the dynamics of social actions and dialogue.

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THE ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITIES' MESSAGES DURING THE FIRST AND THE LAST PART OF THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS AND THE FIRST PART OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

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Introduction

The communication strategies used by the organization in the crisis period are the ones that influences the way the organizations progress or disappear. In this research, the universities are assimilated to the organization that need to adapt to a new way of life. The pandemic forced the limits of online activities. The tools were adjusted in a fast way, so that to enable the communication with students, to ease their adaptation to the new studying method and to decrease the level of distance between students and teachers.

The coronavirus pandemic led to developing many studies about communications in a situation of crisis, which is a mainstream national, European and international subject. In case of students, the influence of messages that universities transmit generate future behaviors related to the implication in the learning process.

In this article, we analyse the results of the research based on some fundamental concepts from previous studies that refers to the crisis communication, adapting to the new informational challenges, the role of the education in the increasing level of credibility in the provided information, the contribution of universities to the increasing level of public health, the context in which subjects are debated by the universities and others.

Through this research we intend to find out which were the main subjects dealt with by universities during the coronavirus pandemic, which was the contribution of universities in the process of increasing the public health, in which context the dissection topics were mainly placed (national, European and international) and if the universities' way of communications has improved. We expect that the results will show a high number of posts about online classes, about the way of organizing the activities and some useful information regarding the evolution of coronavirus pandemic. We also expect that the results will show an evolution of the posts number and as well as the diversity and method of communication. Another variable followed that we expect to discover is that the posts were rather debated in the national context, than European or international context, as well as previous studies show.

Background research

The education system, and the progress it makes or fails to make, plays a fundamental role in the sustainable development of any knowledge-based society. The crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its exponential evolution have had negative effects and repercussions on all areas of activity, with education being one of the sectors most affected if we consider the medium and long-term effects.

As simply reopening classes is not enough, students need intensive support both to recover from learning loss and communication that contributes significantly to improving their emotional health. In this regard, universities need to expand their core role and give greater importance to the communication component in providing psychosocial support to students, thus ensuring greater preparedness for possible crises in the future.

The restriction of face-to-face communication and human interaction as a measure taken in the immediate aftermath of pandemics and the extent of fake news, and the need for credible information become important in how universities have communicated on social media platforms in times of crisis such as pandemics or, more recently, in war situations. In this study, we compare the messages sent by universities in the last three days of the alert state and three days after the pandemic. We note that the last part of the alert period in Romania coincides with the start of the war between Ukraine and Russia and the arrival of refugees in our country.

This material is intended to help raise awareness of the importance and necessity of having a specific strategy and communication plan in place during a crisis to enable the rapid dissemination of accurate information to stakeholders during and after the inception, during and after phases of these particular situations such as the medical crisis generated by COVID19 and the war in Ukraine. We aim to investigate the differences and similarities in the presentation of the context, which were the main decisions that the universities' leadership communicated through their websites and social media pages.

Our scope was to identify what type of themes is Romanian universities representing the most, how universities changed their communication strategies and which type of messages was the most mentioned in the pandemic, but in the war crisis.

Methodology

To show the importance of communication, as main form of connection in human relationships and crisis situations, we have analysed how the universities conveyed the messages about the changes it underwent during the new coronavirus pandemic. By using a content analysis grid, we were able to examine the content, format and frequency of messages from 20 faculties in Romania. We compared the messages conveyed by the universities in the first and the last five days of the alert state and five days after it.

The universities selected were the first 20 listed by uniRank, who published the 2021 Romanian University Ranking of 77 Romanian higher-education institutions. The Facebook data collection was between 11-20.03.2020 and 04-13.03.2022.

We included 27 variables both scale and nominal values. We codified all the possible answers and added the code descriptions. The messages identification included code, day of the message, topic of the message, theme representation of the message, covered area and field of university.

We considered four components of the research: topics of discussion, themes, covered area and the university field. We've divided topics of discussion, in 22 categories: rules, online classes, face to face classes, online tools, online events, medical information, research, emergency state, alert state, official messages from the board, psychological help, extracurricular activities, internal activities, vaccination campaign, keep calm, emotions about the war, historical information, geopolitical information, official messages about the war, volunteering activities, hostels, fundraising. The university field - general studies, medicine, technical, economic - was another important component. As for the covered area we coded and analysed the messages according to the geographical location of the university: North, East, South, West, Centre.

We had focus on three main themes when evaluating of the theme representation in universities Facebook posts about coronavirus crisis messages: National Themes, European Themes and International Themes. The national included solely local issues, the European - covered European Union countries and International refers to worldwide distribution.

Literature review

Crisis communication has in recent years become one of the most studied academic areas in the fields of communication, leadership and management. Nowadays crises are not only generated by organizations through the actions of employees and management, but uncontrollable factors give rise to unpredictable events and situations of uncertainty, making organizations and institutions not immune to the occurrence of crises¹. The impact of the pandemic has been felt as a double crisis in academia: an educational crisis caused by school closures and an economic crisis generated by the general economic situation. Within the framework of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), Coombs, defines a crisis as a sudden, unpredictable event that poses an immediate threat to an organization's stakeholders, performance or reputation.² He also opines that a crisis response strategy is in fact a communication strategy that focuses on how the organization communicates its message according to the type of audience it is addressing. This is essential as it will determine how stakeholders will perceive the crisis not only logically but also emotionally both during the crisis and after it is over. The relevance of the audience-centric perspective in crisis communication is also pointed out by Frandsen and Johansen³ and Ji et al.⁴, who propose a more dynamic understanding of crises through a type of multivocal approach that organizations and institutions are desirable to practice. A complementary approach is taken by Fraustino and Liu who emphasize message formulation taking into account stakeholders' thoughts, feelings and attitudes.⁵ Which aspect to focus on in formulating the crisis message

¹ Toni G.L.A. van der Meer, Piet Verhoeven, Hans W.J. Beentjes & Rens Vliegenthart, "Communication in Times of Crisis: The Stakeholder Relationship under pressure" in *Public Relations Review*, 2, 43, 2017, pp. 426-440.

² W. Timothy Coombs, "Protecting Organization Reputations during a Crisis: The Development and Application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory" in *Corporate Reputation Review*, 3, 10, 2007, pp. 163-177.

³ Finn Frandsen & Winni Johansen, *Organizational Crisis Communication: A Multivocal Approach*, Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2016, p. 147.

⁴ Yi Grace Ji, Cong Li, Michael North & Jiangmeng Liu, "Staking reputation on stakeholders: How does stakeholders' Facebook engagement help or ruin a company's reputation" in *Public Relations Review*, 1, 43, 2017, pp. 201-210.

⁵ Julio Daisy Fraustino & Brooke Fisher Liu, "Toward more-audience approaches to crisis communication and social media research" in Yan Jin & Lucinda L. Austin (ed.), *Social Media and Crisis Communication*, New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 135.

will determine its acceptance by the target audience.^{6 7} This is all the more relevant given the extent of new technologies and the new media landscape, stakeholders and the general public have a voice that organizations and institutions cannot afford to ignore. As the virtual communication space expands, the identification of problem areas combined with stakeholder theory requires an increased degree of crisis monitoring.⁸

Reference to both short- and long-term organizational reputation is brought up by Ziek, who describes crisis as a dramatic event that has disastrous impact and results.⁹ Reputation stakes in the online environment are important as the organization and stakeholders influence each other by forwarding, sharing, or commenting on information.¹⁰ From this point of view, in order to have an impact, the content of messages must consider and reflect their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. According to Jin, the crisis coping strategies that organizations adopt result in a different degree of intensity of emotional responses of stakeholders, in our case, students, by showing acceptance, adaptation, support or anger.¹¹

Communication through social media - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - as an effective solution in crisis management by universities is addressed by Motwani et al, who are of the opinion that when properly used, these resources prove their effectiveness by informing all stakeholders in a timely manner.¹² This allows keeping under control, i.e., mitigating uncertainty situations.

Taking the unpredictable nature of crises and their varying levels of magnitude as a starting point, Moerschell and Novak highlight the urgent need for attention and action by university leadership by addressing a holistic crisis management system that addresses the three phases: planning, response and recovery.¹³ The lack of such a system leads to serious consequences such as loss of message control through the spread of rumors and false news, prolonged disruption of operations with negative effects on business results and damage to reputation. The complexity of a critical event such as COVID is brought up by Kabha et al., they emphasize the emergence of fake news and false reports, which made the role of communication from organizations and institutions in combating and minimizing anxiety and depression even more important.¹⁴ In this context, filtering information, providing

⁶ Brooke Fisher Liu, Yan Jin & Lucinda L. Austin, "The tendency to tell: Understanding publics' communicative responses to crisis information form and source" in *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1, 25, 2013, pp. 51-67.

⁷ Friederike Schultz, Sonja Utz & Anja Göritz, "Is the medium the message? Perceptions of and reactions to crisis communication via Twitter, blogs, and traditional media" in *Public Relations Review*, 1, 37, 2011, pp. 20-27.

⁸ Vilma Luoma-aho & Marita Vos, "Towards a more dynamic stakeholder model: Acknowledging multiple issue arenas" in *Corporate Communications an International Journal*, 3, 15, 2010, pp. 315 - 331.

⁹ Paul Ziek, "Crisis vs Controversy" in *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 1, 23, 2015, pp. 36- 41

¹⁰ Yi Grace Ji, Cong Li, Michael North & Jiangmeng Liu, "Staking reputation on stakeholders: How does stakeholders' Facebook engagement help or ruin a company's reputation" in *Public Relations Review*, 1, 43, 2017, pp. 201-210.

¹¹ Yan Jin, "Examining Publics' Crisis Responses According to Different Shades of Anger and Sympathy" in *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1, 26, 2013, pp. 79-101.

¹² Bharti Motwani, Vidyapeeth Tilak, Dheeraj Singh & Tilak Maharashtra, "Crisis Communication Management at Higher Education in Social Media Era" in *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology*, 2, 12, 2021, pp. 104 - 112.

¹³ Linda, Moerschell & Susan S. Novak, "Managing crisis in university setting: The challenge of alignment" in *Journal of contingencies and crisis management*, 2, 28, 2019, pp. 30-40.

¹⁴ Robin Kabha, Ahmed Mostafa Kamel, Moataz Elbahi, Abdu Mohamed Dawood Hafiz & Wided Dafri, "Impact of fake news and myths related to COVID-19" in *Journal of Content, Community & Communication Amity School of Communication*, 6, 12, 2020, pp. 270-279.

emotional support, monitoring the evolution of the emergency situation are necessary to counteract misinformation.¹⁵

Mohlman and Basch question the mesoscopic level of epidemic modelling that universities should apply, i.e., how the crisis messages these institutions deliver, which they call microscopic interventions, can achieve macroscopic effects.¹⁶ They opine that students have been confronted with sudden, unprecedented changes in their lives. As a result, they relied on directive messages to provide them with a viable plan of action at both informational, behavioral and emotional levels.

Given that the information that circulated during the pandemic was of international interest, we feel it is important to mention a few points about the contexts in which the messages were distributed. Thus, the messages, information or data transmitted can be classified according to their identity, i.e., social, cultural, economic, political, etc. In this respect, in this paper we will also look at the attribution of messages or their placement in the context of a national, European or international identity. As Hall says, it is difficult to determine what gives people their national identity, except their own ideas and information about their national identity or culture.¹⁷ In this context, identity is the sense of belonging to the community and what differentiates it from other communities.¹⁸ ¹⁹ Several studies have shown that, at the level of information distribution in the media, it has been primarily discussed in relation to European identity, followed by European and international identity.²⁰

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Results and discussions

1. Assessment of the most mentioned topic in the Facebook posts

The first objective of the research was to identify which was the most mentioned topic in articles posted by universities on Facebook. From the total of 274 posts on the social network, the most mentioned topics among the 20 universities in Romania were: extracurricular activities, which measured 91 mentions, internal, administrative activities of universities with 41 posts in which the topic was identified, online events were discussed in 35 posts, in another 34 posts the online tools available to students were discussed, and in 33 posts the main topic was about volunteering activities in relation to Ukrainian migrants. Other topics frequently mentioned in the universities' posts were rules to be followed during the pandemic, information about conducting courses online, research opportunities for students, official messages from the university management, information related to geopolitical

¹⁵ Maarj Malik, Mohamad Aadil Qamar, Syed, Shabbir Afzal, Sohaib Tousif Farheen Malik, KKhizr Asif Bhura & Khizer Shamim, "Social Media Use During COVID-19: Real and Fake News?" in *Liaquat National Journal of Primary Care*, 2, 3, 2021, pp. 87-92.

¹⁶ Jan, Mohlman & Corey, Basch, "The language of university communications during the COVID- 19 pandemic" in *Journal of university communications during the Covid 19 pandemic*, 8, 70, 2022, pp. 2253-2256.

¹⁷ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*, London: Sage Publications, 2003, 5.

¹⁸ Richard Jenkins, *Identitatea socială*, Bucharest: Univers, 2000, pp. 11-12.

¹⁹ Mihai Milca, *Identitate românească și europeană*, Bucharest: Ager, 2005, p. 11.

²⁰ Claes de Vreese, "Election coverage. New directions for public broadcasting. The Netherlands and beyond" in *European Journal of Communications*, 2, 16, 2001, pp. 155-180.

²¹ Georgiana Manole & Florinela Mocanu, "Media Representation of Coronavirus in Romanian Online Press. National, European, and International Themes" in *Ovidius Univesrity annals Economic Sciences Series*, 2, 21, 2021, pp. 363-373.

strategies in relation to the war in Ukraine, fundraising for Ukrainian migrants and others, as can be seen in the graphs below.

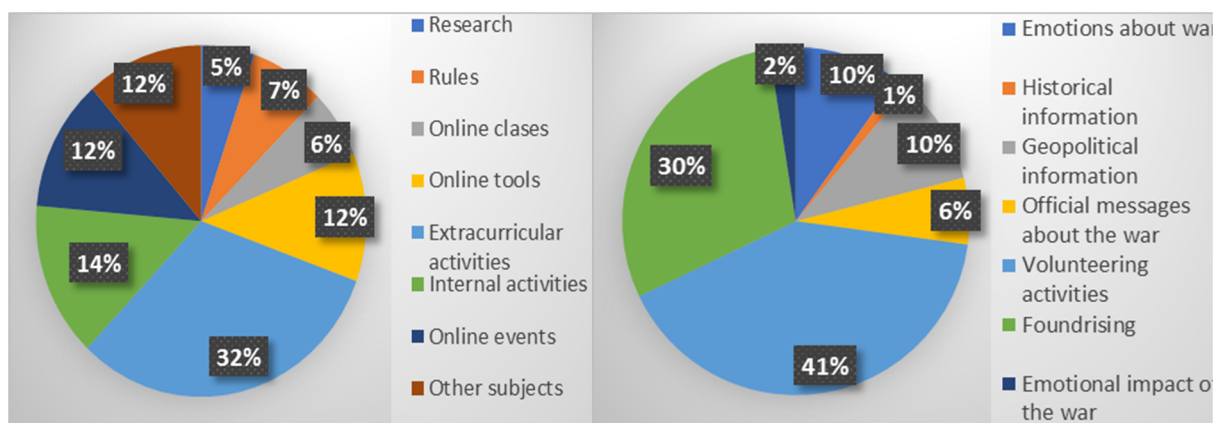


Figure 1 Mentions about pandemic period

Figure 2 Mentions about war situation

In this way, it can be seen which were the most discussed topics in the online environment according to the two big topics, on the one hand the health crisis that lasted for more than two years, and on the other hand the overlapping of the end of the health crisis with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the geopolitical crisis it triggered. From the above we conclude that universities in Romania have chosen to communicate more on issues related to adapting to the online environment, be it in the organization of courses, guidelines for the use of platforms and other online tools or extracurricular activities organized in the digital environment. In terms of the topics addressed on social media by universities in relation to the topic of the war in Ukraine, we observed that they focused mainly on volunteering, fundraising and addressing the topic of emotions generated by the impact of the war.

We believe that one of the explanations for why values have emerged in this way is that universities play the role of the binder of society, aiming to unite common issues and educate the general public to discern for themselves so that the final decisions are ones that are appropriate both personally and in relation to the needs and requirements of society. In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, universities were faced with the need to manage an unprecedented crisis, and were forced to communicate mostly through online channels. Thus, the data presented above confirms what Motwani et al. have stated²², that is, communicating through social media about organizational issues, implementing new ways of course delivery and providing tools has enabled universities to proceed in a way that mitigates the impact of moving entirely to online study.

Both in the case of the coronavirus pandemic and in the case of communication on the geopolitical crisis generated by the war in Ukraine, universities have put forward messages aimed at mass education, as well as messages related to unity, volunteering and aid, achieving, as Mohlam and Basch put it, macroscopic effects at the level of public information and engagement.²³

²² Bharti Motwani, Vidyapeeth Tilak, Dheeraj Singh & Tilak Maharashtra, "Crisis Communication Management at Higher Education in Social Media Era" in *Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology*, 2, 12, 2021, pp. 104 – 112.

²³ Jan, Mohlman & Corey, Basch, "The language of university communications during the COVID- 19 pandemic" in *Journal of university communications during the Covid 19 pandemic*, 8, 70, 2022, pp. 2253-2256.

Comparing situational crisis communication in the pandemic context of universities in the United States, Canada and China, we observe a much more human-centered approach, i.e., emotional reassurance, helping victims and accepting responsibility in the given situation. As shown above, Romanian universities have mainly focused on the "hard" aspect of the information conveyed.

Also, in addition to the number of postings, the frequency of postings was important, if we consider on the one hand, the credibility that a higher education institution presents in the crowd of fake news circulating in the media landscape and, on the other hand, the role of these postings in decreasing uncertainty as a primary factor generating psychological stress among students. From this point of view, the speed at which the information was transmitted varied from a maximum of 3 postings per day, to a posting once a week or even once every two weeks, going as far as total non-involvement in the case of the universities at the end of the list of the most important universities in Romania. Differences in the approach to topics and their frequency, as well as in the crisis management itself, across the 20 universities may be due to different leadership styles, the presence or absence of a communications team and crisis cell, the size or importance of the university and other variables.

Following on from this objective is the analysis of the role of universities in raising awareness of the health measures imposed, which is discussed below.

2. The contribution of universities to increase the public health

With the second objective of this research, we sought to find out to what extent universities have sought to play a role in increasing public health. We also wanted to find out what activities were promoted by them during the period studied, namely at the beginning of the pandemic and two years after its start in Romania. From the data collected, it emerged that 10.21% of the posts discussed the rules to be followed during the pandemic, distributing official information provided by national information platforms such as: www.covid19stirioficial.ro, www.mai.gov.ro, www.ms.ro, www.dsu.mai.gov.ro, etc. Thus, posts were distributed on the rules to be followed when entering institutions, public spaces, the urge to wear protective equipment, information on the steps to be followed by the population to prevent illness and transmission of the virus.

Of the total number of posts, 3.65% were medical information, generally taken and distributed from the Facebook pages of health institutions or medical research in Romania, how the virus acts, how it can be countered, what are the symptoms of illness and what are the phases of the disease. In this case, we noticed, in the case of medical universities, that information from their own sources was promoted, with medical professors providing information and explaining elements related to the new virus through posts.

Regarding the state of emergency, on the Facebook pages analyzed, we calculated a percentage of 3.28% of posts referring to this topic. It should be noted that of the total number of posts about the state of emergency, most were made at the beginning of the pandemic in Romania, i.e., when the state of emergency was declared. In this respect, the information posted mainly concerned the disruption of physical classes, the ban on access to universities and dormitories and the rules of free movement imposed by the national state of emergency.

Another variable identified in the posts on universities' Facebook pages was the psychological support offered by universities to students. Given the emotional impact of the pandemic and the social isolation that occurred with the shift of courses to online mode,

coupled with movement restrictions, universities chose in 3.28% of all posts to publish information about tools to reduce anxiety and the availability to provide psychological and emotional support to students.

In relation to the first objective analyzed, what is presented in this sub-section shows the degree of involvement of universities in raising awareness of the risks to which the student population, and others, have been exposed. Thus, in addition to providing information with a strictly organizational role, universities have chosen to expose data of national interest in terms of population health, as shown by Kabha et al.²⁴ As argued by the aforementioned authors, also in the case of Romanian universities, by distributing information from truthful sources, official or accompanied by the imprint of a recognized academic as a representative of the university, the emphasis was placed on the correct and coherent transmission of information, so that there were no gaps that could generate confusion or sources for false news, thus minimizing the possibility of creating anxiety or negative emotions. The present research thus confirms what Tousif and Afazal Shabbir²⁵ have argued about filtering information to provide truthful data.

3. The evaluation of the theme representation in universities Facebook posts about coronavirus crisis - National, European and International context

The third objective was to track the context in which the topics addressed by the universities were placed. Looking at the beginning and the end of the health crisis, we can see that most of the topics were dealt with from a strictly national perspective (82%), with most of the postings being related to the internal organization of the universities, in relation to the rules and measures imposed by the Romanian authorities, and less to the European (11%) or international (7%) context. Given that the second period analyzed coincided with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, it is necessary to distinguish the context of discussion according to the moment analyzed. The following table shows the weights resulting from this research.

	National	European	International
Start	98,18% (54)	1,82% (1)	0% (0)
End	78,08% (171)	12,79% (28)	9,13% (20)

Table 1 The distribution of themes depending on context

As it can be seen, both in 2020 and 2022, during the period analyzed, most posts on the universities' Facebook pages were built on a national context, with issues being addressed in this context. The increase in the percentages in which issues were discussed at the European level and at the international level were related to the geopolitical crisis built on the theme of the war in Ukraine, which is why in the second part analyzed we can see the emergence of discussions in the international context that are completely missing in the first period analyzed.

²⁴ Robin Kabha, Ahmed Mostafa Kamel, Moataz Elbahi, Abdu Mohamed Dawood Hafiz & Wided Dafri, "Impact of fake news and myths related to COVID-19" in *Journal of Content, Community & Communication Amity School of Communication*, 6, 12, 2020, pp. 270-279.

²⁵ Maarj Malik, Mohamad Aadil Qamar, Syed, Shabbir Afzal, Sohaib Tousif Farheen Malik, Khizr Asif Bhura & Khizer Shamim, "Social Media Use During COVID-19: Real and Fake News?" in *Liaquat National Journal of Primary Care*, 2, 3, 2021, pp. 87-92.

Also in this context, we made another comparison, namely the one based on the geographical position of the universities, in order to observe whether the proximity to neighboring countries had any influence in this respect, in relation to national, European or international identity. However, the present survey did not show a major difference, regardless of the geographical area (east, south, west, north or center) the universities placed the subjects mostly in a national context. A small difference is observed in the case of universities located in the north of the country, in the sense that, in the second part of the period analyzed, they had more postings referring to European identity and in an international context than the other universities. Thus, while in the case of the other universities the average number of postings at European level was 4, in the case of the northern universities there were 11 such postings, and as regards postings in the international context, in the case of the universities in the other parts of the country the average number of postings was 3, while in the case of the northern universities there was a cumulative number of 7.

We also analyzed the research data from the perspective of the field of study and the data show the following:

	National	European	International
General studies	98	17	8
Medicine studies	77	9	7
Technical studies	33	3	4
Economic studies	17	0	1

Table 2 The distribution of themes depending on study domain

This shows on the one hand that the universities that communicated the most were the universities of general studies and the universities of medicine, the situation being maintained in all three contexts of discussion, national, European and international.

The present study confirms that what happens in the media with the transmission of messages, i.e., their placement mainly according to national identity^{26 27}, is also true for what universities distributed on their Facebook pages during the period under analysis. Thus, in general, issues are discussed first in the national context, after which they are addressed in other contexts of discussion.

Discussing an international context of the existence of epidemiological issues, in which all communities, states and organizations took part, we considered it important to follow how the messages were provided and whether the reporting was done according to national, European or international culture, following what Milca²⁸ said about the fact that it is precisely

²⁶ Claes de Vreese, "Election coverage. New directions for public broadcasting. The Netherlands and beyond" in *European Journal of Communications*, 2, 16, 2001, pp. 155-180.

²⁷ Georgiana Manole & Florinela Mocanu, "Media Representation of Coronavirus in Romanian Online Press. National, European, and International Themes" in *Ovidius University Annals Economic Sciences Series*, 2, 21, 2021, pp. 363-373.

²⁸ Mihai Milca, *Identitate românească și europeană*, Bucharest: Ager, 2005, p. 11.

the highlighting of similarities and differences between people or situations that creates identity. The present research captured this, in the sense that the discussions and information were constructed according to national specificity, taking into account the level of health education of the population, the capacity to provide optimal conditions and access to medical treatment. However, we would like to stress that the information and educational data were based on information distributed internationally on protection measures, medical treatment and necessary rules to be observed.

4. The improving of communication during the pandemic period

Given the role played by universities in raising public health standards, we sought to find out whether the epidemiological situation and the shift of university activities online led universities to communicate more through Facebook posts at the beginning of the pandemic than they did two years later.

In terms of the number of posts at the beginning of the pandemic and two years after the pandemic, the number of posts increased approximately fourfold, i.e., from a total of 55 posts in the first three days of the emergency to 219 posts in three days, two years after the first days of the emergency. There were no significant differences in the number of postings by universities by field of study or by region. The results from the research may be related to what Meer²⁹ said about organizations not being immune to crises generated by external factors.

In terms of communication on university Facebook pages, there has also been a development in terms of diversification of post types. While at the beginning of the state of emergency in 2020, universities were mainly posting information related to the organizational side of activities or administrative issues, two years after that time activities on the social network have diversified through live sessions, promotion of events organized in the digital environment, as well as fundraising campaigns using various tools for this purpose. Thus, the way universities react leads to the idea launched by Fraustino and Liu that messages are formulated according to the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of stakeholders.³⁰ Also, by diversifying the tools launched in postings, such as interactive discussion sessions or online donation applications, the research results are in line with the principle that as the size of communication in cyberspace increases, so does the capacity of organizations to monitor crisis situations.³¹ Another important point to note in relation to the results of the study, how organizations, in our case universities, choose to communicate determines a distinct degree of students' emotional responses. In the context of crisis management, the citizen-centric approach, in our study case, of students, involves shifting the focus of organizations to service delivery from their perspective and less on the operational issues they face.³² And to achieve this, universities need a thorough understanding of student expectations and experiences, the

²⁹ Toni G.L.A. van der Meer, Piet Verhoeven, Hans W.J. Beentjes & Rens Vliegenthart, "Communication in Times of Crisis: The Stakeholder Relationship under pressure" in *Public Relations Review*, 2, 43, 2017, pp. 426-440.

³⁰ Julio Daisy Fraustino & Brooke Fisher Liu, "Toward more-audience approaches to crisis communication and social media research" in Yan Jin & Lucinda L. Austin (ed.), *Social Media and Crisis Communication*, New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 135.

³¹ Vilma Luoma-aho & Marita Vos, "Towards a more dynamic stakeholder model: Acknowledging multiple issue arenas" in *Corporate Communications an International Journal*, 3, 15, 2010, pp. 315 – 331.

³² James D. White & King-Wa Fu, "Who do you trust? Comparing people-centered communications in disaster situations in the United States and China" in *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 2, 14, 2012, pp. 126-142.

critical drivers of student satisfaction, and a decision-making strategy that puts students at the center.³³

Conclusion

The communication crisis involves a high level of interactive competence of public actors, organizations and, in this study case, universities. During the coronavirus pandemic, the universities had to adapt their communication way according to the new informational challenges, they played an important part in the adaptation process of students to new reality. The universities, also represents the opinion factor that contributes to the increasing level of public health.

Through the present study case we have discovered some important connections between the content and the interacting ways which universities chose during the pandemic. In this way, we noticed that the most mentioned themes on the universities Facebook pages were: providing students with the information about the extracurricular activities, some facts about the internal organization, health rules to be respected during the pandemics and online events.

Due to the fact that second part of data collecting coinciding with the Ukraine crisis outburst, we identified the communication way of universities on the topic. Therefore, the mainstream subjects were: organising the volunteering activities for the refugees of Ukraine, fundraising, dealing with war emotions and geopolitical information.

As far as the university's contributions to the raising level of health public is concerned, we noticed the fact that universities share information from official web pages other national platforms dedicated people teaching and maintaining a normal level of concerning about the pandemic. Also, they used their own sources of information, sharing scientific information from their teachers.

We noticed this last fact in the case of medical universities. Another aspect identified in relation to the contribution of universities in increasing the level of public health was that they chose to share information related to the provision of psychological support, taking in consideration the emotional impact of the pandemic and the level of social isolation.

Given that the topic of the pandemic was one of international interest, in the present research we sought to find out in which context the topics of discussion were placed. Thus, we found out that most of the posts were discussed in a national context, followed by the European one, then the international one. We note that the topics discussed in the international context appeared only in the second part of data collection, and most of them were related to the war in Ukraine. The situation was maintained independently of the universities' field of study or their geographical position.

Regarding the improvement of the communication skills of the universities, but also regarding the tools used, we noticed a major increase in the number of posts from the first part of data collection, respectively the month of March 2020 and the second part, March 2022, their number increasing up to 4 times. But this is not the only indicator identified regarding the improvement of the way of communication, but also the fact that there has been a diversification of the tools used by universities, from simple communications and sharing of information, to fundraising campaigns, live discussion session and online events.

³³ Liang Ma & Tom Christensen, "Government trust, social trust, and citizens risk concerns: Evidence from crisis management in China" in *Public Performance & Management Review*, 2,42, 2018, pp. 383-404.

Like a general idea, the complexity of crisis events which haven't occurred for the last seventy years threatens not only structures but also people. Taking in consideration the universities role in dealing with a high number of students during an evolving pandemic, the registered data in this research showed that the universities messages, excepting the University of Bucharest, didn't followed a pattern dealing with crisis. The messages weren't elaborated based on the maintaining students, teachers and auxiliary personnel in safety conditions regarding informational and emotional state. In most of the cases, the communication during the pandemic was missing, the emphasis being posed only on cancelling the physical classes, passing to hybrid system and coming back to the physical format. The messages were mixed between the decision to coming back to the physical pattern and the debating of the Ukraine situation.

COVID-19 university crisis communication was, almost exclusively, done via social media platform – Facebook. The majority of universities communicated their crisis response in two phases: pre- and post-crisis focusing only on the suspension and reopening of courses, missing the emotional support to students. Pandemic-related stresses, including relocation, online learning, social distancing, and anxiety over health and economic risks are likely to persist as long-term stressors.

This study was conducted while the pandemic was ongoing and the final impacts on Romanian universities are not yet fully known. COVID-19 has been an especially broad, disruptive, and long duration crisis, and a tailor-made crisis strategy may not transfer to other more limited events.

This study can open future research avenues with the scope of reapplying the analysis on the current social situation to discover how the universities communication evolve after the face-to-face classes decision and of analyzing the impact of the communication strategies, during the pandemic, against the relationship between the students and the board of universities.

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CONDITIONS FOR WAR TERMINATION IN UKRAINE – A BARGAINING MODEL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction and theoretical framework

After illegally annexing Crimea and engaging for eight years in the protracted conflict and low intensity warfare in Donbass, following its covert and by *proxy* support for the separatist outbreak in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, Moscow decided to openly intervene with Russian regular troops in Ukraine. Despite not having officially declared war, incorrectly calling its invasion of Ukraine a „special military operation”, Russia’s current actions in Ukraine fit in with the war definition used by The Correlates of War Project (CoW). War has been defined as sustained combat involving organized armed forces, resulting in a minimum of 1,000 battle-related fatalities¹, later specified as 1000 battle-related fatalities within a twelve-month period. Both criteria are already met, despite having passed just six weeks (at the time of the conference) since the war started.

At the time of writing (and reviewing) this paper the war is still ongoing. However, „every war must end”². Therefore, the main aim of the current research is analysing and identifying possible conditions for war termination in Ukraine. I cannot stress enough the fact that the research is exploratory in this phase since the operational situation in the field is rapidly changing, thus influencing the sides’ bargaining positions and the chances for a settlement.

To address the subject, I use the bargaining model of war literature relying on game theory literature and instruments.

The bargaining model of war starts from the so-called „war inefficiency puzzle” (exact terminology used by William Spaniel, but the underlying idea is widely explored in the literature way before that), which states that „there always exists a range of settlements that leave both sides better off than had they fought a war.”³ War is always *ex-post* inefficient, because should the belligerents had the hypothetical choice between receiving the share of the good as stated in the post war agreement and fighting a war in order to reach the same kind of settlement, then they would choose the former. So, the question becomes why the sides don’t agree to a division of the disputed good before war breaks out such that they both spare the high costs of engaging their armies in direct military confrontations. The bargaining model of war therefore addresses strategic interaction that might lead to an inefficient military confrontation.

¹ M. Small, J. D. Singer, *Resort to arms: international and civil wars, 1816-1980*, Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1982, p. 210.

² F. Ikle, *Every War Must End*, Rev. ed., New York: Columbia UP, 1991.

³ W. Spaniel, *Game Theory 101: the Rationality of War*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014, p. 24.

As Schelling said, „war appears to be, or threatens to be, not so much a contest of strength as one of endurance, nerve, obstinacy, and pain. It appears to be, and threatens to be, not so much a contest of military strength as a bargaining process - dirty, extortionate, and often quite reluctant bargaining on one side or both - nevertheless a bargaining process”⁴. Consequently, coercion and the threat to initiate a costly military confrontation for both sides involved should also have the reverse coin of the perspectives for success in settling for a bargained solution (at least theoretically). This means that the belligerent sides should not have absolutely opposed interests.⁵

Perhaps the most popular theoretical model of bargaining was formalised by Ariel Rubinstein⁶. His model regards a category of iterated games in perfect/ complete information and an infinite time horizon, in which in consecutive rounds the two players alternate proposals on how to share the respective good until one of the offers is being accepted by the other side. The author introduces the idea of discount factor, according to which in each period the sides do not reach a settlement the value of the good decreases, or its total utility for the players is getting smaller. Levin presents a series of conclusions on Rubinstein’s theoretical model: (i) a player who is „patient” (or in other words considers to be important also the future gains, not just what he can obtain in the current round of the game) can get higher overall rewards because he can wait until it is his turn to make the proposal on how to share the good and thus has bargaining power; (ii) the first player to make an offer has an advantage; (iii) there are no delays, the negotiations end in the first round with the first offer being accepted; (iv) the above observations hold only if there are no immediate counter-offers, because otherwise there can be multiple equilibria of the game.⁷

Most often than not the literature that uses the bargaining model to model war, formalise the option of military confrontations as an exit strategy. The choice for war represents the final stage of the interaction between the sides and the distribution of costs and benefits reflect the distribution of power between the belligerents⁸. The payoffs for the war outcome are assumed to be a costly lottery, the players choosing a probability distribution of success in military confrontations, given their relative power. Powell considers that this assumption – which is also the most widely used in the scientific literature on the bargaining model of war – makes it impossible to address certain questions on the strategic dynamic of the players’ behaviour during the war and on the decision to end the military confrontations. Because of that, Powel proposes to modify this assumption such that it will allow modelling the war as a costly process during which the players continue to interact, rather than a lottery. The author considers that changing this perspective could lead to a better understanding of the way in which certain costs – economic, military, political etc. – influence the belligerents’ decision to initiate and continue war.⁹

Thus, the bargaining model of war can also be applied to war termination. According to Sanders & Tuck, each of the belligerents has a range of acceptable settlements for the conflict, and if the bargaining spaces overlap, then ending the war *via* a compromise is

⁴ T. C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, Yale University Press, 2008, p. 7.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁶ A. Rubinstein, “Perfect Equilibrium in a Bargaining Model” in *Econometrica*, vol. 50 (1), 1982, pp. 97-109.

⁷ J. Levin, *Bargaining and Repeated Games*, 2002, pp. 1-14.

⁸ R. Powell, “Bargaining Theory and International Conflict” in *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 5, 2002, pp. 1-30.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

feasible¹⁰. However, the two authors underline that though, it is difficult to create the necessary conditions to reach an agreement that is preferred by all the sides involved in the conflict to the alternative to war continuation. So „ending the war is a difficult and complex task.”¹¹

Schelling's revolutionary ideas and Rubinstein's mathematical formalisation gave rise to an ever since increasing and cumulative body of literature explaining different stages of war - onset, duration, and termination¹². I will focus mainly on war termination.

According to Werner, one possibility to explain war settlement arrangements is to consider whether the terms of the agreement reflect the belligerents' original aims (so called exogenous explanation for war termination), the second possibility is that the specifics of the final treaty between the sides arise out of negotiations to end the military confrontations and reflect each side's evaluations of marginal costs for the continuation of hostilities (so called endogenous explanation for war termination)¹³. Finding the exogenous explanation is equivalent to answering the question of why negotiations between the belligerent parties failed before the war, or why the military engagement between the sides started in the first place. Finding the endogenous justification for war termination or lack thereof means clarifying how (several rounds of) confrontations between the armies influence the cost-benefit analysis of the belligerent states, making them (possibly) more or less likely to make concessions.

In this paper, I will consider just the latter, having addressed the former elsewhere (A bargaining model perspective of the exogenous explanations for the war between Russia and Ukraine- due for publication).

Why negotiations between the belligerent parties failed during the war (so far)

In order to address the issue, I model the interaction between Russia and Ukraine.

Assumptions:

- i. There are only two parties to the war – Russia (the initiator/ attacker) and Ukraine (the defender).

Despite its indirect involvement through sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine, thus having the possibility to influence the sides' actions and choices, the West will not be considered a part of the war. Also, other actors, like Belarus, that is supporting Russia's war effort in Ukraine is also considered to enable certain actions that would otherwise be impossible for the Russian Armed Forces (by allowing its territory to be used by Russian troops and equipment, thus acting as a force multiplier).

- ii. The two actors are unitary state actors. Despite the decision-making process is the result of a deliberation/ consultation of the most influent leaders of each country (maybe less so in authoritarian states like Russia), I consider it to be

¹⁰ D. Sanders, C. Tuck, "The Ukraine Conflict and the Problems of War Termination" in *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 33 (1), 2020, pp. 22-43.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

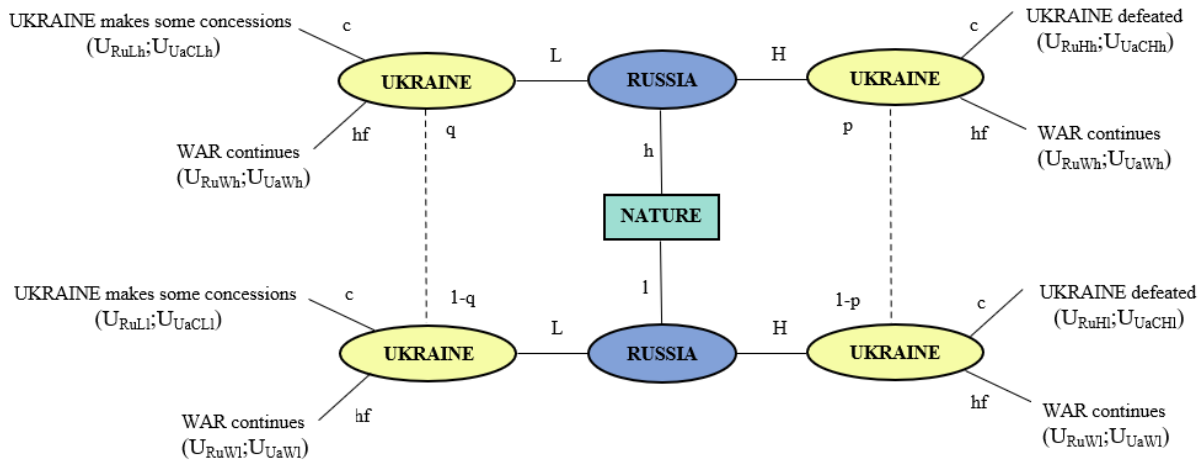
¹² Sanders & Tuck, 2020; Stanley & Sawyer, 2009; Langlois & Langlois, 2008; Massoud, 1996; Sanchez-Pages, 2005; Slantchev, 2004; Reiter, 2003; Filson & Werner, 2002; Werner, 1998, 1992; Davis, 1988; Wittman, 1979; Quester, 1970.

¹³ S. Werner, "Negotiating the Terms of Settlement. War Aims and Bargaining Leverage" in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 42 (3), 1998, pp. 321-343.

of secondary importance for the purpose of this article, thus treating the two states as single entities.

iii. The actors are rational utility maximizers, but their utility functions do not only consider costs and benefits in economic terms but include also symbolic costs like prestige or maintaining/ losing sovereignty.

The model:



This game tree models the current interaction between Ukraine and Russia. It represents a stage game because the interaction reiterates with each battle the belligerents fight and each round of negotiations the two sides hold, which changes the probability of winning for each side.

First, the Nature (which is not a proper player because it doesn't make proper choices) „decides“ the probability of Russia winning a total war against Ukraine, with h representing a high probability of Russia winning, and l representing a low probability of Russia winning. Nature's „choice“ can also be interpreted as representing the high or low costs for war continuation. Introducing Nature as the first non-strategic actor to make a move is equivalent to assuming uncertainty over the final outcome of the war and a costly lottery over the chances in combat.

After the Nature decides, Russia, considering its chances for success in war, chooses if it makes high (H) or low (L) demands regarding Ukraine and the issues at stake.

The last part of the game starts when Ukraine is about to make its move. Observing Russia's demands, thus if it requests high or low concessions, but not knowing with certainty whether it comes from a *high-chance-of-winning-the-war-Russia* (Ru_h – type 1 of player Russia) or from *low-chance-of-winning-the-war-Russia* (Ru_l – type 2 of player Russia), Ukraine has the options to concede (c) or to hold firm (hf). Concessions will end the interaction at a final node where the sides receive their respective payoffs, with Ukraine accepting high concessions which would mean its capitulation and loss of independence and sovereignty or accepting some concessions which could mean a multitude of scenarios for how the sides can split the good at stake (however this can be defined), but not losing its sovereignty over the entire territory of the state. If instead Ukraine chooses to hold firm, then the war continues, each side receive the utility for another round of military confrontation and the game reiterates with

nature readjusting the chances of each side winning the war according to the outcome of the new battles. Also, with each round of military confrontations there is an unspecified probability that an event or development will occur such that the relative power in the field, and thus the chances to win the war each side has, shifts between the belligerents. This models the possibility of a third-party involvement, technological gains/ losses that significantly change the balance of power between the armed forces of the belligerents, a change in tactics in the field that allows significant success for the offensive/ counter-offensive and so on.

The proper players are Russia and Ukraine. Russia's available actions are L and H while Ukraine's available actions are c and hf. Thus, their respective strategies are for type 1 of player Russia, Ru_h – L and H and the same for type 2 of player Russia Ru_l – L and H; for Ukraine the strategies are (c, c) – concede regardless of the probability of Russia winning the war, (c, hf) – concede if Ukraine assesses that the probability of Russia winning the war is high and hold firm otherwise, (hf, hf) – hold firm regardless of the probability of Russia winning the war and (hf, c) – hold firm if Ukraine assesses that the probability of Russia winning the war is low and concede otherwise.

Utility for Ukraine	Description
U_{UaWh}	The utility Ukraine receives if it continues the war when the chances of Russia winning are high – Ukraine pays high costs for another battle considering its chances for success are low (loss of military personnel, civilians and infrastructure), however it avoids being completely defeated and it maintains the possibility of an event in the next round of military confrontations that could change the course of the war in its favor and also avoids the higher costs of accepting a defeat, thus ceding its sovereignty.
U_{UaWl}	The utility Ukraine receives if it continues the war when the chances of Russia winning are low – Ukraine pays lower costs for another battle considering its chances for success are higher (loss of military personnel, civilians, and infrastructure) compared to previous outcome (U_{UaWh}). Most likely a new battle will influence in its favor the chances to succeed in a final confrontation, thus increasing its chances to impose in negotiations a more preferred settlement in which it keeps its sovereignty and forces Russia to retreat from internationally recognized Ukrainian territory.
U_{UaCHh}	The utility Ukraine receives if accept high demands from Russia, thus making high concessions when the chances of Russia winning are high – Ukraine accepts concessions like agreeing to a pro-Russian government in Kyiv (thus satisfying the so called „de-Nazification” set as an objective by Russian leadership and accepting the annexation of Crimea and independence of the so-called „People's Republics” in Donetsk and Luhansk). This outcome leads to <i>de facto</i> loss of Ukraine's sovereignty. However, Kyiv avoids the high costs of another round of military confrontation with Russia when Russian Armed Forces are in a better position compared to Ukraine's, thus sparing military personnel and civilian lives and damage to the infrastructure.
U_{UaCHl}	The utility Ukraine receives if accepts high demands from Russia, thus making high concessions when the chances of Russia winning are low – Ukraine pays

Utility for Ukraine	Description
	high costs for accepting Russia's high demands (Ukraine accepts defeat in battle and surrenders) and also decision makers in Kyiv risk treason accusations for accepting a loss of sovereignty even when Russian Armed Forces' chances for success in battle are low.
U_{UaCLh}	The utility Ukraine receives if accept low demands from Russia, thus making low concessions when the chances of Russia winning are high – Ukraine makes some concessions but there is no risk of losing for good its sovereignty (most likely similar to 2014 when it has accepted the Minsk Agreements, when it didn't give up the aim to reintegrate the lost territories). This most likely should be the case when Russia misperceives its chances for winning a total war against Ukraine, thus by underestimating the probability of success it makes lower demands and Ukraine accepts them. Or another possibility is that despite Russia's chances for winning are high, after several round of battles during which it sustains heavy losses due to military confrontations but also sanctions, it becomes interested in avoiding this sort of costs in the future thus making a set of lower demands that might be more acceptable for Ukraine.
U_{UaCLI}	The utility Ukraine receives if accept low demands from Russia, thus making low concessions when the chances of Russia winning are low – Ukraine makes some concessions but there is no risk of losing its sovereignty. However, it is a worse off outcome compared to the previous one because should it had continued the fight, it could have obtained a better outcome by forcing Russia to retreat because its chances to win were low in the first place and by continuing the war Ukraine could have gotten in an even better position. Most likely there will be costs for accepting concessions.

Assumption: $U_{UaWI} > U_{UaWh} > U_{UaCLh} > U_{UaCLI} > U_{UaCHh} > U_{UaCHI}$

Reasons for assuming this ordering of Ukraine's preferences over the six possible outcomes: „As the largest conflict in Europe since World War II enters its second month, surprising numbers of Western politicians and commentators continue to question why Ukraine does not simply accept Moscow's demands. They fail to appreciate that there can be no meaningful negotiated settlement with a regime that openly denies Ukraine's right to exist while actively seeking to destroy Ukrainian statehood and identity.”¹⁴

According to president Zelensky's statements during the war (but also prior), Ukrainians will not accept any other outcome in the war, except victory „for Ukraine, only victory in the war with Russia is acceptable, so Kyiv will not make territorial concessions for the sake of peace”. Also, he said that Ukraine is not trading its territory and that the issue of territorial integrity and sovereignty is not up for discussions or negotiations.

Recent polls, conducted by KIIS and also by The Wall Street Journal-NORC, reveal significant data on the level of Ukrainian support towards Russian occupation an Kyiv's stance towards accepting concessions in the negotiations: „only 2% of citizens have a good

¹⁴ K. Zarembo, *No compromises with the Kremlin: Why we must denazify Putin's Russia*, Atlantic Council, (2022, March 28th), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/no-compromises-with-the-kremlin-why-we-must-denazify-putins-russia/> (accessed August 8th).

attitude towards Russia, while 92% have a bad attitude”¹⁵ and „an overwhelming share of Ukrainians, 89%, say it would be unacceptable to reach a peace deal with Moscow by ceding Ukrainian territory that Russian forces have seized.”¹⁶

Maybe less relevant if we take into account the scale of the entire Ukrainian society (compared to polls), but still proving the point regarding the order of the preferences for the different outcomes in the model, is the social media documented example of a Ukrainian woman offering sunflower seeds to a Russian soldier illegally occupying a part of Ukraine’s territory, suggesting him to put them into his pocket so that at least the flowers will bloom when he will lay dead on the Ukrainian soil.¹⁷

In this case it is reasonable to assume that Ukraine prefers continuing the war over accepting any kind of concessions that would affect the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state or its sovereignty. The utility Ukraine receives if it continues the war when the chances of Russia winning are low is bigger than its utility if it continues the war when the chances of Russia winning are high because in the second outcome the costs for sustaining another battle are higher due to Russia being in a better position. The absolute worst utility for Ukraine would be when accepts high demands from Russia, after Nature „chooses” low chances of success for Russia because, should Kyiv continue to fight another round it would have a better chance to improve its position such that it becomes available the possibility to force Russia into retreat. The utility Ukraine receives if accept high demands from Russia, thus making high concessions when the chances of Russia winning are high is the second worst because the opportunity costs it incurs is lower compared to the previous outcome – Ukraine avoids some additional high costs of continuing the combat. The same logic applies for the utility Ukraine receives if accept low demands from Russia, thus making low concessions when the chances of Russia winning are high, and low respectively.

Utility for Russia	Description
U_{RuHl}	The utility Russia receives when Ukraine is defeated after it makes high demands despite its chances for success in a military confrontation are low (the threat to use force in a new round of confrontations is a bluff if Moscow is aware of its real chances of success and still presses for high concessions from Ukraine or a miscalculation if it wrongly assesses that its chances are higher compared to what Nature „decided”). Also, it spares the costs of military confrontations in another round.
U_{RuHh}	The utility Russia receives when Ukraine is defeated after it makes high demands and its chances for success in a military confrontation are high (the threat of continuing to use force is real). Should Ukraine engage in another

¹⁵ A. Hrushetsky, Динаміка ставлення населення до росії та емоційний фон унаслідок війни: результати телефонного опитування, проведеного 13-18 травня 2022 року. Kiev International Institute of Sociology, (2022, May 26th), <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1112&page=1> (accessed August 8th).

¹⁶ A. Zitner, “In New Poll, 89% of Ukrainians Reject Ceding Land to Reach Peace With Russia”, *The Wall Street Journal*, (2022, June 29th), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-new-poll-89-of-ukrainians-reject-ceding-land-to-reach-peace-with-russia-11656504002> (accessed August 8th).

¹⁷ S. Sicard, “Ukrainian woman says Russian troops should carry seeds so flowers grow where they die”, *Military Times*. (2022, February 24th), <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/ukraine/2022/02/24/ukrainian-woman-says-russian-troops-should-carry-seeds-so-flowers-grow-where-they-die/> (accessed August 8th).

Utility for Russia	Description
	round of battles, Russian Armed Forces would have greater chances of improving further their probability of obtaining a final success, compared to Ukraine's troops. However, since Kyiv accepts Moscow's conditions for a settlement that is equivalent to its surrender, Russia spares the costs for a continuation of the war.
U_{RuWl}	The utility Russia receives if Ukraine decides to reject Moscow's proposed settlement, thus continuing the war when its chances for success in military confrontations is low. The costs for another round of battles are quite high for Russia because it is in a worse position in the field compared to Ukraine, by Nature's „choice“. However, it maintains the possibility to change the chances for success in future rounds by reinforcing the troops, changing the tactics, absorb the costs for war until an event shift the relative power in the field etc..
U_{RuWh}	The utility Russia receives if Ukraine decides to reject Moscow's proposed settlement, thus continuing the war when its chances for success in military confrontations is high. The costs for another round of battles are relatively low compared to previous outcome since its relative position is better compared to Ukraine, thus having to sustain lighter losses should another military confrontation occur. There is also a higher chance that a new round of fighting will consolidate even further Russia's chance to win the war.
U_{RuLl}	The utility Russia receives when Ukraine makes some concessions and its chances for success in a military confrontation is low. Ukraine makes little concessions according to the new Russian demands that stop the war. However, Moscow's initial goals are not satisfied by the outcome because Kyiv maintains its sovereignty and independence and is not closer to entering Russia's sphere of influence. Moscow pays the heavy costs of the war without major gains.
U_{RuLh}	The utility Russia receives when Ukraine makes some concessions and its chances for success in a military confrontation is high. Ukraine makes some concessions but maintains its sovereignty, which represents a failure for Russia. However, it is a worse off outcome compared to the previous one because should it had continued the fight it could have improved its chances for success given that it war in a better position to begin with (the probability of Russia winning the war was high, as per Nature's „choice“).

Assumption: $U_{RuHl} > U_{RuHh} > U_{RuWh} > U_{RuWl} > U_{RuLl} > U_{RuLh}$

Reasons for assuming this ordering of Russia's preferences over the six possible outcomes: The most positive outcome for Russia would be for Ukraine to surrender and agree to all its demands, as stated by Putin in his February 24th speech: Ukraine's demilitarization and so-called „de-Nazification“, along with recognition for the annexation of Crimea and the separatist republics of Eastern Ukraine, so-called „People's Republics“, which were just recognized as independent by Russia on February 21st, a few days before Putin ordered its army to cross into Ukraine. While several rounds of peace talks have been organized both online and in-person, Russia has so far shown little sign of a readiness to compromise, which can be interpreted at this moment as an indicator that its preference structure has not been

modified by the ongoing military confrontations. The utility Russia receives when Ukraine is defeated after it makes high demands despite its chances for success in a military confrontation are low is greater than if its chances to win were high because it succeeds in gaining more with little actual resources. The utility Russia receives when Ukraine makes some concessions and its chances for success in a military confrontation is high is the smallest because, despite having the military capacity to sustain another battle and improve even further its probability to win, it makes low demands in negotiations with Ukraine, that doesn't further its goals. The second worst payoff is obtained by Russia when Ukraine makes some concessions but Russian Armed Forces' chances for success in a military confrontation are low. In this case Moscow spares the high costs of another round of military confrontations which would have had to be supported because of the Nature's „choice“. Similarly, the utility Russia receives if Ukraine decides to reject Moscow's proposed settlement, thus continuing the war when its chances for success in military confrontations is low is worse for Russia compared to the situation when its chances for success are high.

Given the structure of the game (similar to a signaling game) and the structure of the preferences assumed above, the possible Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium to analyze are the separating equilibrium (when different types of the player Russia– the one that has low chances of success in military confrontations and the one that has a high probability of success, choose a different strategy) and pooling equilibrium (when both types of the player Russia choose the same strategy).

For the separating equilibrium I only check for the strategy (H, L), not for (L,H). The first action is for Ru_h (Russia with high chance of winning the war chooses to make high demands) and the second action is for Ru_l (Russia with low chance of winning the military confrontations chooses to make low demands). I assess that (L,H) can be ignored because it is safe to consider that should Russia consider that it has high chances of winning the war, it is not going to make low demands in negotiations with Ukraine, but rather risk the continuation of the war. So, for (H, L) the Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium is (H, L, h_f h_f , $p=1$, $q=0$). Given the preference structure assumed before, Ukraine's best response to the (H,L) strategy of the Russian side is to hold firm in both cases, thus continuing the war into another round of fighting. Similarly, Russia is best responding to (h_f h_f) strategy of Kyiv.

For the pooling equilibrium I only check for the strategy (H, H), not for (L, L) for the same reason as above. Russia is not going to make low demands regardless of its chances of winning in combat. So, for (H, H) the Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium is (H, H, h_f h_f , $p=\alpha$, q), with α being the Nature's „choice“ and q left unspecified. Given the preferences, Ukraine is best responding by choosing to hold firm, thus continuing the fighting. Russia is also best responding to Ukraine's strategy.

Given the preference order I assumed based on public statements of the belligerent parties (at the moment, reflecting also the assessed capacity to sustain combat for another round), Ukraine has a dominant strategy to hold firm regardless of Russia's strategy concerning the demands it requests in negotiations. For Russia making high demands if it assesses that its chances for success in combat are high, is also a dominant strategy.

Results

In this article, I proposed a model for analysing the strategic interaction between Ukraine and Russia based on the bargaining model of war, relying on game theory literature

and instruments. The main research question concerns endogenous conditions for war termination.

By analysing the interaction between the two sides according to the proposed stage game tree that uses the structure of a signalling game and given the preference order, as it turns out mostly from the sides' public statements, but also polls, Ukraine still has a dominant strategy to hold firm regardless of Russia's strategy concerning the demands it requests in negotiations. For Russia making high demands if it assesses that its chances for success in combat are high, is also a dominant strategy. At this moment, given the preference structure assumed, war continuation is an equilibrium of the interaction between the two sides. As such, possible endogenous war termination conditions should account for:

- i. The relative distribution of forces on the battlefield - given the distribution of military power on the battleground at the moment, that impacts the chances of success for each side (using the exact terms in the model – the type of player Russia) the victory in a total war continues to be a disputed matter between Russia and Ukraine. Lacking a definitive victory that marks the change in the tide of the war, both sides continue to believe that each has a chance to win or to obtain a better negotiated settlement (eventually) if their respective armies continue to engage in combat. However, should an event happen that irreversibly influences sides' chances for success, most likely it would have an impact on war duration.

- ii. The change in the preference structure of the two parties – as long as the preference structure remains as I assumed it to be at this moment (given public statements and polls), the war will continue until one of the sides is exhausted. However, should one of the sides change its preferences, either as a consequence of the changes in its respective chance for success (*caeteris paribus*, in order to avoid total defeat, accepting some concessions is preferable), or as a consequence of a change of the decision-making circle (there is a theoretical possibility that a change in Kremlin might translate into a less hawkish strategy regarding Ukraine dossier, or similarly, a change in Bankova – with a more pro-Russian Administration – might lead to Ukraine being more available for concessions).

So, endogenous condition for the war to reach an ending is either the **expected outcome of war continuation to favour decisively one of the sides, both belligerents to exhaust their military capabilities or one of the sides to change the ordering of the preferences between the possible outcomes of the interaction. For the time being, the equilibrium remains war continuation.**

Is a ceasefire equivalent to war termination - Discussion

The short answer is *no*. Even if the sides agree on ending the military confrontations, if the underlying issues that caused the war don't get solved by Ukraine and Russia or if one of the sides doesn't change the preference ordering over the possible outcomes (more specifically if Russia continues to deny the right to exist to the Ukrainian state), there will remain the potential for future escalations of the security situation.

The long answer takes from Sanders & Tuck assessment of the theoretical question if there is a feasible solution for peace in order for a war to end¹⁸. The authors explain that the

¹⁸ Sanders, Tuck, *op. cit.*, 2020, pp. 22-43.

belligerent parties have to first agree on a common space or a base for the negotiations to start, that indicate the sides can consider at least in general terms the fact that can exist a political agreement that is acceptable for everyone involved, that is also preferable to confrontations. The agreement should therefore be possible to deliver and, also, should consist of „sufficient elements of compatibility between them that they can act on as a serious basis for negotiation.”

Despite Ukraine and Russia took a step closer to a ceasefire after Ukraine outlined the details of a 15-point peace deal that would mark the fact that Kyiv agrees to a status of neutrality, to rescind its aspirations to join NATO, to keep its army but with limits and to not to host any foreign military bases¹⁹, they haven't signed the treaty. Russia continues to push for the Russian language be returned to the status of an official language in Ukraine, the recognition of Russian control over the Donbas region as well as of the annexation of Crimea, issues that cannot be accepted by Kyiv without risking treason charges because accepting the demands would mean also giving up its sovereignty.

Similarly, Tuck considers that a significant issue that hinders war termination through a negotiated settlement is the extent to which that cause for war is *value-based* (stems from principles and values) or *issue-based* (based on a certain issues)²⁰. This means that issue-based conflicts are started over an infinitely divisible good, while value-based wars are caused by indivisible goods, like the issue discussed above about the sovereignty of Ukraine. The second category of causes for war, which is the case also for the subject of this article, are more difficult to solve through peaceful negotiations, because the belligerent fight over their identity and are ready to sustain heavier losses and economic costs rather than accept an unfavourable settlement.

Furthermore, according to Sanders & Tuck, even if the sides consider that the war is not the best alternative to achieve their goals and there is a common base for negotiations, agreeing to a settlement is costly too. „Peace has costs, especially where a belligerent has failed to achieve all of its objectives, and these costs are not distributed equally”²¹. First, there are individual costs for the leaders because a settlement can be interpreted internally as a defeat²², which might lead to his removal from office²³. Second, there are external costs regarding the how the sides' reputation might be affected by a peace agreement²⁴. Third, the longer the peace is postponed, the harder it is to agree to a settlement, because the costs of the war on the long run add up and thus a compromise becomes even more unacceptable.²⁵

Applied to the war in Ukraine, this means that neither Moscow, nor Kyiv are in a position to accept compromise. For Russia the costs accepting a compromise that would reinstate the situation from February 23rd (as Ukraine is asking at the moment) would represent a hard hit on the prestige and power it has, with unknown consequences internally (after the narratives that justified the war were aggressively promoted in the last year) and in relation to its external partners that rely on Moscow (like a part of the former Soviet states that

¹⁹ B. Aris, “Ukraine and Russia appear to be close to agreeing a 15-point peace deal”, *Intellinews*. (2022, March 16). <https://www.intellinews.com/ukraine-and-russia-appear-to-be-close-to-agreeing-a-15-point-peace-deal-238333/> (accessed August 8th).

²⁰ C. H. Tuck, “Theoretical Perspectives on the Ending of Wars” in *National Institute for Defence Studies International Forum on War History: Proceedings*, 2015, pp. 111-120.

²¹ Sanders, Tuck, *op. cit.*, 2020, pp. 22-43.

²² S. Croco, *Peace at What Price: Domestic Politics, Settlement Costs and War Termination*, University of Michigan, 2008.

²³ Sanders, Tuck, *op. cit.*, 2020, pp. 22-43.; C. R. Mitchell, *The Structure of International Conflict*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 35.

²⁴ Sanders, Tuck, *op. cit.*, 2020, pp. 22-43.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

are still in Russia's sphere of influence). So it might be that for Russia the costs of peace are too high. Similarly, after fierce resistance from Ukraine any compromise in order to satisfy Moscow's demands it would be perceived internally as a betrayal, thus also raising the costs for peace for the Ukrainian side.

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SOCIAL RESILIENCE – KEY FACTOR IN MANAGING CRISES, CONFLICTS AND OTHER CHALLENGES

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Introduction

Let us imagine our societies as living organisms, subject to positive and harmful factors. How they evolve is a matter of understanding the opportunities and threats addressed to them. Throughout our evolution, we developed mechanisms to take advantage of the positive factors and defend what we achieve from threats and dangers. The fact is, proven by historical examples, which we cannot assume all measures to avoid inevitable downfalls but what we can do to ensure continuity is built resilience.

This research aims to understand how individuals perceive resilience, how much they understand it, what they think it could be done to enhance it and what factors they consider negative in achieving this aim. Resilience starts at an individual level and goes as far as system resilience, as it will be shown further, but in essence, the cells of an organism need to be strong for the organism as a whole to be strong.

Defining the term and existing theories

The most concise definition of the term “resilience” is offered by the Oxford Dictionary, describing the term as the ability of people or things to recover quickly after something unpleasant, such as shock, injury, etc. The term emerged during the 1970s as a recognition that nature is inherently dynamic. To better understand the concept in the social context, the standard terminology must be adapted to the sociology sphere to gain more value and applicability. In this regard, resilience is defined as “the capacity of a system, enterprise, or person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances.”¹

A difference must be made between the resilience of the individual and the resilience of a system. Both are of interest, but understanding each from the start enables a better construct of the whole picture in the end. The first one, in terms of psychology, is understood as “a quality that allows an individual to recover from adversity stronger than before. The factors that make an individual psychologically resilient are often emotional and attitude related; here, the primary resilience is the emotional well-being of the individual”². The individual, the central figure of this research, is essential in his role in society or to have a visual image by being resembled with a link in a chain. In the other approach, regarding the

¹ A. Zolli, & A. M. Healy, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012.

² K. S. Langeland, D. Manheim, G. McLeod & G. Nacouzi, *How Civil Institutions Build Resilience*. RAND Corporation, 2016.

resilience of a system, engineers characterise a structure as resilient based on its ability to avoid failure; factors that contribute to structural resilience include physical strength and robustness³ or “the ability of a structure (or part of it) to withstand events (like fire, explosion, impact) or consequences of human errors, without being damaged to an extent disproportionate to the original cause.”⁴ By combining the two approaches, we can have the image of resilience in its full spectrum. They could work separately, and it would be a good idea to have a two-layer strategy since one could help the other in difficult times, but there still is an interconnection between them, causing an action-reaction effect.

Importance

The importance of fully understanding the concept is based on adopting a proactive attitude towards quick recovery, backup and alternative solutions for problems that exist or are yet to come. Starting from the well known saying “in peace, prepare for war and in war, prepare for peace”⁵, this could prove to be a valuable tool for the times to come.

History is full of examples of resilience or lack of it, and one of the central answers to questions such as: What made all the great empires fall? What made the entire species fall? Or, on the contrary, what made them successful? They are all related to resilience.

What happened to the great ancient empires? As Winston Churchill said in 1906, “where there is great power, there is great responsibility”, and also great challenges could be added. They all reached a point where they could not maintain their resilience due to different problems. What would have meant to ensure a certain level of resilience enough to retain the possibility to recover quickly from those difficulties? Of course, there would have been a price, but it could have offered a chance for continuity. Other cases of successful resilience are present in today’s world. Some of the societies known today for their development had a tough time during events such as wars, pandemics, financial problems, etc. Still, they managed to recover and continue their work with the advantage of the lessons learned. Nowadays, they represent examples for others that were once equal or even superior to them.

In a world of constant change, with a globalisation process shifting toward regionalisation due to economic and political reasons, each society is obliged to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and to assess the best options available to tackle issues like food and water shortages, conflicts, pandemics and a rise in products prices. What social resilience means in this particular context? It means that societies faced with different challenges can develop resilience to overcome whatever comes next. Why is this imperative? Comes from the opposite case scenario. What would be the other option? The answer is that there is no other viable option that ensures continuity other than being resilient. As for the other option, the answer would be a radical change, for better or worse.

Starting from the ideal situation where the individual is offered a safe environment that allows him to manifest his freedom in terms of life, work, education, social connections and so on, we could assess that three main elements are involved in the resilience equation. The first one refers to the individual, the person that is born, lives and dies with all the actions in-between. Independent or in groups, this is the main character of this article. The entire course of action is subject to change depending on his actions. Secondly, the environment

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ ISO22111, I. O., *Bases for Design of Structures - General Requirements*, 2007

⁵ S. Tzu, *The art of war* [PDF]. Chichester, England: Capstone Publishing, 2010.

refers to all the resources, space, time, and conditions in which the person lives. It is essential for well-being, and the person's actions greatly influence it. We had the chance to live in a welcoming environment with enough resources to cover all our needs. Still, the fact is that due to specific facts, mainly human action and geography, access to resources became the subject of rivalries between inhabitants. And the third one refers to the state as a form of a social organisation responsible for managing all variables to ensure a well-organized environment for the individuals to develop.

All that affects the natural state of either one of these elements, the individual, the environment or the state, represents a threat to all three. More specifically, relevant examples from recent history are sufficient for each case scenario to prove the statement's validity.

In the first scenario, where the individual is affected, the recent COVID-19 pandemic offers the perfect example. Besides the individuals, the whole environment was affected because specific jobs could not be done. The natural flow of activities that enable our social constructs to function was endangered by failing to do so. On the one hand, resilience was the critical feature that helped us return to everyday life; on the other, better use of it could have shortened the necessary time to recover.

In the second scenario, where the environment is affected, our current situation regarding the lack of resources available for our parts of the world, such as fuels and electricity, caused prices to rise starting from those particular resources and affecting the pricing of all that surrounds us. This environmental issue affects the individuals, causing a deterioration in life quality and the state because it has to deal with people's mistrust and blame for the situation.

Finally, for the third scenario, in which the state is affected, we can observe the armed conflict that is going on in the eastern parts of the world and which is currently writing our humankind history. This is a state-related issue that affects the individual and the environment.

Understanding and accepting our vulnerabilities that are beyond the measures we can take to prevent them leads us to another mechanism and to the subject of this article, social resilience. It's a complex mechanism that requires a set of values, skills, knowledge and specific responsibility. It's a skill meant to overcome easily the challenges that face our societies.

Social resilience

The first identified definition describes social resilience as "the ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructures."⁶ In this case, the emphasis is put on the defensive capacity of social structures regarding threats they confront. Taking further the term, the ability to respond was included in its meaning "whether autonomous action or planned, public or private, individual or institutional, tactical or strategic, short or long term, anticipatory or reactive in kind and their outcomes collectively determine the resilience of the coupled system."⁷ Later on, another key feature was added, the ability to recover, and the

⁶ N. W. Adger, "Social and ecological resilience – are they related?", in *Progress in Human Geography*, 24, 2002, p. 361.

⁷ B. L. Turner, R. Kasperson, P. Matson, J. McCharty; R. Corell, L. Christensen, N. Eckley, J. Kasperson, A. Luers, M. Martello, C. Polsky, A. Pulsipher, A. Schiller, "A framework for vulnerability analysis in sustainability science" in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America*, 100, 2003, p. 8075.

definition extended to “the ability of a social system to respond and recover from disasters.”⁸ After a long process of refining the term, one of the most coherent and comprehensive definitions of social resilience refers to “the capacity of actors to access capitals in order to – not only cope with and adjust to adverse conditions (that is reactive capacity) – but also search for and create options (that is, proactive capacity) and thus develop increased competence (that is, positive outcomes) in dealing with a threat.”⁹ From this last definition, we can conclude that social resilience is about coping, adjusting and reacting to threats.

In a world of threats and uncertainties, where people and societies are put to the test, developing such competence could make a difference. Multiple key factors have been identified as necessary in developing resilience. Perception of risk, power relations, knowledge and civic engagement, are some of them. Taking into consideration the extent of literature on these topics, the current research will **focus on finding new perspectives of social resilience based on recent experiences that individuals have encountered** regarding threats such as COVID-19 pandemics, the rise in prices, the uncertainty regarding the future, and the possible perspective of an arm conflict expansion. The aim is to observe:

- how individuals perceive the importance of social resilience after they were confronted with different issues that had a significant impact on their lives;
- what measures were they able to take to mitigate the negative related aspects;
- what actions they consider necessary to be taken at the individual, societal and state levels;

The three elements mentioned before that are involved in the resilience equation (individual, environment and state) will be analysed starting from the practical side of experience gained by individuals. This experience must be used as learned lessons and should be understood from the individual perspective to adapt strategies and actions conducted to enhance social resilience. This concept is built on multi-level action, but to be feasible and actionable, it must be constantly updated in terms of individual understanding since it represents the main actor that enables it.

To gain an insight into people’s perception of social resilience, 25 questionnaires and 5 interviews were conducted with people of different ages covering the entire range from 19 – 61 years old, mainly urban inhabitants (19) with higher education (17).

Results from questionnaires

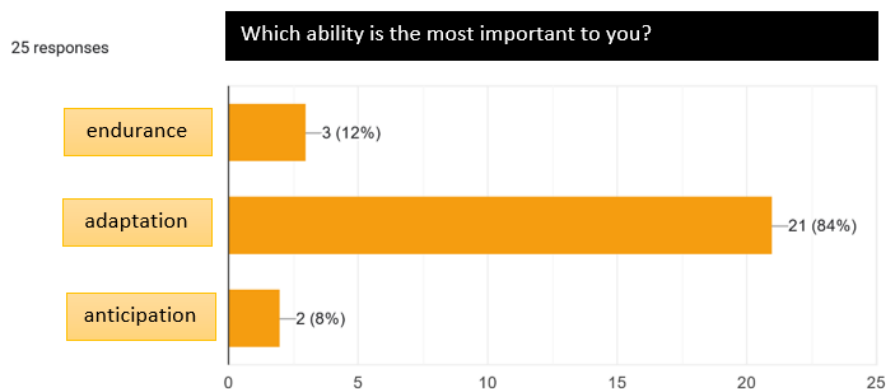
The responses show a clear stand of the majority regarding resilience in terms of importance and a general preference for adaptability but with different options in specific case scenarios.

In terms of importance, the ability to adapt was the first one valued by most respondents. The majority (21) considered this ability more important than endurance or anticipation. Adaptation is one key feature for survival, and “according to Darwin’s Origin of Species, it is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able **best to adapt** and adjust to the

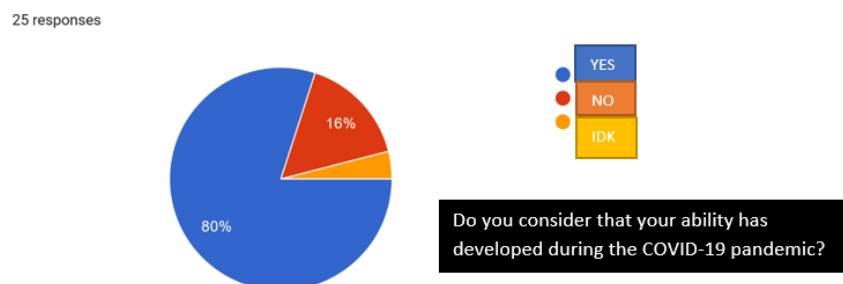
⁸ S. L. Cuttler; L. Barnes; M. Berry; C. Burton; E. Evans; E. Tate and J. Webb, “A place-based model for understanding community resilience to natural disasters” in *Global Environmental Change*, 18 (4), p. 598.

⁹ B. Obrist; C. Pfeiffer and R. Henley, “Multi-layered social resilience: a new approach in mitigation research”, in *Progress in Development Studies* 10 (4), 2010a, p. 289.

changing environment in which it finds itself.”¹⁰ Based on each respondent’s personal experiences, the choices tend to prove the validity of this statement but also reveal that people are aware of it and value this skill. For backing this statement, also stands the majority (16) that considered adaptation to have been the most useful tool they had in order to deal with the COVID-19 pandemics, and the next choice was psychical endurance (7). The emphasis is put on adaptation to new situations the respondents are confronted with, and a significant number of the respondents considered psychical endurance to have helped them.



After confronting difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic, most (20) believed they had developed resilience-related abilities. The choice shows that difficult times helped them build resilience and acknowledge this skill they enhanced or acquired.

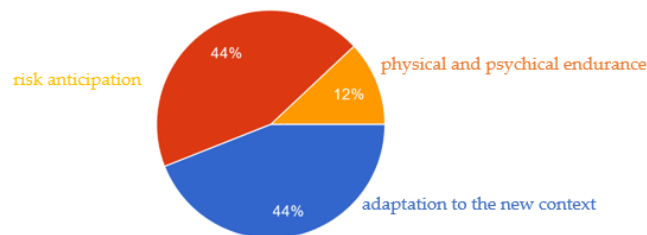


Differences in choice emerged in a severe economic crisis case scenario. Two choices were even, with 11 choices for each: adaptation to the new context and risk anticipation. This result shows a different approach and probably different defence mechanisms. One that tries to anticipate and mitigate the effects and other, to adapt to new conditions. One is proactive, which involves struggle and effort, and the other is passive, built on acceptance. Taking the reasoning further, the central hypothesis that emerges from this difference could be related to personality type or to available resources in means of time, energy, money, personality etc.

¹⁰ Leon C. Megginson, *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Volume 44, Number 1, June 1963.

What ability do you consider would help you the most during a severe economic crisis?

25 responses

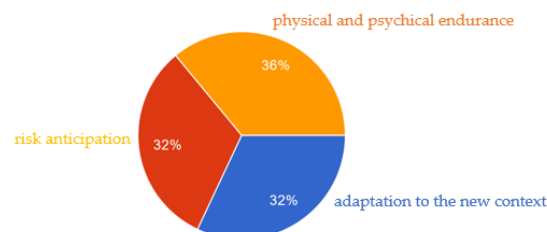


An even more fragmented choice resulted from a war case scenario. All three choices were even, with 8 or 9 choices for each of the following:

- risk anticipation and taking preparing measures;
- adaptation to the new situation;
- physical and psychical endurance.

What ability do you consider would help you the most during a war?

25 responses



Regarding risk anticipation, the primary entities responsible are considered the individual and the state and not the groups of people they belong to. Even if there is a need for extra data regarding this issue, it could be assessed that the view is limited to personal and state responsibility and groups are almost excluded because there is a lack of collective effort oriented in this direction.

Even if only 19 persons knew what resilience was, the responses are not affected by this fact because the questions were not directly related to resilience but to its main parts, which are familiar to almost everyone.

Results from interviews

The main focus was related to new ways of building resilience that the interviewees developed during a recent difficult time.

Even if the main ideas were similar regarding the necessity of building resilience, when it came to creative forms of developing this feature, new ways emerged. Each of the 5 persons I interviewed found particular ways to cope with the difficult situations they were confronted and adapted to each possibility.

While the general responses were mainly the same regarding saving money and making provisions, the individual responses were different. Ideas such as reconnecting with the countryside for food, fresh air and space, changing available cash into other currencies to have an alternative in case of an economic crash or finding cheaper ways to reduce their consumption represent new approaches that are all meant to enhance resilience.

Also, another critical aspect that resulted is that the denial of a negative prospect determines a lack of proactive approach and that most of the resilient measures mentioned above were taken shortly before or during the crisis.

Conclusions

In summary, by confronting theory with practice, we can observe the differences in the means of approach. While theory sustains a multi-level action plan meant to enhance resilience, the individuals take a more practical approach and consider that the primary effort belongs to them. This result can be interpreted in two different ways. Positively, regarding the responsibility each takes to managing threats and in a negative manner that underlines the lack of confidence in the help provided by state agencies.

Most respondents consider that the experience taught them more about resilience and helped improve it. Starting from this observation, we can revalidate the statement “*repetitio mater studiorum est*” and conclude that to build resilience, one effective way is to be subject to threats. The deductive conclusion would be that not being confronted with threats would lead to a loss of resilience and could also translate into increased vulnerability. Since this is not a feasible action, alternative ways to improve resilience must be found. Taking advantage of these difficult times could transform risks into opportunities, and the lessons learned the hard way could represent the foundation of a more resilient world, starting from the individual and society’s resilience.

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ETHNIC AND POLITICAL MIGRATION FROM AN UNRECOGNIZED STATE: THE CASE OF THE TRANSNISTRIAN REGION*

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Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the former socialist bloc produced a significant rise in migration flows. The breakup was one of the most important events in the global arena in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. By the end of 1991, the former Soviet republics emerged in the international arena as independent and sovereign states. Nevertheless, the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of several post-Soviet countries (the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) have been breached by separatist forces supported militarily and financially by the Kremlin. Therefore, the migration process in the post-Soviet space after the dissolution of the USSR was connected to a large extent to political instability and separatist disputes. As a result, the Transnistrian conflict and the military violence in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia triggered massive flows of internal and external migration, and humanitarian crises. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict generated around 576.000 displaced people by 2003, while the UNHCR report states that in 2009 the Azeri Government estimated 1 million people who remained refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan.¹

There are a plethora of types of migration from post-Soviet unrecognized states: labour migration, ethnic and political, study-related migration, migration due to natural disasters, and migration motivated by family reunification.² However, in the first years after the dissolution of the USSR, ethnic and political migration were the most prominent types of migration from these disputed regions. While ethnic migration has been determined particularly by repatriation programs, political migration has been caused by military conflicts, repressive conditions, restricted freedom, and human rights violations.

Alla Ostavnaia in her study entitled “Mapping Migration from Transnistria” investigated the phenomenon of migration from the Transnistrian region, including ethnic and political migration. Even though ethnic migration is an ongoing process, she outlined that it mostly occurred during the early 1990s. Ethnic migration was not motivated only by cultural

* This research benefited from funding: Special Scholarship for Scientific Activity (SSSA) for the 2021-2022 academic year launched by the Babeș-Bolyai University, via its STAR-UBB Institute.

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Azerbaijan: Analysis of Gaps in the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)*, 2009, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/convention/4bd7edbd9/azerbaijan-analysis-gaps-protection-internally-displaced-persons-idps.html>, 13 May 2022.

² Alla Ostavnaia, *Mapping Migration from Transnistria*, 2017, https://moldova.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1266/files/documents/Mapping%20Migration%20from%20Transnistria_0.pdf, 14 May 2022.

ties, the familiarity of migrants with different traditions and languages or by the desire of migrants to return to their historical motherlands, but also by a variety of financial facilities and reintegration programs: language classes, housing rental, package assistance for job seekers and families with children.³ The author underlined that repatriation was strongly driven by migrants' desire to improve their economic conditions and quality of life. Therefore, life abroad was perceived both as an opportunity and a solution to their problems and dissatisfactions related to different spheres of daily life. A. Ostavnaia also highlighted that migrants from the Transnistrian region who emigrated to Israel through repatriation programs had to respect certain obligations such as conversion to Judaism and compulsory military service.

Regarding political migration, A. Ostavnaia underlines that this type of migration from the Transnistrian region has been defined by two main directions: migration due to the military conflict and the migration of political representatives from the former political establishment due to political repression. The last one was particularly evident between 2011 and 2016 when the political class of the separatist region went through a process of change.⁴ It is important to mention that political migration from such regions is also determined by human rights issues, authoritarianism, ethnic discrimination, anti-Western ideology, and extremist legislation. Therefore, I would add other groups of people who emigrated due to political reasons: teachers from Moldovan-administered Latin-script schools, independent journalists and lawyers, Moldovan war veterans, and civic activists.

Eric Neumayer in his article on the determinants of asylum migration states that migration is a result of a "utility-optimizing behaviour". Individuals who have migration intentions tend to weigh the costs of remaining in the country/region of origin and the benefits of migration to a specific country of destination. He also underlines that living in a hostile environment, where political repression and human rights abuses are the rule rather than the exception, determines all individuals to think about migration. The author explains that human rights abuses increase the cost of staying in the country of origin. Moreover, he underlines that oppressive or coercive conditions are closely linked to social and economic deprivation.⁵ Therefore, individuals who live in regions affected by conflicts and geopolitical insecurities or who live in countries governed by authoritarian regimes, tend to perceive migration as a form of protection or as a coping mechanism.

Researchers have also reflected on the difficulties faced by migrants from post-Soviet countries. For example, E. Voutira shed light on the difficulties of repatriation processes and ethnic migration to historical motherlands. According to her, even though ethnic migrants emigrated with the prospect of diverse political, economic, and social rights, their (re)integration process had been uncertain. Some of them remain marginalized due to language barriers and the way they are perceived by local communities. Additionally, many skilled migrants turned to unskilled occupations in their countries of destination.⁶ Furthermore, Ivashchenko-Stadnik highlighted that many migrants from post-Soviet conflict

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Eric Neumayer, "Bogus Refugees? The Determinants of Asylum Migration to Western Europe" in *International Studies Quarterly*, 94 (3), 2005, pp. 391-392.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 538

zones do not have any clear visions of their post-migration life.⁷ Uncertainty prevailed not only in their post-migration life, but also in the pre-migration life. As Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay argued, individuals from unrecognized countries, have a “life in quotation marks”.

The Transnistrian region is a narrow strip of land located between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, on the left bank of the Dniester river. Since 1992, the Moldovan Government has had no effective control over the left-bank region. The disputed territory is also known as “Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic” (hereafter “PMR”), which was established in 1990.⁸ The separatist state was proclaimed in the context of political and social turmoil during the collapse of the Soviet Union (hereafter USSR) and the national liberation movement. Shortly after the dissolution of the USSR, the majority of the population reaffirmed its aspirations for embracing Romanian culture, after waves of forced Russification. In contrast, the population of the Transnistrian region, particularly Russian ethnics, demonstrated resistance and sought to preserve the „Soviet identity”, as they did not have close political and cultural ties with Romania. The political tensions between Chişinău and Tiraspol resulted in an armed conflict, which ended in 1992, after a ceasefire agreement was signed.⁹ Currently, the Transnistrian “frozen conflict” represents the biggest threat to Moldova's national security and an impediment to follow the path of EU accession and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Both the Republic of Moldova and the Transnistrian region are affected by mass migration, which resulted in a serious demographic crisis. In a study of the World Bank from 2008, it was estimated that the number of emigrants constituted 16.8% (705.533) of the total population of Moldova.¹⁰ Additionally, unofficial sources estimate that this number is higher, as it reaches 1.000.000 Moldovan citizens.¹¹ Moreover, Moldova has had one of the highest rates of youth migration (130 young people per 1000 population) in Europe and Central Asia.¹² The socio-economic issues and the complicated political context determined the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region to leave the left bank territory. During 1998-2020, the population decline in the Transnistrian region accelerated, as it lost more than 200,000 inhabitants or 30 percent of the total population.¹³

This study addresses the phenomena of ethnic and political migration from a particular region of the Republic of Moldova: the Transnistrian region. I have chosen this topic

⁷ Kateryna Ivashchenko-Stadnik, “The Social Challenge of Internal Displacement in Ukraine: The Host Community’s Perspective” in Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska, Greta Uehling (eds.), *Migration and the Ukraine Crisis: A Two-Country Perspective*, Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2017, p. 38.

⁸ John Mackinlay, Peter Cross, *Regional peacekeepers: the paradox of Russian peacekeeping*, 2003, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/500204>, 3 May 2022.

⁹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Transdnistrian conflict: origins and issues*, 1994, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/3/42308.pdf>, 3 May 2022.

¹⁰ World Bank, *The Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/6383>, 3 May 2022.

¹¹ Eduard Mihailov, Mariska N.J. van der Linden, Shivaun Scanlan, *Forced labour outcomes of migration from Moldova: rapid assessment*, 2005, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_081970.pdf, 3 May 2022.

¹² United Nations Development Programme, *Common Country Assessment: Republic of Moldova*, 2005, https://www.bing.com/search?q=COMMON+COUNTRY+ASSESSMENT+moldova+2005&qsn=&form=QBRE&msbsrank=0_00&sp=-1&pq=common+country+assessment+moldova2005&sc=0-37&sk=&cvid=5F5B91B43E1B43C39A3D84EE6AF05C26, accessed on 28 March 2021, 3 May 2022.

¹³ Based on the data from statistical yearbooks (2003-2021) elaborated by the so-called Transnistrian Statistical Service.

of analysis because of its complexity. First of all, this article investigates a niche topic in academic literature and migration studies. Secondly, it documents the phenomenon of migration from a pro-Russian separatist region and an unrecognized state which is highly militarized. The phenomenon of migration from such a region implies a variety of factors, which can range from economic needs, limited access to certain services and goods to human rights abuses, geopolitical insecurity, and systematic discrimination. Moreover, the topic of ethnic and political migration from a post-Soviet frozen conflict area is under-researched. To my knowledge, there is no detailed analysis of ethnic and political migration from the perspective of the Transnistrian region.

In this article, the terms “right bank” and “left bank” refer to territories controlled by the Moldovan authorities and the separatist forces, respectively.

Methodology and data collection

The methodology of this article is based on documentary research. I analyzed data and information from the so-called Transnistrian Statistical Service. The so-called Transnistrian Statistical Services provides data about migration movements since 1998. Because of this, all the graphs presented in this article about migration from the disputed territory do not cover the period between 1990-1998. Moreover, since 1989, the Transnistrian local authorities have been responsible for conducting population and housing censuses. Therefore, the last census which included rural and urban localities from the left bank region was conducted in 1989. Nevertheless, the official data and information provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova about the total number of population according to the 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989 censuses excludes the west bank and the city of Tighina/Bender, because they are defined within the boundaries established at the 2004 census. As a result, the lack of an integrated statistical system generates difficulties in making population estimates, including estimates of emigration.

This study aims to cover the following aspects:

- The evolution of migratory movements from the Transnistrian region between 1998 and 2020;
- Main particularities of ethnic migration from the Transnistrian region;
- Main characteristics of political migration from the Transnistrian territory.

I aimed to analyze the evolution of migratory movements from the Transnistrian region for a better understanding of the general context. The main characteristics of ethnic and political migration from the Transnistrian region were identified based on statistics provided by the so-called Transnistrian Statistical Service, previous studies, reports, and analyses from organizations such as Promo-LEX.

This study is divided in four parts. First of all, I present general information about the Transnistrian region to understand the context behind migration. Secondly, I offer details about the population of the Transnistrian region and how migratory movements evolved between 1998 and 2020. Thirdly, I explain the phenomenon of ethnic migration from the Transnistrian region. Next, I analyze the particularities of political migration from this post-Soviet separatist territory. The final section underlines the concluding remarks of this article.

Introduction to the Transnistrian region

The disputed territory is equal to 4,16 thou. km², which constitutes 12% of Moldova's territory. The administrative-territorial structure of Transnistria consists of 7 administrative regions: 5 rayons (Rybnitsa, Dubasari, Grigoriopol, Slobozia, and Camenca) and 2 large cities (Tiraspol and Tighina/Bender) which are the most important political and economic centers of the region.¹⁴ Tiraspol, the second largest city of Moldova, was declared the capital of the Transnistrian region. The international community does not recognize the Transnistrian region as a legitimate and independent country. Nevertheless, since 2019, the „PMR” has had official representation in the Russian Federation and conducts official visits to other breakaway regions such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The separatist regime has established a state apparatus which is governed by a constitution and consists of legislative, executive, and judicial branches, armed forces, economic institutions, and government agencies. Furthermore, the separatist regime focused on identity transformation to create the so-called „Transnistrian identity”. Thus, the regime adopted distinct symbols - anthem, flag, and emblem - which are tied to political ideology and represent symbols of Soviet nostalgia. The separatist authorities claim that Ukrainian, the so-called „Moldovan language” and Russian, which is the lingua franca, are the official languages of the region. It is important to outline that „Moldovan language” is a linguistic experiment of the USSR, which tried to create a separate language in its endeavour to distance the population of Moldova from Romanian identity.¹⁵

From an economic, military, social, and cultural perspective, the Transnistrian region is distinct from the rest of the country. The region is populated primarily by Russian ethnics and Russian-speaking people, who tend to live in urban areas. A vast majority of them are former Soviet internal migrants who emigrated from different parts of the USSR. John Mackinlay and Peter Cross describe the inhabitants of the left bank region as a „highly Sovietized population, suspicious of the peasant free-market mentality and fearful of the possibility of unification with Romania”.¹⁶ During the Soviet period, the Transnistrian region was one of the most industrialized and urbanized parts of the country, which also had high concentrations of military equipment. As a result, Moldova's biggest cement plants, electrotechnical plants, cotton fabrics, and the country's single steel plant were located in the Transnistrian urban areas.¹⁷ It is estimated that the economy of the region accounted for almost 25 per cent of the country's GDP and concentrated one-third of the MSSR's industrial production.¹⁸

¹⁴ World Bank, *Republic of Moldova: Economic Review of the Transnistria Region*, 1998, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/492631468773991051/pdf/multi0page.pdf>, 5 May 2022.

¹⁵ Igor Cașu, „Moldova under the Soviet Communist Regime: History and Memory” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, Bogdan C. Iacob (eds.), *Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to terms with traumatic pasts in democratic societies*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015, p. 353.

¹⁶ John Mackinlay, Peter Cross, *Regional peacekeepers: the paradox of Russian peacekeeping*, 2003, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/500204>, 5 May 2022.

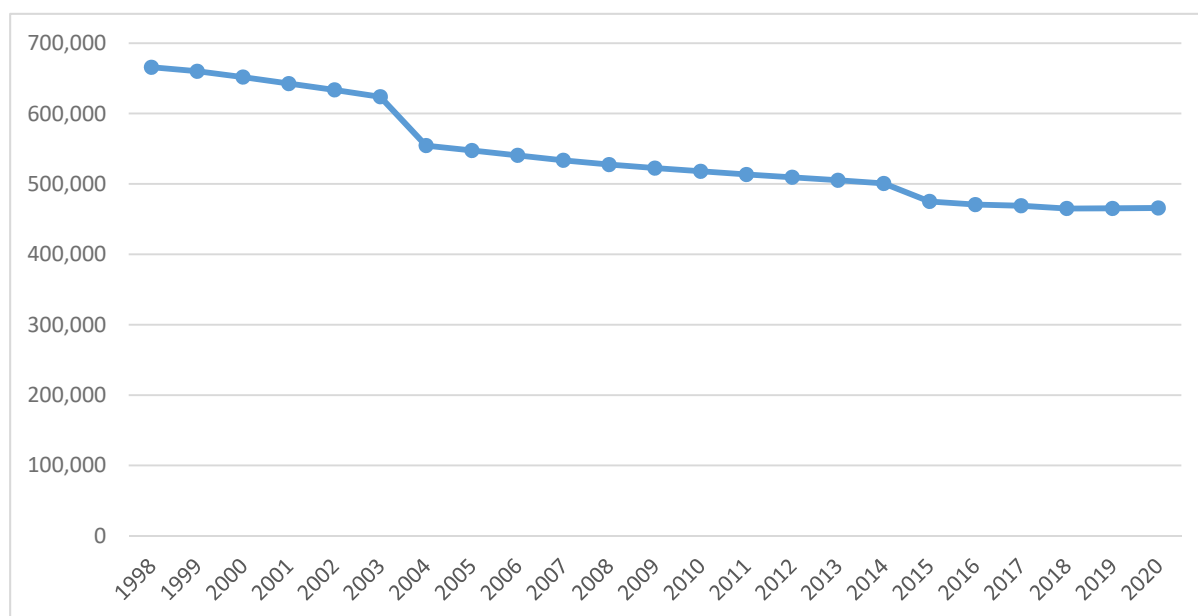
¹⁷ World Bank, *Republic of Moldova: Economic Review of the Transnistria Region*, 1998, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/492631468773991051/pdf/multi0page.pdf>, 5 May 2022.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Moldova: The Turbulent Dniester*, 1993, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Moldova0393.pdf>, 5 May 2022.

Population structure

During the Soviet period, the Transnistrian territorial unit was an attractive region due to industrial production and the migration policies of the USSR. In her article, Olga Burla outlines that in the late 1980s, the net migration rate in the left bank region was positive.¹⁹ The situation changed radically after the emergence of the armed conflict.

Figure 1. Population trends in the Transnistrian region between 1998 and 2020 (thousand inhabitants).



Source: made by the author on the basis of data from statistical yearbooks (2003-2021) elaborated by the so-called Transnistrian Statistical Service/ Государственная служба статистики (ГОССТАТ), Министерство экономического развития Приднестровской Молдавской Республики, Статистический ежегодник 2003-2021 год.

According to the data provided by local authorities from Tiraspol, the population of the Transnistrian region was around 665,000 in 1998 and nowadays it totals nearly 465,000 people. Currently, the population of the region represents nearly 17 per cent of the total population of Moldova. The population has declined annually by several thousand people (see Figure 1.1). Furthermore, since 1998, the Transnistrian region has had a negative rate of natural increase. For example, in 2002, the rate of natural increase (hereafter RNI) was at -5,4 (per 1000 population), while in 2020 the RNI was at -3,8. The RNI has fluctuated from -2 to -5 during these two decades.

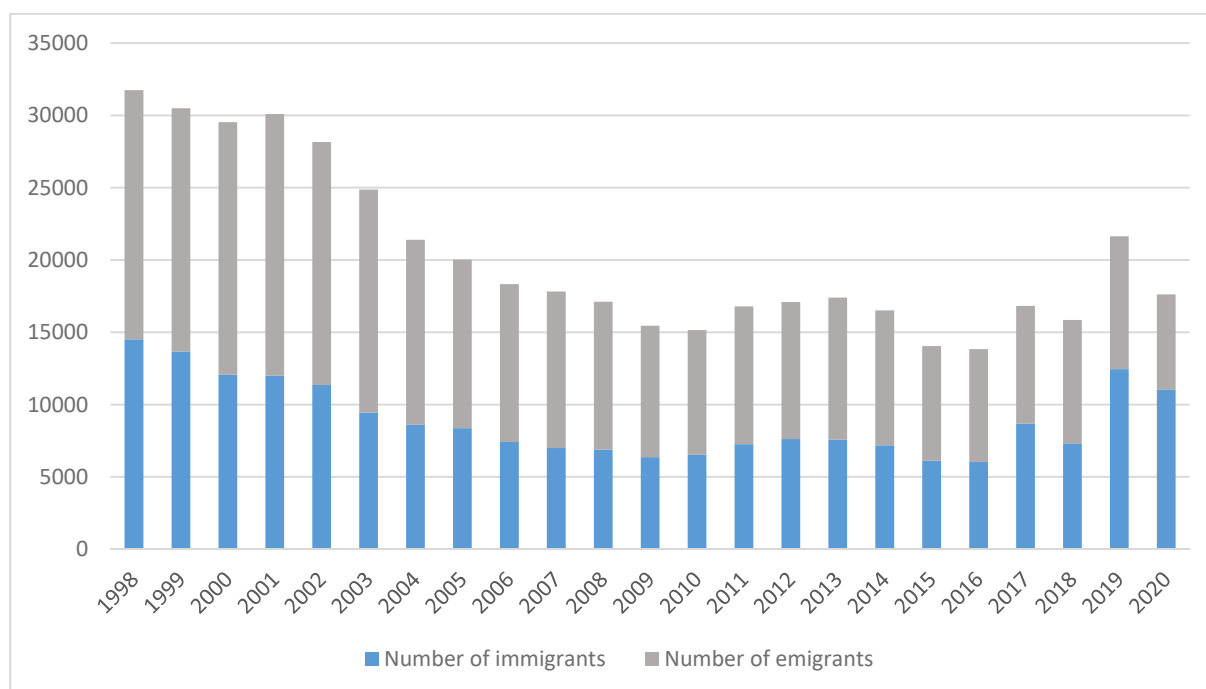
The depopulation of the Transnistrian region is explained by a push-and-pull model. After the end of the armed conflict, the key push factors have been the economic determinants including lack of financial resources, high rates of unemployment, low standards of living, and low-paid jobs. the uncertain political future of the region. These economic determinants go hand-in-hand with other important push factors: political isolation, the unresolved status issue of the Transnistrian region, high levels of corruption, untrustful attitudes related to the

¹⁹ Olga Burla, "Special features of the demographic situation in the Transnistrian region and its socio-economic consequences" in *Problems of Continuous Geographic Education and Cartography*, 22, 2015, pp. 37-38.

political class, the absence of certain goods and services such as international clothing brands or international bank transfers. The most predominant pull factors were the possibility to earn money and receive higher salaries.

The chart below emphasizes that the largest migration from the left bank territories took place between 1998 and 2005 and reached its high point in 2001 when the net migration rate was -6090 per thousand population. Furthermore, the net migration rate continued to be negative between 2006 and 2016.

Figure 2. Migratory movements from the Transnistrian region between 1998 and 2020.



Source: made by the author on the basis of data from statistical yearbooks (2003-2021) elaborated by the so-called Transnistrian Statistical Service/ Государственная служба статистики (ГОССТАТ), Министерство экономического развития Приднестровской Молдавской Республики, Статистический ежегодник 2003-2021 год.

Ethnic migration

According to available information, the ethnic structure of the Transnistrian region in the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union comprised the following nationalities: Moldovan, Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Jewish, German, and others. As we can observe in the table below, ethnic Moldovans constituted the largest share of the region's population and they made up around 30% of the total population. Ethnic Russians and Ukrainians represented the other two major ethnic groups, as they each accounted for approximately 30% of the population. In comparison, according to the 1989 census, ethnic Russians represented nearly 13% of Moldova's population. In their publication, John Mackinlay and Peter Cross stressed the idea that Russian ethnics in the left bank territories represent a "minority within a minority."²⁰ Russian is considered a native language for a large

²⁰ John Mackinlay, Peter Cross, *Regional peacekeepers: the paradox of Russian peacekeeping*, 2003, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/500204>, 5 May 2022.

proportion of ethnic Ukrainians who reside in the “PMR” and the Republic of Moldova. More precisely, in the early 2000s, out of 600,000 ethnic Ukrainians who lived in Moldova, 200,000 claimed that they do not know their mother tongue and only 52,000 spoke Ukrainian fluently.²¹

The table below, extracted from a multi-year study conducted in the region, emphasizes that Ukrainians represented the largest ethnic group in the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which was established within the borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The ethnic composition of the region during 1926 - 1995 was affected by a range of economic and political factors such as World War II, the Soviet famine of 1946-1947, the industrialization process and centrally promoted immigration, the collapse of the USSR, the armed conflict, repatriation programs, economic crises, and mass-migration.²²

Table 1. Ethnic composition of the Transnistrian region during different years.²³

Year	Share, %				Total (in thousands)
	Moldovan	Russian	Ukrainian	Other	
1926*	30,1	8,5	48,5	12,9	572,3 39
1939*	28,6	10,2	50,7	10,9	475,1 44
1989* *	33,5	30,5	28,3	7,7	678,2 81
1993* **	34,1	30,1	28	7,8	712,5
1995* **	33,5	28,8	28	9,7	696,1
2004 (census)	31,9	30,3	28,8	9,0	550,0

* within the borders of the „Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic”, part of the USSR

** within the borders of the „MRRS”, part of the USSR

*** within the current borders of the „PMR”

The trans-border mobility after the dissolution of the USSR contributed to the facilitation of the movement of ethnic groups from the disputed territory. According to the

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Alla Ostavnaia, *Mapping Migration from Transnistria*, 2017, https://moldova.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1266/files/documents/Mapping%20Migration%20from%20Transnistria_0.pdf, 14 May 2022.

²³ *Ibid.*

statistical yearbooks of the so-called Transnistrian Statistical Service, between 1998 and 2003, the Jewish population was estimated at 13 thousand, representing nearly 2 per cent of the total population. In 2004, the Jewish population declined sharply, as they made up about 0,2 per cent of the region's population. This mass migration was part of a repatriation policy, which facilitated the relocation to Israel or to other destination countries. Besides the Jewish population, the proportion of ethnic Germans decreased from 1999 to the early 2000s. In 2020, the German population in the „PMR” represented only 0,3% of the current population. Moreover, both the Jewish and German minorities are underrepresented in the Moldovan civil society. According to the Agency of Interethnic Relations, out of the total 71 ethnocultural organizations registered in Moldova, only 2 of them represent the German ethnics and 4 of them represent the Jewish community.²⁴

Table 2. Ethnic composition of the Transnistrian region from 1998 to 2005.

Nationality	Population share (in thousands)							
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Moldovan	221,0	219,1	216,4	213,3	210,4	207,1	177,1	174,9
Russian	193,7	192,1	189,7	187,0	184,4	181,5	168,4	166,3
Ukrainian	192,4	190,7	188,4	185,6	183,1	180,3	159,8	157,8
Bulgarian	14,0	13,9	13,7	13,5	13,3	13,1	13,8	13,7
Jewish	13,3	13,2	13,0	12,9	12,7	12,5	1,2	1,2
Gagauz	4,7	4,6	4,6	4,5	4,4	4,4	4,1	4,0
German	2,0	2,0	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9	2,1	2,0
Others	24,6	24,4	24,1	23,8	23,4	23,0	24,1	23,8
Population, total	665,7	660,0	651,8	642,5	633,6	623,8	544,5	547,5

Source: Государственная служба статистики (ГОССТАТ), Министерство экономического развития Приднестровской Молдавской Республики, Статистический ежегодник 2003 год, Статистический сборник (за 1998-2002 г.г.) / Statistical service, Ministry of Economic Development of Transnistria, Statistical yearbook 2003 (Compilation of statistics 1998-2002).

The proportion of Russian and Ukrainian ethnics constantly decreased between 1998 and 2019. The first wave of mass migration of Russian and Ukrainian nationals was registered after the disintegration of the USSR when many of them returned to the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Russian nationals and Russian-speaking inhabitants of the Transnistrian region

²⁴ Agenția Relații Internaționale, Lista organizațiilor (asociațiilor, comunităților) entoculturale ale minorităților naționale înregistrate în teritoriu, <http://www.ari.gov.md/ro/minoritati-nationale-organizatii-etnoculturale-teritoriu>, 12 May 2022.

participated in the State Program for Assisting Compatriots in their Voluntary Resettlement to the Russian Federation. Eligible compatriots are Russian citizens, citizens of the former Soviet countries, including people who never lived in the Russian Federation, and any individuals whose ancestors lived in Russia or in other former Soviet states. Moreover, some of them returned to their countries of origin during the emergence of large-scale refugee flows in 1992. The following waves of ethnic migration from the separatist region were primarily determined by socio-economic factors. According to the Transnistrian Statistical Service, the Russian population in the region decreased by 35,3 thousand between 1998 and 2020, while the Ukrainian population dropped by 35% in the last 22 years.

Table 3. Ethnic composition of the Transnistrian region from 2015 to 2020.

Nationality	Population share (in thousands)					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Russian	161,3	160,0	159,5	158,1	158,2	158,4
Moldovan	156,6	155,3	154,8	153,5	153,5	153,7
Ukrainian	126,7	125,7	125,2	124,2	124,2	124,4
Bulgarian	13,3	13,2	13,2	13,0	13,0	13,0
Gagauz	5,7	5,7	5,6	5,6	5,6	5,6
Belarusian	2,8	2,8	2,8	2,8	2,8	2,8
German	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4	1,4
Polish	1,0	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9
Others	5,7	5,6	5,6	5,6	5,6	5,6
Population, total	474,6	470,6	469,0	465,1	465,2	465,8

Source: Государственная служба статистики (ГОССТАТ), Министерство экономического развития Приднестровской Молдавской Республики, Статистический ежегодник 2021 год / Statistical service, Ministry of Economic Development of Transnistria, Statistical yearbook 2021 (Compilation of statistics 2016-2020).

Ethnic migration from the Transnistrian region has been also determined by ethnic discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity. For example, Moldovan ethnics who are Romanian native speakers have lived in a hostile environment, where their rights to education and freedom were infringed. Due to the absence of concrete data, quantitative and qualitative analysis, it is difficult to estimate how many people left the region due to ethnic discrimination. However, the information published by the Moldovan Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and Promo-LEX Association provides overall evidence of this

phenomenon. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of Moldova, the total number of students enrolled in Romanian language schools located in the separatist region has decreased by nearly 70% between 1998 and 2021.²⁵ Ethnic discrimination represents one of the main determining factors particularly for ethnic migrants from the Transnistrian region. Ethnic migrants from the Transnistrian region do not have access to legal protection and do not enjoy the right to an independent and impartial judicial process. In this context, migration is perceived as immediate neediness, rather than an opportunity. The severity of this issue is highlighted by the case of Serghei Vardiasvili, a Georgian ethnic who lived in the Transnistrian region. In 2015, Transnistrian separatist authorities arrested him and denied him entry to the region for 6 months. During this period, he did not have access to his home. He complains that the separatist authorities imposed a six-month re-entry ban in a discriminatory manner, on the grounds of his Georgian origin.²⁶ The case of Vardiasvili v. Russia and Moldova is the first one related to ethnic discrimination in the Transnistrian region submitted to the European Court of Human Rights.

Political migration

The political dimension of migration from the Transnistrian region was particularly prominent during the early 1990s, because of the Transnistrian armed conflict, which led to forced migration and internal displacement. In 1992, Moldova faced its biggest humanitarian crisis since the collapse of the USSR. Moldovan authorities could not provide reliable data on the number of refugees, partially because a part of them remained unregistered and did not inform the authorities about their status. It is estimated that around 100.000 people, mostly women, children, and the elderly, fled the region in 1992.²⁷ Their main destinations were the right bank territories and the neighbouring country - Ukraine. However, according to Elena Gorelova and Galina Șelari, the total number of people who left the Transnistrian region during and after the conflict reached 200.000 persons. Moreover, the authors state that the total number of persons who left their homeland and requested asylum in neighbouring countries - Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and Belarus - was approximately 70.000.²⁸

Ukraine was the major refugee-hosting country, as it received more than 61.000 people, including 30.000 children. This large number of refugees was distributed among 17 Ukrainian regions, but the majority of them, nearly 50.000, were allocated to the Odesa region.²⁹ It is important to mention that a large part of them returned to their homes

²⁵ Biroul Politici de Reintegrare, *Evoluția numărului de elevi în cele 8 instituții de învățământ din regiunea transnistreană*, subordonate Ministerului Educației și Cercetării al Republicii Moldova, progrese și dificultăți, <https://gov.md/ro/content/evolutia-numarului-de-elevi-cele-8-institutii-de-invatamant-din-regiunea-transnistreana>, 13 May 2022.

²⁶ European Court of Human Rights, Second Section Application no. 558/16 Serghei Vardiasvili against the Republic of Moldova and Russia lodged on 11 December 2015 communicated on 20 May 2021, 2021, [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-210441%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-210441%22]}), 27 August 2022.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Moldova: The Turbulent Dniester*, 1993, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Moldova0393.pdf>, 5 May 2022.

²⁸ Elena Gorelova, Galina Șelari, *Costurile conflictului transnistrean și beneficiile soluționării lui*, 2009, <http://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/Report%20ROM%20Master%20Draft%20vEG.pdf>, 17 May 2022.

²⁹ Valeriu Moșneaga, Platon Frunțaș, *Problema refugiaților și persoanelor strămutate în Republica Moldova* cited in Elena Gorelova, Galina Șelari, *Costurile conflictului transnistrean și beneficiile soluționării lui*, 2009, <http://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/Report%20ROM%20Master%20Draft%20vEG.pdf>, 17 May 2022.

voluntarily after the end of the conflict. Ukrainian authorities together with Moldova's state institutions undertook a series of practical measures which facilitated the process of voluntary repatriation. In contrast, refugees who fled to Belarus and the Russian Federation did not opt to head home.³⁰ According to Catherine Dale³¹, many migrants from these post-Soviet separatist territories did not return to their regions of origin due to the absence of comprehensive political settlements of the conflicts. In this context, for many of them, return migration turned out to be a complicated process.

Registration of refugees in Russia and Belarus continued to take place after the end of the conflict. According to the Russian Federal State Statistics Services, the total number of refugees from the Transnistrian region rose to 18,491 in 1998.

Table 4. The distribution of refugees from the Transnistrian region among host countries during the armed conflict.³²

Ukraine	61.000 (30.000 were children)
The Russian Federation	17.346
Belarus	859
Other CIS countries	20.000

The military conflict generated a massive wave of internal displacement, which resulted in 130.000 internally displaced persons (hereafter IDPs), primarily women, the elderly, and children. The largest majority of them (around 91,3%) were residents of the left bank territorial units.³³ Additionally, a vast majority of them came from Tighina/Bender, Dubasari, and Tiraspol.³⁴ Some people fled the conflict from left bank territories to right bank districts, while others moved to safer areas of the Transnistrian region. Even though the existing IDPs represented different ethnic groups, around 80% of them were ethnic Moldovans.³⁵

In the following years, the issue of IDPs was not a large-scale phenomenon. Nevertheless, nearly 1.000 people continued to face socio-economic insecurity and a lack of housing assistance.³⁶ During the first decade after the conflict, the Republic of Moldova did

³⁰ Elena Gorelova, Galina Șelari, *Costurile conflictului transnistrean și beneficiile soluționării lui*, 2009, <http://www.cisr-md.org/pdf/Report%20ROM%20Master%20Draft%20vEG.pdf>, 17 May 2022.

³¹ Catherine Dale, *The Dynamics and Challenges of Ethnic Cleansing: The Georgia-Abkhazia Case*, 1997, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6c54.html>, 2 May 2022.

³² Valeriu Mosneaga, *Asylum-seekers, refugees and displaced persons in Moldova: Problems of recognition, social protection and integration*, 2013, https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/62725/Explanatory%20%25%20Note_2013-103.pdf?sequence=1, 15 May 2022.

³³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Report 1999 - Republic of Moldova*, 1999, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/3e2d4d6011/unhcr-global-report-1999-republic-moldova.html?query=transnistria>, 2 June 2022.

³⁴ Gorelova, Șelari, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Mosneaga, *op. cit.*

³⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Report 1999 - Republic of Moldova*, 1999, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/3e2d4d6011/unhcr-global-report-1999-republic-moldova.html?query=transnistria>, 2 June 2022.

not have enough instruments, resources, and an adequate legislative framework to provide assistance and counselling to asylum-seekers and IDPs. Therefore, the government and law enforcement agencies often relied on international support. IDPs from the Transnistrian region were affected by difficulties in accessing social and health services, education, financial resources, housing, and legal assistance.

After the end of the armed conflict, political factors have continued to represent major determinants of migration from the disputed region. Currently, political migration from the Transnistrian region is strongly linked to discrimination, political repression, human rights abuses, including restricted freedom of movement, freedom of expression, illegal detentions, and restricted right to education or to legally owned or rented properties. People who share different political visions, such as Moldova's war veterans, political opponents and Moldovan teachers, are subjected to threats and pressure from the Transnistrian KGB. As a result, human capital is fleeing the Transnistrian region leading to a massive brain drain.

The strengthening of authoritarianism and the growing political oppression have determined more people to leave the breakaway region. Authorities monitor and control the activity of local NGOs and civil society activists. Due to its ambiguity and vagueness, Transnistria's anti-extremism legislation, adopted in 2007, is used by separatist authorities to suppress and liquidate political opponents and groups of people which reveal corruption schemes and human rights abuses. It is important to outline that Transnistria's anti-extremism law is based very closely on Russia's anti-extremism law adopted in 2002 by the State Duma.

The annual reports of the Freedom House portray Transnistria's abysmal human rights record. According to the reports, non-governmental organizations and the entire civic society work in a repressive environment. Freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of information, the right to a fair trial and the presumption of innocence are tightly restricted.³⁷ Furthermore, the U.S. Department of State in its annual Country Report on Human Rights highlighted that Transnistrian authorities repeatedly engaged in orchestrated physical attacks, arbitrary arrests, and forced detention. In addition, separatist authorities restricted and violated freedom of religion, internet freedom, and academic freedom.³⁸ The law-enforcement institutions in the region are strictly controlled by separatist forces. Therefore, the inhabitants of the Transnistrian region do not have access to authentic support and protection mechanisms. An overwhelming majority of criminal cases are opened under Article 316 - disrespect of government or state officials, Article 278 - arousal of racial, national, or religious enmity, Article 278-1 - conducting an extremist activity, Article 278-2 - organising extremist groups, Article 278-3 - denying the positive role of Russia's peacekeeping mission.³⁹

Besides civic activists, teachers from Moldovan-administered Latin-script schools, independent journalists, and lawyers, there is another group of people who leave the region: political representatives from the former political establishment. The current political class harasses and intimidates political opponents, who are perceived as possible threats to the stability of the regime. For example, in 2017, Evgheni Shevchuk, the „former president of the PMR“, who is under investigation in several criminal cases, left the disputed region and

³⁷ Freedom House, *Transnistria Country Report*, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/transnistria/freedom-world/2021>, 26 June 2022.

³⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2002: Moldova*, 2003, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18381.htm>, 26 June 2022.

³⁹ Based on the Criminal Code of the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic

moved to the right bank of Moldova.⁴⁰ In 2016, E. Shevchuk lost the presidential elections, after losing support from the Sheriff corporation during a tense political campaign. A part of his political team and acquaintances moved either to right bank territories or to Ukraine, while others were arrested or even killed. For example, the former mayor of Tiraspol, Andrei Bezbabcenko, who fled to Ukraine, was killed in Odesa Oblast, in 2019.⁴¹ Another example which highlights the regime's aggression against critical voices is the case of Oleg Horjan, the leader of the local Communist Party.⁴² He was sentenced to five and half years of prison, after declaring that the Transnistrian region is run by a „puppet regime”. Another member of the Communist Party, Alexandr Samonii, fled the region after he was accused of incitement to extremism and conducting activities which represent a threat to “national security”.⁴³

Conclusion

This study emphasized the main characteristics of ethnic and political migration from a post-Soviet unrecognized state, locked in a state of frozen conflict. Ethnic and political migration from the Transnistrian region has been particularly influenced by neediness. While ethnic migration was more pronounced in the first decade after the emergence of the Transnistrian armed conflict, political migration continues to represent a pervasive issue.

The most important waves of ethnic migration from the separatist region took place in the early 1990s and 2000s when different countries such as Germany and Israel started to implement repatriation programs for individuals from post-Soviet countries. Ethnic migration was not motivated only by cultural ties and the desire to return to the motherland, but also by economic aspirations, different employment prospects, more predictability, and decent living and working conditions.

Political migration is an ongoing phenomenon in the Transnistrian region due to authoritarianism, human rights violations, ethnic discrimination, the absence of judicial independence, and lack of mechanisms of protection. However, it is important to mention that the first waves of political migration from post-Soviet separatist regions were motivated by armed conflicts and threats of violence. These waves of migration particularly affected women, children, and the elderly. Nowadays, the nature of political migration from the Transnistrian region has changed, as it impacts mostly political opponents, independent journalists and lawyers, Moldovan ethnics who work or study in Moldovan-administered Latin-script schools, and civic activists. Besides the above-mentioned information, it should be noted that there are other important factors behind political migration from the Transnistrian region: economic isolation, lack of employment prospects, strict control over social and community life, limited opportunities, absence of a plethora of goods and services. Individuals from unrecognized states do not have access to goods and services which people from recognized countries take for granted.

⁴⁰ Radio Europa Liberă Moldova, *Care sînt acuzațiile lansate în regiunea transnistreană la adresa lui Evgheni Șevciuk și ce riscă el*, 2017, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/28586617.html>, 25 June 2022.

⁴¹ Radio Europa Liberă Moldova, *Fostul primar al orașul Tiraspol, Andrei Bezbabcenko, a fost găsit mort la Odesa*, 2019, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/29960359.html>, 25 June 2022.

⁴² Radio Europa Liberă Moldova, *La Tiraspol se pregătește un nou dosar împotriva liderului comunist Oleg Horjan*, 2020, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/la-tiraspol-se-preg%C4%83te%C8%99te-un-nou-dosar-%C3%AEmpotriva-liderului-comunist-oleg-horjan/30799617.html>, 25 June 2022.

⁴³ Radio Europa Liberă Moldova, *Tiraspolul luptă cu vocile incomode, aplicând „legea extremismului”*, 2020, <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/30665449.html>, 25 June 2022.

This study analyzed data provided by the so-called Transnistrian Statistical Service. Even though data veracity is questionable, it represented the only source of quantitative information related to mobility patterns from the Transnistrian region. This fact emphasizes that further research is needed for a more comprehensive understanding of mobility trends from this disputed territory.

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PUTIN'S DISCOURSE ANALYSIS DURING THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

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INTRODUCTION

An analysis of the discourse of politicians is "always relevant in the case of a democratic regime where freedom of expression is guaranteed"¹, but it proves to be much more difficult in the case of speeches by politicians from autocratic or totalitarian regimes. Unfortunately, this research context is marked by a huge tragedy, namely, the War in Ukraine. However, like any scientific approach in the field of political science and communication, the present analysis has an extremely high degree of novelty, and its relevance is given by the current context and the need to fully understand the messages, but also the subtleties behind two speeches made by Putin that marked this period of the war in Ukraine, namely, the speech on the start of the invasion on 24 February and that of the partial military mobilization decision of 21 September. They are two identical speeches, but at the same time different. They are identical because of the style in which they were uttered, but they are different due to the connotation and the way they were presented.

Therefore, this research makes a speech analysis of two public interventions of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, focusing on identifying the components that define these speeches and at the same time, coming up with a series of more than interesting details and explanations about certain phrases and notions that the Russian president has uttered. The purpose of the research is to identify the components of Putin's discourse and to provide explanations and details on certain aspects of his speech. As regards the research methodology used in the scientific approach, discourse analysis plays a central role. Nor can the comparative analysis between the two discourses, to which we join a descriptive design and a descriptive-empirical approach, cannot be ignored either. Finally, here we must also mention the "filter of critical thinking and the elements of logos, ethos, and pathos specific to the rhetorical triangle."²

The research is structured in three main chapters, the first two chapters having the role of introducing the reader to the knowledge of certain elements regarding how Putin came to power, but also the knowledge of the historical and international context of the events preceding the war. Although chapters I and II have nothing to do with the discourse analysis and the main research objective, they are complementary to the scientific process and help in

¹ Ann Wennerstrom, *The Music of Everyday Speech: Prosody and Discourse Analysis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 211.

² Brian McNair, *Introduction to Political Communication*, Oxford: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2017, p. 45.

understanding both the type of politician who is Putin and the context in which he manifested himself.

I. ABOUT PUTIN AND HIS RISE TO POWER

It is not a pleasure to analyze the political trajectory of a person responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people, but for the research, we need to understand how Putin came to power, the background from which he comes, but also how he acted and thought after gaining power. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian state under Yeltsin's rule went through a difficult period economically, and "the invention of a new state destiny"³ seemed to become increasingly complicated for the Russian Federation. It was an existential crisis of a civilization that had always played a "major role in the geopolitics"⁴ and fate of Europe and the world, and as the great crises offer the opportunity for radical politicians to come to power, in the case of Russia things were the same. Towards the end of the '90s, it seemed increasingly clear the desire of Boris Yeltsin to retire from the leadership of the Russian Federation, and on December 31, 1999, he resigned, appointing Vladimir Putin as interim president. Vladimir Putin came from the front line of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, "a former operative officer of great importance for the Soviet Secret Services"⁵, now Putin was seizing the system of the leadership of a nation on the verge of a general *degringolade*. But what he did at the helm of Russia was not to put it on the path of effective state and administrative democratization, but to prepare it for a new era of Russian authoritarianism.

Putin proves himself after over 20 years of Russian rule as an authoritarian politician, "without mercy to the Political Opposition"⁶, a real dictator of the twenty-first century, but also a person whose nonchalant personal ambitions regarding Russia have been transposed into the strategy and political thinking of this country, becoming a danger to the future of the whole world. A crucial aspect of Putin's rise to power was that the *Russian oligarchy that emerged in the 90s, was consolidated as kleptocratic control of the state by a single oligarchic clan, under Putin's leadership, in the 2000s*⁷. Thus, compared to his predecessor, Putin also manages to have direct and strong control over the internal spectrum of the state, which also justifies his "ability to remain in power until now"⁸. Putin certainly falls into the category of the world's dictatorial leaders, politicians for whom voting and the democratic system no longer pose a threat to their power, and their ambitions and own thinking are transposed into the internal and external public policies that the state is committed to conducting.

By controlling the Russian administration with an iron hand, changing laws and the constitution at will, and turning votes and elections only into an eternal reconfirmation of himself, Putin is a politician without limits in terms of the plans or ambitions he wants to

³ Helen Carrère of Encausse, *Kremlin egos – A history of the Russian Empire from 1552 to today*, Bucharest: Orizonturi, 2015, p. 284.

⁴ Robert D. Kaplan, *Războiul geografiei. Ce ne spune harta despre conflictele viitoare și lupta împotriva destinului*, București: Litera, 2020, p. 339.

⁵ Heidi Blake, *Din Rusia, cu sânge – Programul de asasinate brutale ale Kremlinului și războiul secret dus de Vladimir Putin împotriva Vestului*, București: RAO, 2020, p. 328.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 235.

⁷ Timothy Snyder, *Drumul spre Nelibertate: Rusia, Europa, America*, București: Editura Trei, 2021, p. 232.

⁸ Catherine Belton, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020, p. 407.

achieve. Precisely because of this clear lack of any control of the Russian population over Putin, he no longer shows any reservations about what he wants to achieve as President of Russia, being in a continuous psychosis detached from the realities of the daily world. Because of this, Putin has a threatening, consistent style of discourse on unreal ambitions, defiance of international law or peace, and without logical and often solid arguments that give him substance. But for Vladimir Putin these things are not a problem, having no one to account for, Putin has taken over an increasingly dictatorial speech in recent years, a speech worthy of those of Kim Ir Sen, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Pol Pot, etc. Putin's speeches or his public outings have become increasingly virulent, aggressive, and increasingly directed against the West, democratic values, or what would represent an international order of the force of law, with Putin being a proponent of the law of force. In the more than two decades in which he was at the head of the Russian state, Putin "has managed to fully seize the media channels, thus having categorical control of the written, virtual press, or TV news channels"⁹.

Control over the Media has allowed Putin to turn his speeches and addresses to the Russian people into the only acceptable truth on many domestic or foreign policy issues. Throughout the leadership of the Russian Federation, as a politician and state leader, Putin has undergone major changes in discourse, starting from moderate and promising appearances and statements in the early 2000s, but reaching early 2022 speeches completely "cut off from reality"¹⁰. The transformations over the years since he was in power have turned Putin into a ruthless, unpredictable, cunning, and extremely dangerous political personality both for the Russian people and for the whole world.

II. THE HISTORICAL, GEOPOLITICAL, AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The end of the Cold War meant a definite victory of democracy against communism, but it was also a moment of intense transformation for the defeated state of the war, namely, the Russian Federation. Russia's transition throughout the 90s was a moment marked "by internal political uncertainties"¹¹, but also by confusion over the positioning of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The failure of certain reforms in the Yeltsin era led to the general discontent of the Russian oligarchy created immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But Vladimir Putin comes to power and will prove to be a proponent of a much more radical, unpredictable domestic and foreign policy and even often in flagrant disagreement with the international agreements in which Russia had engaged through the signature of its leaders. The key moment in this radical change of Putin is in the years 2001-2004 when "he begins to adopt a much more nationalist discourse"¹², with appeals to the historical past, choosing a path of revisionism, including in international relations. Of course, this research is based only on the recent events of the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, but as important as this current context, it is also to know the previous contexts. Putin's actions, discursiveness, and thinking cannot be analyzed only on an event, they must be viewed in a degree, in a historical and chronological evolution as a result of which we can notice differences in approach or, on the contrary, the preservation of certain specific elements that we will talk about next.

⁹ Angela Stent, *Putin's World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest*, New York: Twelve, 2019, p. 54.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

¹¹ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit, trăiască Rusia!*, București: Artemis, 2010, p. 64.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 74.

Not many years after, Putin began to recalculate his way of thinking and acting, and the first movement that was taking place was extremely bold and that shocked the whole world. In August 2008, "amid tensions of historical origins between Russia and Georgia"¹³, Putin ordered Russian military forces to attack Georgia, occupying nearly a third of its area and de facto taking control of two regions: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. What led Putin to make such a radical, criminal, and unaccountable decision was the desire to expand Russia's sphere of influence in the South Caucasus, but in the same vein, to block Georgia's European and Atlantic path, which was manifesting its desire to become a member of the European Union and North Atlantic Alliance. Russian interference in the internal affairs of another state, and especially through an aggressive way of occupying territories, "was a shocking change"¹⁴, and then Putin's speeches called for a sacred mission that Russia has in the South Caucasus, blocking an expansion of NATO and the EU. Of course, neither NATO nor the EU threatened Russia, but Putin used in his speeches a historical fear of the Russian people, the fear of the "decadent and dangerous West"¹⁵, a fear that he continues to exploit to this day. At the same time, Georgia's invasion was a sign of a change in the Russian paradigm regarding the system of international relations, Putin's Russia now relying on a more aggressive and revisionist policy. At the same time, the events in Georgia wanted to be interpreted by the Russian presidential administration as an important message for Ukraine, which also wanted Euro-Atlantic integration.

Less than six years after the attack on Georgia in February 2014, following Putin's presentation of his desire to block Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO, Russia is illegally annexing the Crimean Peninsula. The annexation of the peninsula was accompanied by the start of a frozen conflict in Donbas, where the Ukrainian army was to fight against rebels equipped and financially supported by the Russian Federation. The explanation of the actions that Russia has taken on the annexation of Crimea, was transmitted through a public address by Russian President Vladimir Putin, during the acceptance of the unrecognized declaration of the "Republic of Crimea" to join Russia. Putin has blamed Ukraine for the civil unrest and accused the US and the European Union of allegedly "wanting to destroy the Russian Federation"¹⁶, again using an address like those of 2008.

On the fateful day of February 24 this year, Putin again violated international order and law, peace, territorial integrity, and Ukraine's right to choose its own fate. Attacking Ukraine is the greatest crime against humanity in the last twenty years and was a desperate gesture by a man who, as I also stated in the previous chapter, has no limit or democratic control. Putin began a ruthless war in February against a country that had every legitimate right to territorial integrity and the choice of integration into NATO or the EU. Having and believing in the illusion to restoration of what was the Soviet Union or the Russian Empire, Putin began a war of aggression unimaginable and on a scale unprecedented in the contemporary history of the world. The tradition and legacy of peace in Europe after the Second World War was trampled underfoot by the actions of a man detached from reality and "who believed in a military transformation"¹⁷ of Russia into a new great superpower.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

¹⁴ Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World - Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2010 p. 111.

¹⁵ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit, trăiască Rusia!*, București: Artemis, 2010, p. 101.

¹⁶ Agnia Grigas, *Crimeea și Noul Imperiu Rus*, București: Corint, 2016, pp. 176-177.

¹⁷ Adrian Severin et al, *Războiul din Ucraina*, București: Editura RAO, 2022, p. 54.

III. ANALYSIS OF PUTIN'S SPEECH

1. Analysis of the speech of February 24, 2022, with the invasion of Ukraine.

The attack on Ukraine was accompanied by a long-televised address by President Putin, a speech addressed to the Russian citizens and military. Putin began his speech with a formula characteristic of his style of discourse: "Citizens of Russia, friends"¹⁸, trying to combine formality with an expression that would also have the appearance of a close connection between him and the people. His speech continues with a motivation of the aspects that led him to address the citizens, specifying the events in Donbas and issues related to the security of Russia. Putin has always been a proponent of speeches that center around Russia's safety, expressing his continuous concern for Russia's security. The continuation of Putin's speech is made in the discursive logic of the "guilty external enemy"¹⁹, with Putin saying that the West has created moments and occasions of uncertainty and insecurity for the Russian Federation.

He further develops his idea, blaming NATO for its intention to reach Russia's borders and become a threat to the country. To explain his position on NATO, Putin calls for a "historic understanding" between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War in which he believes that NATO should never have expanded into the formerly communist eastern bloc. This position may seem truthful, but it is contradicted by the lack of agreements or treaties whose content refers to Putin's statements, which we can therefore label as mere fictions created to support his actions. After exposing the vision of a West that has "betrayed and tricked"²⁰ Russia, Putin uses three rhetorical questions to capture attention and sympathy: "Why is this happening? Where did this insolent manner of talking down from the height of their exceptionalism, infallibility, and all-permissiveness come from? What is the explanation for this contemptuous attitude to our interests and legitimate demands?"²¹. The role of these rhetorical questions is to camouflage Russia's military actions under the guise of innocence, with the certain purpose of legitimizing. He also answers these questions, basing his answer on "the hatred of the West for Russia", thus, using a well-known leitmotif imprinted in the memory and general consciousness of the Russian people.

Like Stalin, Brezhnev, Khrushchev, Lenin, Tsar Alexander I, and many other Russian leaders have historically preferred that when the state they lead faces internal problems, they increasingly turn to blame the external enemy. Fear of the West is a constant in Russian society and culture, it has its origins in the process of Europeanization of Russia from the time of Tsar Peter the Great to the establishment of the communist regime in 1917-1921. Russian society's eternal reluctance towards the West was exploited in a Machiavellian way by Putin, using it in preparing the ground for radical measures, including in the case of the War in Ukraine.

Continuing his analysis of Putin's speech on the morning of February 24, 2022, Putin states at one point that: "As a result, the old treaties and agreements are no longer effective"²² which is nothing more than a renunciation of respect for international law, a defiance of the force of law and an announcement informing that Russia will no longer be interested in

¹⁸ The official website of the Russian Presidential Administration, Address by the President of the Russian Federation, February 24, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>, accessed on September 15.

¹⁹ Brian McNair, *Introduction to Political Communication*, Oxford: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2017, p. 102.

²⁰ The official website of the Russian Presidential Administration, Address by the President of the Russian Federation, February 24, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>, accessed on September 15.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*.

respecting the commitments it has made, generating global disorder and unrest. Putin continues his speech in a manner known in the field of critical thinking as an appeal to hypocrisy, motivating the attack on Ukraine based on US humanitarian and military interventions in Iraq, Syria, Libya, or Afghanistan, although they have no connection or similarity. Putin also uses a Red Herring, an argument that is used for confusion or distraction to shift attention away from a topic and toward a false conclusion. Red herrings usually contain an unimportant fact, idea, or event that has little relevance to the real issue. Another issue that the Russian leader raises is a historical comparison between how the USSR suffered disastrous losses because it did not invade Nazi Germany, with Putin noting that in the case of "neo-Nazi Ukraine"²³ Russia will no longer have such losses. The appeal to history and the Great Patriotic War of Defense of the USSR in-between 1941-1945 is often used by Putin to coalesce the Russian nation around him, being a trap for older people who are living with the memory of those times.

Moving forward with his speech, Putin also reiterates a subtle threat to the world, but especially to the West and the United States by specifying that: "Russia is a great nuclear power"²⁴, a threat that he continued and developed in the following speeches during the war, reaching in September 2022 to even state that Russia is ready to defend itself militarily with the nuclear weapon it holds if it feels in danger.

President Putin continues his speech by announcing the conduct of a "special military operation"²⁵ that he motivates at the expense of an undemonstrated "genocide" of Ukraine in Donbas. It is very interesting to note that Putin preferred not to use either the term invasion or war in his speech. Although the attack on Ukraine was a large-scale classical invasion to minimize the situation, Putin calls the attack a special military operation, that is, a minor action. The Russian president notes that the purpose of this operation "is not the occupation of some territories in Ukraine, but the protection of the Russians in Donbas, the denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine and the bringing to trial of those responsible for crimes against Russia."²⁶ Although in February Putin said in his speech that Russia will respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine and will not occupy territories, just 7 months after the invasion, Russia will take four more southeastern regions of Ukraine, which account for over 18% of the area of the Ukrainian state. This demonstrates to us an important aspect of Putin's style of discourse, the knowing concealment of obscure interests, the lie, and the acute and unprecedented lack of any form of decision-making transparency of Putin not only towards the whole world but also towards the Russian people themselves. Lying and deceiving through speeches thus proves to be a tool often used by Putin to deceive his enemies and raise his degree of unpredictability in terms of his actions and plans.

Also, in addition to using the lie as truth, Putin is crudely and aberrantly using the idea of "neo-Nazis", accusing the Government in Kyiv of being far-right, dictatorial, neo-Nazi, and set out against the Russian people. Putin also uses this term from the historical perspective of the struggle between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, trying hard to demonize Ukraine and its leadership as strongly as possible in front of the Russian people and the whole world. Putin addresses near the end to the Russian citizens and military, the citizens mentioning to them the superior values of the Russian culture for which they deserve

²³ *Ibidem.*

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ *Ibidem.*

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

to fight the "decadent West", and to the military telling them that he is sure of an imminent victory of this operation." At the end of the day, Russia's future is in the hands of its people,"²⁷ Putin says, attempting yet another patriotic call by the entire civil society to support the war for the sake of "the safety and security of the mother country."²⁸

Putin's speech by which he consecrated the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a detached and classic one to the discourses of the world's dictators, trying through lies, manipulation, attacks on the West, and historical or national appeals to gain public support internally for criminal actions, and externally to motivate them as legitimate and in self-defense. Putin is not interested in his speeches being transparent toward Russian citizens or the international community, and his address on February 24, 2022, demonstrates that he has no remorse for hiding such heinous crimes against the Ukrainian people. His indirect call to hatred, the threat to the world with nuclear weapons, and his embodiment into an innocent character, lead us to believe that Putin may have reached a very high level of unconsciousness, being devoid of any logic and reason in many of the decisions he makes.

2. Speech on partial military deployment on 21 September 2022

Just 7 months after the Ukraine invasion, the war's situation became "increasingly uncertain for Russia"²⁹. Kyiv's major counteroffensive on Russia had extremely positive effects, with the Ukrainians succeeding with the help of the armament delivered by the West to liberate many territories from the occupation. Aware of the danger of losing the war, Putin made a crucial decision that he announced on September 21, 2022, namely, partial military mobilization to increase the number of soldiers to be sent to the front in Ukraine. Historically, losing the war in Ukraine would mean Putin's political end, and this happens in the case of almost all Russian leaders who have ever lost wars. So, it's interesting to look at this speech, to see what the style changes are, and to do a symmetrical comparative analysis between the speech announcing the war in February and the one in September that announced partial military mobilization in a very disturbing context for Putin.

In his speech on September 21, Putin preferred to address himself with the formula of "friends"³⁰, wanting to address the Russians more informally, a way that would demonstrate the "attachment" between the leader and the citizens. Putin begins his speech this time on a different note than in February, making a real appeal to emotion by saying that "today I am addressing you – all citizens of our country, people of different generations, ages, and ethnicities, the people of our great Motherland, all who are united by great historical Russia"³¹. This betrays Putin's desperation in the race to gain public support, a race he realizes he is losing after every day of the war. As in his speech on February 24, this time too, Putin prefers to present his arguments and motivations before presenting his decision itself. The argument that Putin uses in explaining the decision of mobilization is mostly identical to that presented in the speech on the launch of the special operation. The mobilization decision is based on the same idea of the danger represented by the West to Russia, the protection of Russian citizens of the two unrecognized people's republics of Donbas, but also "the preservation and protection of Russia's territorial integrity". Putin talks about the "heroism" of Russian soldiers

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia: The Rise of Putin and the Age of Fake News*, New York: Penguin Books, 2022, p. 298.

²⁹ Adrian Severin et al, *Războiul din Ucraina*, București: Editura RAO, 2022, p. 54.

³⁰ The official website of the Russian Presidential Administration, Address by the President of the Russian Federation, September 21, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69390>, accessed on September 22.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

and volunteers fighting in Ukraine, praising the progress and successes that the army has made in the "denazification" of the Ukrainian state. The lack of logic can thus be easily discerned in simple analytical thinking by the question: If you win this war and praise the successes of the armed forces, why would you need more soldiers? It is, unfortunately, a question to which Putin knows the answer, it is a truth hidden and presented in another form by propaganda in Moscow and by the messages and public outings of the Russian president.

Another piece of evidence that betrays Putin's anxiety lies in the statement that "we are fighting for the afflicted, for those who have left their homes and gone through genocide", because he believes that through such statements, he could gain support and sympathy, or at least try to explain in any way partial mobilization. Although in his February speech he recalled that he would not in any way reach the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Putin declared in his speech, "all his support" for the secessionist referendums within the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian Federation, thus betraying his statements from 7 months ago and proving that he had reached an incredible degree of unpredictability in actions and thinking.

In the next part of the speech, Putin tries to explain that "Russia is not only fighting Against Ukraine but fighting against the entire West,"³² thus wanting to explain why he resorted to partial mobilization and continuing by saying that "In this situation, I consider it necessary to take the following decision, which is fully adequate to the threats we are facing. More precisely, I find it necessary to support the proposal of the Defence Ministry and the General Staff on partial mobilization in the Russian Federation to defend our Motherland and its sovereignty and territorial integrity and to ensure the safety of our people and people in the liberated territories." Putin speaks of proportionality between decision-making and threats, giving the impression of using an element of logos, but his problem is that Russia itself is the aggressor state and because of that, his argument is a major error.

Realizing the major role of the West's military aid in support of Ukraine and contributing to Kyiv's victories, Putin tries in a completely desperate gesture to once again threaten the US and the EU by using a nuclear weapon, noting that this "is not a joke"³³.

Putin ends his speech on the same line of the "glorious historical past", which is becoming less and less credible in Russian civil society. But before that he explains that only professional soldiers and reservists will be recruited, which will also prove to be a lie towards the end of September when the Russian population will take to the streets and students, young people or medically unfit people will be forced to enlist in the army. The reaction of Russian civil society, Russian protests, and movements against Putin will demonstrate the failure of this type of dictatorial discourse. Visibly compared to Putin's public appearance in February, his appearance in September betrayed his feelings of despair and distrust. Unable to do anything but threaten the West and hide the truth from ordinary Russian people, the Russian president's speech in September proved to be a lamentable failure in trying to capture domestic support or scare the world with threats of the use of nuclear weapons.

CONCLUSIONS

Putin's speech is built on distorted elements of the Rhetorical Triangle, and he always uses gestures and voice changes to emphasize certain things. Not infrequently, Putin resorts

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*.

to the intentional use of threats or argumentation mistakes such as the Red Herring, the appeal to the nation, the appeal to emotion, the appeal to hypocrisy, the appeal to cultural prestige, but also rhetorical questions.

To argue his actions, Putin changes the historical truth according to Russia's interests. False accusations against the West are part of his type of discourse. It is very consistent in terms of the leitmotif of "Russia's security" or the exploitation of the "fear of the West" that it uses every time it has the opportunity. The idea of fear of an external enemy, present in almost all the speeches of dictators and used as an excuse for the problems of a state is also used by Putin for the same purpose and idea of action.

An important behavioral change occurs with the change of context. Following the major defeats of the Russian army in Ukraine, Putin moves from a more formal and sober speech (the one in February) to one more animated by the address to the nation (the one in September) in which he shows his attachment to the soldiers and demands a moment of national unity.

Analyzing the style of discourse, we can certainly say that Putin turns out to be an extremely intelligent person when it comes to his public appearances, having a very energetic speech, completed with national elements, and symbols, but accompanied by a large extent of misinformation, false accusations or the attempt to manipulate citizens. However, this kind of discourse is becoming, more and more quickly, a lamentable failure, and in the wake of the unprecedented protests by Russian civil society against the mobilization, the invincible basis of Putin's power is faltering in a way that was never before.

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THE “WAR ON TERROR” IN XINJIANG AND THE ISSUE OF UYGHUR MINORITY

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Introduction

In recent years, the situation of the Uyghur's community in China is increasingly publicized due to abuses by the Chinese administration. However, until the present moment we do not have a concrete presentation of the situation in question, due to the lack of transparency on the part of China, or in a more correct discourse from a political point of view, the Chinese state wants its sovereignty to be respected and no external part to be involved in solving internal differences. Due to the fact that there is not much data that can be analysed in this context, in the debate on the situation of the Uyghurs we encounter a series of distinct perceptions on the evolution of events in Xinjiang. The Uyghur's diaspora, which is extremely active in foreign countries, accuses China of a veritable genocide against the population of northwest China. The Western community is increasingly taking an accusatory stance towards China and its abuses of the Uyghur community through backbreaking work and inadequate wages. China, on the other hand, denies these accusations, but admits the existence of cultural differences and wants to fix them in the near future, but also wants to reduce security problems in the region by reducing the terrorist issues.

Thus, in this research paper, I want to answer to the following question: Why did the international community tacitly accept the situation of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang on the basis of a "terror" discourse promoted by China? To do this we will analyse two variables:

- Those of an internal affair: what concerns the identity construction of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region, the evolution of the counter-terrorist discourse promoted by China, and finally the presentation of the current situation and the status of this community.
- Those of an external affair: the reaction of the international community to the Chinese counter-terrorist discourse and the position on the abuses in the Xinjiang region.

My approach in this paper will be a socio-constructivist one in order to understand how the international community's perception of this case was built. We will analyse the interactions between international entities to understand how the anarchy of international relations has allowed the anti-terrorism discourse to be used by China to abusively solve domestic problems.

Who are the Uyghurs?

The Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group living in the Xinjiang region of China. Although they are under the administration of the Chinese state, they do not admit belonging to the centralist policies carried out by China and actively campaign for the independence of the region. Moreover, this disparity between the Chinese administration and the Uyghur

population is not only political, but also has significant cultural implications.¹ The conflict between the two sides is based on a difference over the interpretation of the Xinjiang region. While the People's Republic of China considers the Xinjiang region an important part of its territory, the Uyghurs are de jure part of the Chinese administration, but de facto consider the region to be their homeland, called East Turkestan. The dispute for this territory has a very long history, since before our era. China has been trying to dominate this region since the Han Dynasty. Even though East Turkestan has been under the auspices of the Chinese state for many times, through military occupation or payment of tribute, the identity of the Uyghurs has remained constant. Thus, we ask what factors have allowed the Uyghurs to remain a persistent and well-defined identity in the face of the great Chinese state to this day?

The construction of the Uyghur's identity in the Xinjiang region is based on a combination of factors related to both the Uyghur population and external factors, especially those aimed at China's relationship with this region. The Uyghurs were a nomadic people², and for this reason they were not attached to static constructions such as cities or villages, and each time they were occupied by the Chinese they could reorganize within a reasonable time without affecting their continuity in the region. Another factor is the fact that the Chinese state did not have a continuity in dominating this territory which it called the "Western Regions" in the past, due to various problems such as the change of dynasties or rivals who wanted to seize the territory populated by Uyghurs such as the Xiongnu or First Turkish Khanate.

Another important element in Uyghur culture is belonging to Islam. The adoption of this religion by the Uyghur population also depended on a period when the Chinese state was weakened following a defeat in the year 751 in the Talas region against the Arab Islamists. Following this defeat, the Uyghur people continued to consolidate their identity through two important elements. The first was that through this stage they came into contact with the Muslim religion, which would later come to predominate among the population of Xinjiang. Second, the context of the defeat allowed the Uyghurs to expand their influence in the region and again resist Chinese people. Also, this moment was the peak of this people because the Uyghur Khanate was established for almost a century, a form of organization that favoured the clear outline of the Uyghur identity and that did not allow them to be assimilated by Chinese culture. But, as in other episodes in the past, the Uyghurs did not last long against other peoples in the region, being defeated by the Tibetans and other khanates such as that of the Karluks. The decisive defeat that destroyed the Uyghur Khanate was in 843 before the army led by the Tang dynasty.

Even more tumultuous work followed for the Uyghurs, as they constantly had to fend off attacks by others in the region and resist the administration Chinese who wanted to have more and more influence in this territory. A new challenge for the continuity of the Uyghurs was the contact with the Manchurians, who deeply studied Turkestan of the East in order to establish an efficient administration. They managed to maintain a state of equilibrium in this territory, even as they faced the desire for control from the Qing dynasty. In order to ensure their resistance to China they tried to maintain diplomatic relations with Russia and England but still, they could not cope with the power of the Chinese state. After the removal of the Manchurians, the Qing dynasty established its dominance much more clearly over this

¹ Konuralp Ercilasun, "Introduction: The Land, the People, and the Politics in a Historical Context" in Güljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun and Konuralp Ercilasun (eds), *The Uyghur Community Diaspora, Identity and Geopolitics*, Ankara: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 1-16.

² Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 23-39

territory and wanted to be introduced as a part of the Chinese state. To do this, China no longer governs this region indirectly, but is directly involved in the government in order to ensure that it fully respects China's geo-strategic interests. An extreme moment important took place in 1884, when East Turkestan was officially named Xinjiang. This is a symbolic moment that formalizes the dispute of Chinese and Uyghur perception of these regions, for the Chinese East Turkestan ceased to exist and the Xinjiang region appeared as part of the Chinese state.

The Uighurs do not admit this transition even to this day, and from that moment they began a struggle for independence from China. In 1933, their struggle took shape in the declaration independence of the Republic of East Turkestan. Their independence movement did not last long, due to pressure from the Soviet Union and China, and the government was dissolved at only one year after its establishment. A period of instability and Chinese rule followed until, again in 1944 they declared their independence, this time much more problematic due to internal conflicts. And five years later, following an agreement between the USSR and the new communist government in China, Xinjiang clearly belonged to the Chinese administration and the Uyghurs had no form of support to resist these external pressures. From 1955 to the present, the Uyghur people live in an autonomous region of the Chinese administration despite any manifestations of independence, but their identity remains present within the Xinjiang region as a distinctive element in the Chinese central administration.

Constructing a Discourse of 'Terror' in Xinjiang

Earlier we could observe that the tensions in Xinjiang are influenced by a historical narrative of who rightfully owns this region. On the one hand, we have the Chinese state which considers this territory as an integrated part of its administration, and which must submit to the central policies coming from Beijing. On the other side, there is the Uyghur population, who culturally identify with this territory and consider East Turkestan as their form of organization. Thus, we are witnessing a dispute over the region between the two sides, who invoke arguments of different natures, political and cultural, to express their interest in what has recently become the conflict in Xinjiang.

Another important aspect related to China is that as many tense situations related to territories or regions within it, we will discover as many approaches as possible to these internal problems. In the case of the situation in Xinjiang, China managed to isolate this issue from a possible reaction of the international community, by outlining an internal security problem generated by the Uyghur terrorist movements. Through this positioning towards the Xinjiang population, the Chinese authorities have been able to legitimize a significant military presence and control in the region. Even more, China managed to create a good image of China in this dispute through a speech of solidarity with the "War on Terror" started by the United States of America following the tragic events of September 9, 2001. But, in order to be able to deconstruct this image of China as a state facing terrorism it is important to analyse the events that formed the basis of these statements.³

³ Sean R. Roberts, *The war on the Uyghurs China's Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority*, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020, pp. 63-83.

In creating this security problem through terrorist movements, the People's Republic of China made use of two international factors. First of all, the conferences of the "Shanghai Five", through which, together with the other members, they clearly campaigned in the region against separatism and national movements that wanted to obtain independence. In itself, the Uyghur people have been an internal problem for other member states of this organization, states such as Kazakhstan, which deal with the Uyghur diaspora within the state. Within these conferences, China took over the narrative regarding terrorist movements, which it later presented to the international community. Through this international anti-separatist cooperation organization, China gained the necessary support in the region to fight the Xinjiang territorial issue and was able to outline a narrative to be presented to the international community.

The second factor was represented by the fight against terrorism at the global level. Terrorism was an extremely complex security problem, and its very nature was favourable to those who wanted to use it to achieve their own national interests in relation to certain minority groups. Terrorist groups are a very difficult actor to identify, and this aspect allows authoritarian states to use this situation as a political tool. This has also been China's strategy towards the Uyghur population in recent history.

The Uyghurs have an extremely active diaspora, which seeks to promote their interests and issues at the level of the international community. Breaking out of the logic of the Cold War, it represented an extraordinary opportunity for them to draw the attention of the Western bloc to the problems they were facing. But amid the impact of terrorist attacks like the one on September 9, China has used this opportunity to create a negative image of the Uyghurs in the international community. Initially, they submitted to the UN Security Council a list of Uyghur terrorist organizations that are in the separatist movements in the diaspora. In the first instance, this list was inconclusive because it did not provide clear evidence connecting the activity of these national Uyghur movements to terrorist groups.⁴

In its second attempt to portray the Uyghurs as a terrorist threat, China had much greater success that relied on two key factors. The first was to connect the "East Turkestan Islamic Movement" group with the Al-Qaeda group, based on the fact that it was based in Afghanistan. The correlation of the ETIM group with Afghanistan, which at that time was seen as a state highly involved in the activities of Al-Qaeda, gave significant credibility to the Chinese security discourse. The second factor was the correlation of everything from ETIM to a series of terrorist attacks in the Xinjiang region, which were not officially recognized by any terrorist group. Again, although the exposed variables were not exact, they seemed highly credible by associating the terrorist attacks in Xinjiang and an extremist Uyghur group on the territory of Afghanistan.

Another significant event in the construction of the terrorist threat was the online activity promoted by ETIM, following the change of the organization's name to "The Turkistan Islamic Party" in 2004. With the transition from ETIM to TIP, this organization began to be extremely active in the online environment through clips with messages specific to terrorist organizations, which promote extreme national ideas and separatism. The tensest moment was during the Olympic Games in Beijing when they announced the organization of public attacks on the participants in the sports events. This episode once again drew the attention of the international community to the alleged terrorist activities that threaten the Chinese state. Amidst these threats, China launched a new set of counter-terrorism measures that justified

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 84-96.

an even greater presence in Xinjiang and control over the Uyghur population. Chinese authorities have blamed Uyghur separatist movements for a terrorist attack during Beijing sports events in the city of Kuqa, 3,000 kilometres from the Chinese capital. The Beijing Olympics were not directly affected by the TIP except at the declaratory level, as there was only a short series of bus bombings in Xinjiang, and this did not create a state of international panic, as these events they were portrayed as part of the conflict in the autonomous region and not as an attack on international security.

The Chinese state has publicly denounced TIP as the main culprit in these attacks, although they have been unable to prove this connection with any hard evidence all along. Also, against the background of the rise of TIP in the online environment and through a separatist speech, China⁵ again accused this organization of being involved in the protests in the Xinjiang region in 2009. Following the mass protests in the city of Urumqi, China has arrested members of the Uyghur community based on a possible terrorist threat.

Since 2007, terrorist attacks have multiplied in the region and have become more and more clearly an extreme separatist movement against Chinese centralism. Many of these were dealt extremely quickly by the Chinese authorities and did not cause huge damage or casualties. Another aspect of these episodes was China's lack of transparency in dealing with them. Although often not directly claimed by the TIP, China portrayed them as an organized terrorist cadre threatening the safety of citizens. Although the files of these events were not extremely conclusive and were mostly classified. But for sure, all these events have been extremely useful for China to maintain its security issue narrative and continue the series of anti-terrorism policies in Xinjiang.

Throughout this period, the academic literature could not give a clear verdict on the situation in Xinjiang and the connection with a terrorist group located in Afghanistan. The main reason being the lack of clear information on the group and its alleged terrorist activity. China continued to wage a real fight against terrorism in Xinjiang. Against the background of counter-terrorism measures, the Chinese authorities have militarized the borders of Xinjiang, thus significantly isolating the Uyghur population in this region. The international community could not take a clear stand on the Xinjiang case because of this narrative of security against terrorism. By tacitly accepting the fact that there are separatist Uyghur groups that are considered a terrorist threat, China has succeeded in creating a favourable paradigm in the context of the situation in Xinjiang. Why exactly favourable? Because the only ones who could significantly challenge the terrorist implications of the Uyghur diaspora would be the Uyghurs themselves, but by accepting the narrative proposed by China, it has managed to internalize the problems in Xinjiang and be the only one to provide the international community with information on the evolution of the conflict.

Thus, the international community allowed China to single-handedly define the solution to the dispute with the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, by indirectly categorizing them as part of the terrorist security problem, without relying on concrete evidence. Moreover, it did not react to the abuses in Xinjiang and did not pursue the respect of human rights in this context. If there are currently abuses against the Uyghur population, the international community is partly to blame for not understanding the cultural essence of this conflict and allowing China to construct a security issue favorable to the Chinese authoritarian regime.

⁵ Sarah Tynen, "Islamophobia, Terrorism and the Uyghurs: When Minorities in China Find Themselves on the Wrong Side of the Counterterrorism Discourse" in *Geopolitics*, Volume 27, Issue 1, 2021, pp. 360-365, doi: 10.1080/14650045.2021.1924939, accessed in 28.12.2021.

The current situation

Up to this point we have been able to observe the historical and even archetypal context of the Uyghur community with the Chinese state. In recent history we could observe how China constructed an anti-terrorist discourse in the region and how the international community tacitly accepted this narrative. What we are interested in next part is to analyse how the previously presented events have affected the reality in which the Uyghurs now live inside China. We will also look at how China has handled this issue of multiculturalism in the context of the Xinjiang population. To carry out this analysis I will consider two variables: the status of the Xinjiang region within the Chinese administration and the political-legal status of the Uyghurs.

Status of Xinjiang region

After being incorporated by China, the region became autonomous and tried to maintain a balance with the Uyghur community living in that territory. The autonomous status was mostly respected until the early 1990s, and with the start of the terrorist narrative in Xinjiang, China significantly changed its attitude towards this region. Amid the discourse of maintaining security and fighting terrorism, China has created a complex surveillance mechanism for the Uyghur population.

China's population surveillance system is highly controversial in the international community due to an alleged attack on individual freedom. Even though China has generally justified this surveillance mechanism as a security measure, it has also been used against its citizens. And the most illustrative example is the use of this surveillance system in Xinjiang⁶. Massive investments have made this system extremely extensive in the region where the Uyghurs live and was used as a tool of coercion against them. This system has been used structurally to create profiles of potential terrorists. Again, we can observe that the use of the narrative of terrorism was a factor that created abusive situations in the context of Uyghur separatism.

The Xinjiang region has significant geopolitical importance for China due to important economic aspects such as: natural resources (oil, natural gas and especially cotton) and extremely cheap labour. The natural resources make this region extremely important for fuelling China's massive manufacturing, but Xinjiang also plays an important role because of the "Silk Road" that goes through this region to the west. And in the case of labour, we have to consider its low price and conditions that can be an alarming sign of abuse.

Another defining aspect of this region in this conflict is the creation of re-education centers, which in the Chinese strategy are described as centers for the integration of Uyghurs into society. However, the debate surrounding them is extremely wide due to accusations of abuse of the Uyghurs and massive human rights violations. Precisely for this reason, the second point of analysis is dedicated to the political-legal situation of the Uyghur population.

⁶ James Leibold, "Surveillance in China's Xinjiang Region: Ethnic Sorting, Coercion, and Inducement" in *Journal of Contemporary China*, Volume 29, Issue 121, 2019, pp. 46-60, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1621529> accessed in 3.01.2022.

The political-legal status of the Uyghurs

The Uyghurs are recognized as an ethnic minority within the People's Republic of China, and this status should ensure that their rights are respected by the Chinese authorities. In recent years, the situation of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang has become increasingly worse. The Chinese government is accused of a series of abuses against this community, although these are not officially recognized. Exactly as I said before, the Uyghurs are recognized as a minority by the Chinese state, and *de jure* they enjoy the rights and freedoms of a minority, but *de facto* they are subjected to a series of abuses by the Xi Jinping administration. Thus, we wonder what the connection between the Chinese leader's strategy and the situation of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang is?

Beginning in 2014, President Xi Jinping⁷ began to talk about reasserting China in the international context and planning a grand strategy for the future of the state. From that moment, China began to be very clearly an emerging power and definitely wanted long-term strategies to ensure China's great power status in international relations. And one of these objectives is the "Silk Road" initiative, which will create an extremely important regional economic link and which will strengthen its power as an economic actor in the region. However, this road has a significant part that passes through the Xinjiang region, and the tense situation in the region would represent an instability factor for the successful implementation of strategic ambitions. Precisely for this reason, amid the implementation of this initiative and the desire to maintain stability in the region, the Xi Jinping administration has significantly changed the strategy of approaching the regions. Thus, since that moment the Uyghurs in Xinjiang have been subjected to repeated abuses and serious violations of human rights, and the international community did not learn until recently that this situation is not only provides anti-terrorists actions in the region and the lack of transparency on the part of China.

Against the backdrop of the fight against terrorism, China established "re-education centres"⁸ to which more than a million Uyghurs were sent. Within these centres, Uyghurs were subjected to forced labour, sterilization, prohibition of religious practices, and even a form of resocialization to eliminate cultural differences through political indoctrination against Chinese centralism. When the first accusations about the situation in Xinjiang appeared, the central authorities claimed that it was just some educational centres that help the Uyghur community to integrate into the labour market, but the statements of those who went through these experiences contradict these claims. In addition to these centres, Uyghurs are also oppressed by the prohibition of religious practices, the use of abusive surveillance and sterilization, all measures to reduce the population in the region. Thus, at the moment China is conducting a broad policy of abusive resocialization of the Uyghurs and the elimination of the separatist movement. All these abuses are justified by the fight against terrorism, and the international community has not acted because of the tacit acceptance of this speech and the invocation of the sovereignty of the Chinese state.

⁷ Anna Hayes, "Interwoven 'Destinies': The Significance of Xinjiang to the China Dream, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the Xi Jinping Legacy" in *Journal of Contemporary China*, Volume 29, Issue 121, 2019, pp. 31-45, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1621528>, accessed in 3.01.2022.

⁸ Sean R. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-235.

The reaction of the international community

Given that there were reports of abuses, even if it was not a certainty that we were talking about a genocide, why did the international community not take a position on the situation in Xinjiang? We could consider the main culprit to be the Chinese state due to the lack of transparency and the attempt to cover up the situation. But the main element that China used to legitimize the strong intervention in the region inhabited by the Uyghurs was the terrorist threat, and for this reason the international community is part of the humanitarian problem of the Uyghurs, because the international discourse against terrorism is extremely permissive, especially in the context of an authoritarian state.

To elaborate the problem of the terrorist narrative we can consider Wendt's premise regarding the context of international relations, namely: "Anarchy is what states make of it."⁹. Through the socio-constructivist theory of Alexander Wendt, the international community, although anarchic, draws its own rules, norms and values through the interactions between the actors that compose it. This is precisely the case with the problem of international terrorism. By taking a totally offensive position towards this problem, the international community accepted this "War on Terror" started by the United States of America following the attack on September 9, 2001, and thus a set of extremely permissive practices in the fight against terrorism. The antagonism of terrorist movements created episodes in the history of international relations, in which states abused these practices, even more, they were not sanctioned afterwards. Even the US, which played a key role in creating this security problem, was accused of abusing the discourse against terrorism in Iraq, but the international community did not have any firm reaction.

Earlier, we could note that China also joined this anti-terrorism discourse to reduce separatist tensions in Xinjiang. The international community has accepted the Chinese narrative and has been less vigilant in monitoring the humanitarian situation in Xinjiang. Amid an antagonized security issue in the sphere of international relations, China created an abusive regime in Xinjiang to suppress the Uyghur minority. The combination of the anti-terrorist discourse with the lack of transparency and the assertion of China as an emerging power created a real Trojan horse, because in the external relations, China claimed to fight terrorist movements while abusing the Uyghurs in the region.

Xi Jinping's administration continues to pursue an oppressive policy against the people of Xinjiang, and the international community should take a much firmer stance on this situation. But, to do this, there needs to be an extremely sensitive paradigm shift in the international community, to be able to officially declare that the situation of the Uyghurs is a humanitarian problem and requires the intervention of the international community. In the following we will analyze a series of obstacles that the international community will encounter in trying to combat the conflict in Xinjiang.

Chinese sovereignty and BRISC support for this principle of non-intervention

In international relations, China is one of the great powers that promotes national sovereignty and respect for the principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs to maintain

⁹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics" in *International Organization*, Volume 46, Issue 02, 1992, pp. 391-425, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027764>, accessed in 5.01.2022.

peace and stability. For this very reason, it would be extremely difficult to formalize the situation of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang as a humanitarian problem. Moreover, not only China supports this principle, but also the BRICS bloc. So, even in the hypothetical case that China could not invoke this right of non-intervention, there would be actors with whom China has friendly relations that would support Chinese sovereignty, notably Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Demystifying anti-terrorism security

In order to condemn China for genocidal actions in Xinjiang, the international community needs a prompt response against China's anti-terrorist discourse. Given the current status of this international security issue, there is a need for a reaffirmation of how the situation of terrorist movements is managed, as the international community is permissive in combating them. In itself, there is a need for states, including Western ones, that have taken part in the "War on Terror" to make a *mea culpa* for the abuses committed in this asymmetric war. A new approach is needed, which reduces the extremes of this discourse, and which updates the terrorist security dimension.

Economic pressures

Although the main mechanisms to fight against Chinese abuses in Xinjiang will be economic sanctions, we have to ask how effective they will be and whether the international community will have a unified position in the event of their introduction. China is an essential actor in the global economy, and the attempt to economically sanction this giant would have significant repercussions for the entire economy. Precisely for this reason, certain states that are dependent on economic relations with China will be exposed to enormous pressure in the event of the need to implement economic sanctions. Thus, we see how complicated the management of the humanitarian situation of the Uyghurs is, and the international community has few options to sanction China.

Conclusions

The tensions in Xinjiang have a very distant historical value and are a persistent problem for the Chinese administration. However, this is not a justification in the context of abuses and an extreme approach in dealing with the separatist movements of the Uyghurs. We would expect the UN, the international community or even the Western bloc to have a reaction to the rights violations and the humanitarian problem in the Chinese region, but so far, we have seen very little action in this regard and limited to the declarative level.

In addition to the lack of humanitarian action in the region, I was able to observe during this work how the international community tacitly accepted the main justification for the abuses in Xinjiang. China's fight against terrorism is asymmetric compared to the evidence of a real security problem in the region. Next, we witness speeches from the Xi Jinping administration claiming that everything that happens in the region is in the interest of security. And the international community must bear some of the blame because it bought into the Chinese anti-terrorist narrative and created a far too lax approach to this security issue without clear rules/norms to constrain these policies or sanctioning mechanisms in the event of abuse.

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WOULD A UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION SOLVE THE DEMOCRATIC PROBLEM IN MYANMAR?

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Brief understanding of the political heritage

Myanmar's entire history after gaining independence revolves around various military governments and even during the democratization period, the army has never been absent from decision-making. The people of Myanmar have precedent in their fight for democracy and they may achieve it again. However, if the power of the military is not eliminated, the world may witness a never-ending circle of tensions between citizens and armed forces. Additionally, the human suffering certain minority groups endure may remain unsolved. Therefore, when addressing all these complex elements, the paper will be structured into six parts: firstly, a contextual explanation of the democratic problem and its roots, secondly addressing the current events and how a peacekeeping operation can be a viable solution. The following step is defining what is meant by a peacekeeping operation, while also explaining the roots for the disastrous political problem. Lastly, other peacekeeping models will be analyzed and applied to Myanmar for the purpose of creating a detailed conclusion and assessment regarding efficiency.

Since its independence in 1945, Myanmar has experienced multiple political experiments, with diverse ideologies. The common thread for all of these is the presence of a strong military influence in one form or another.¹ The army is closely linked to the country's independence movement and thus, remained a symbol. The creation of the Union of Burma shortly after the Panglong Agreement² gave a reminder to the ruling bodies how ethnically diverse the newly formed state is. This is the context in which Ne Win, a member of the Burmese Independence Army (BIA)³ at that time, orchestrated the first coup d'état, one from many more to come. The support his Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) gained from the military would be difficult to explain in other parts of the world, where the usually conservative army is skeptical towards such a radical movement. But the explanation lies in the facts that the first BIA, which started the fight for independence was formed from

¹ Roger Lee Huang, "Re-thinking Myanmar's political regime: military rule in Myanmar and implications for current reform", *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 19(3), 2013, pp. 247–261.

² See https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MM_470212_Panglong%20Agreement.pdf, last accessed on 20.01.2022.

³ Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, politics, and political thought in Myanmar*, Cambridge University Press, 1st Edition, 2016, pp. 22-36.

communist groups, led by Aung San.⁴ For Myanmar, the communist movement was simultaneous with the fight for self-determination. Thus, one can assume that the political ideology has been just an accessory of the ruling military. The 8888 Protests brought in the front-line young students, ready for change and led by the famous Aung San Sun Kyi and her National League of Democracy (NLD).⁵ But despite a significant and historic display of civil implication, the unrest gave room for another military junta to step forward. General Saw Maung with his State-Law-Order and Restauration Council (SLORC) simulated change and free election, changing in fact only the name to Myanmar.

But the people's desire for democracy was already seeded. Therefore, the junta became self-aware that although not ready to give up power, it should however not represent the face of power. The attempts at a disciplined democracy failed and NLD was ready to take over after experiencing major electoral support. But the army never disappeared. They retained certain privileges: occupy 25% of the parliamentary seats, have an almost monopoly on the country's businesses and lead the regions.⁶ This is why the international community could hardly explain the Rohingya crisis that emerged during the lead of a free and democratic government, all while San Sun Kyi seemed unwilling or unable to condemn the actions of the military. Many believe that exactly the threat NLD represented for their political position started the coup.⁷

Rather than a succession of events, the current context represents the political culture of Myanmar, a culture that is transcending between military "disciplined democracy", Western "rights-based democracy" and Buddhist "moral democracy".⁸ As a consequence, democracy may always have a specific and different meaning for Myanmar as for other South Asian countries. If one admits that democracy is "an idea formulated and put into practice in different places using locally shared cultural or religious values",⁹ the raised question is whether one can truly talk about a democratic problem. A democratic problem from whose perspective on democracy? Nevertheless, when there is no shared culture and a deep problem in accepting common values in that place, there is objectively a democratic problem in the sense of the definition. This is the problem Myanmar is facing.

Evolution and demand for an international response

The current events of the humanitarian crisis that keeps evolving day by day, are to a great extent recognized by almost all international actors. Action is demanded and the international community's formal responses seem insufficient.¹⁰ Day after day, the situation evolves into a civil war,¹¹ making the possibility of an UN peacekeeping mission more plausible. Besides deterrence, commitment, and information, general recognized

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ David I. Steinberg, *The Military in Burma/Myanmar: On the Longevity of Tatmadaw Rule and Influence*, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TRS6_21.pdf, last accessed on 16.01.2022.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

¹⁰ Martin Mennecke, Ellen E. Stensrud, "The Failure of the International Community to Apply R2P and Atrocity Prevention in Myanmar", *Global Responsibility to Protect*, Vol. 13(2-3), 2021, pp. 111-130.

¹¹ Nicholas Farrelly, Adam Simpson, *A year after Myanmar's coup, the military still lacks control and the country is sliding into an intractable civil war*, <https://theconversation.com/a-year-after-myanmars-coup-the-military-still-lacks-control-and-the-country-is-sliding-into-an-intractable-civil-war-174766>, last accessed on 16.01.2022.

mechanisms¹² by which one can determine the favorable outcome of a mission, this paper will also focus on the effects such a mission can offer in the long run, for the recovery of Myanmar's political situation that keeps affecting the population. Since the future of peacekeeping operations has been intensely debated and the international community has grown critical on the recent passivity of the UN,¹³ it is important to determine the extent to which a new peacekeeping mission can help in multidimensional aspects a state tormented by conflict has to face. Considering the particularities of the ethnic and civil conflict taking place, the usual high-involvement measure is a UN form of intervention.

Understanding the meaning of a peacekeeping operation

The first problem is defining what a peacekeeping operation is, in order to determine its effectiveness on the present case. From a legalist and technical perspective, under the umbrella of UN interventions, peace keeping, peace enforcement and peace making are strictly divided terms.¹⁴ However, the UN Charter does not address these terms specifically, but rather incorporates them under the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P), from Chapter VI and VII. All these forms of involvement are rather stages in which peacekeeping – in a larger meaning – has evolved and slowly seized greater attributions.¹⁵ Gareth Evans, one of the founders of the concept, explains that the R2P should include preventive action and reconstruction measures, diplomatic isolation, sanctions and embargoes, ICC, and other response measures.¹⁶ The practice has shown that these types of involvement often blend in, consisting of multiple phases. All these phases are essential in building lasting peace. For instance, at the end of the peacekeeping mission in East Timor, the UN assisted the political and administrative transition in building a state structure, based on human rights and democracy.¹⁷ For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to peacekeeping in a larger sense, as a broad, multidimensional mechanism, the way it is defined by Lise Morjé Howard: "*The most oft-used mechanism is United Nations (UN) multidimensional peacekeeping. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations endeavor to rebuild the basic institutions of the post-civil war state. These missions are large and complex, involving sizable political, military, police, refugee, humanitarian, electoral, and often human rights components.*"¹⁸

¹² Vincenzo Bove, Andrea Ruggeri, "Kinds of blue. Diversity in U.N. peacekeeping missions and civilian protection", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46(3), 2015, pp. 681–700; Andrea Ruggeri, Han Dorussen, Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, "Winning the peace locally: UN peacekeeping and local conflict", *International Organization*, Vol. 71(1), 2016, pp. 163–185.

¹³ Jean-Pierre Lacroix, *Opinion: UN peacekeeping at a crossroads*, <https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-un-peacekeeping-at-a-crossroads-92440>, last accessed on 16.01.2022.

¹⁴ Roderick von Lipsey, *Breaking the Cycle*, St. Martin's Press, 1st Edition, 1997.

¹⁵ Ronald Hatto, "From peacekeeping to peacebuilding: The evolution of the role of the United Nations in peace operations", *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 95(891-892), 2013, pp. 495-515.

¹⁶ Zhu Xianghui, "New Modes of Non-Military Intervention under the Responsibility to Protect: The Case of the Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine State", *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 1, 2019, hereinafter Xianghui.

¹⁷ Astri Suhrke, "Peacekeepers as nation-builders: Dilemmas of the UN in East Timor", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 8(4), 2001, pp. 1-20.

¹⁸ Lise Morjé Howard, *UN peacekeeping in civil wars*, Cambridge University Press, 1st Edition, 2008, p. 1.

What does Myanmar need in its quest for a veritable democracy?

Firstly, it is important to determine the pillars that need rebuilding, in order to establish whether a peacekeeping mission is the effective mechanism. The most pressing issue is of course the emerging tension between civilians and government, together with the ethnic cleansing of minorities. In this regard, the main task of peacekeeping is exactly limiting conflicts, an objective that was achieved many times. The aftermath which consists of contributions to peaceful settlements and concrete political measure is however a more delicate point in UN's intervention history.¹⁹

Given the way former military juntas have designed the state apparatus around themselves, a new constitution would be the logical continuation and it is what opposants demand.²⁰ But legally, the 2008 constitution has restricted amendment possibilities, involving the Defense Services in each decision.²¹ New, transparent and independent institutions need to be established at the top of the hierarchy. For this, Myanmar needs reliable democratic models and safe constructions which will prevent all hidden forms of influence from the military. On top of this issue, one more layer is added: the need for ethnic minorities to participate in the process. Myanmar cannot hope for long lasting peace and human rights-based democracy without addressing one of its fundamental features, namely the ethnic diversity. Ethnic politics has been avoided for decades in Myanmar.²² More than being overlooked as citizens and culture, the current crisis of the Rohingya minority shows that they are systematically eliminated. This division between ethnic groups has been created for years and the ethnic cleansing represents only the peak of an already existing discrimination. Healing requests facing the facts and making efforts for reconciliation. A decision of the International Criminal Court may play its part, but public policy must show that an entire society is aware of the committed crimes. Once they have obtained the long-awaited democracy, the Bamar²³ have shown in the past little attention towards their fellow compatriots from different ethnic groups, even the NLD failing in this matter. But things may change this time. The oppression and brutality the Bamar opponents of the regime have faced during the last month, has led to empathy and connection with the other suffering categories. In this context, for the first time the civil society with former political leaders have gathered in the form of the National Unity Government and have clearly stated the support for a possible federalization.²⁴ Although a comforting possibility, such a transition demands a careful approach and concise distribution of administrative powers in the regions. The extent of regional autonomy needs to be clearly sorted out and not leave room for further intrusions from the center.

¹⁹ Paul F. Diehl, "Peacekeeping operations and the quest for peace", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 103(3), 1988, pp. 485–507.

²⁰ Sebastian Strangio, *Myanmar Coup Opponents Announce 'Unity Government' Interim Constitution*, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/myanmar-coup-opponents-announce-unity-government-interimconstitution/>, last accessed on 18.01.2022.

²¹ Michael F. Martin, *The Importance of Ethnic Minorities to Myanmar's Future*, <https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/The-Importance-of-Ethnic-Minorities-to-Myanmar-1.pdf>, last accessed on 18.01.2022.

²² Martin Smith, "Ethnic Politics in Myanmar: A Year of Tension and Anticipation", *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2010, pp. 214–234.

²³ The ruling majority ethnic group that gave the country its name.

²⁴ Hannah Beech, *Now we are United: Myanmar's Ethnic Divisions Soften after Coup*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/world/asia/myanmar-ethnic-minority-coup.html>, last accessed on 18.01.2022.

Many of the action plans need to be ensured by public vote and providing fair elections represents a fundamental task. Burmese politics has a history of manipulating elections, the army invalidating the result and reporting fraud when it is suitable for providing a justification to take over. Once again, it is explorable to what extent international observers can be an answer to the issue and encourage a safe transition.

Peacekeeping models and applicability for Myanmar

When assessing the impact of such a mission in Myanmar and its possibility to respond efficiently to the political context, I will look upon past experiences of multidimensional peacekeeping and how far they have come in addressing similar issues. Despite the numerous nuances one must consider when declaring UN operations, a success or a failure, scholars and political leaders seem to agree that some of them fulfilled their initial purpose and therefore, are successful. What cases such as Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, or East Timor have in common is the fact that all of them were subjected to a multiple phase implementation in the peacebuilding process. The UN is entrusted to solve various conflicts, unrest, and humanitarian challenges in the first place. After securing peace, UN officials must respond quickly and efficiently to each specific political context, offering support, institutional know-how and liability mechanisms if needed. But the biggest similarity resides in how broad the mandate in each of these operations was. It allowed diverse methods of intervention, designed specifically for the political reality of the country. A contributing factor for success was the bottom-up approach that involved the community in the reconciliation process and paid attention to traditional practices, thus obtaining trust for political involvement.²⁵

Considering the aforementioned political particularities, it becomes clear that only a mission that incorporates different layers of former interventions can bring the expected results. Although each peacekeeping mandate evolves in a unique way, there is a certain pattern which can be applied and moreover, comparisons between different models and how they functioned, may prove themselves helpful. I will argue that the Namibian and the East Timorese models have a pattern of action that is applicable for the Burmese situation as well and therefore, they can be translated into effective measures. On top of that, other missions brought interesting contributions to the classical *modus operandi* in cases of conflicts. But all these presented approaches are in the end *sui generis* and should be interconnected with the status of the conflict in Myanmar and its roots.²⁶

The mandate in Namibia benefited from a broad authority, one that allowed officials to spread into the country, inform citizens and ultimately, contribute to a shift in the political environment before organizing elections.²⁷ For Myanmar, this kind of step would be fundamental, since it will help in constructing a political vision built around all ethnicities, something that has never happened before. Field work, the way it has been done in Namibia can promote interaction as much as possible and develop a common agenda involving all ethnicities and making their voices heard for the first time. An international intervention focused on the struggle of ethnic minorities goes straight in the middle of a decades-long problem. Since it is very likely that the peacemaking will revolve around the National Unity

²⁵ Cynthia M. Horne, "Reconstructing 'Traditional' Justice from the Outside in: Transitional Justice in Aceh and East Timor", *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Vol. 9(2), 2014, hereinafter Horne, pp. 17-32.

²⁶ Jake Sherman, Agathe Sarfati, Ilhan Dahir, *The Future of UN Peacekeeping and Parallel Operations*, International Peace Institute, 2020, pp. 1-8.

²⁷ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

Government and since this exiled government includes leaders that have been accused in the past of not protecting their citizens in cases of abuse,²⁸ it becomes obvious that only through a broad mandate, one which allows a deep understanding of the country, can this crucial issue be resolved and bring reconciliation. The position of certain ethnic communities is not well known on the international stage and the risk is that their status may not change in a substantial manner, should a peacekeeping mission overlook their demands. Another similarity to Namibia is the lack of information, although in different matters. UN Commissioner for Namibia, Martti Ahtisaari noticed this aspect very well, encouraging the active role of the organization as a source of information to Namibian people.²⁹ In the same spirit, the UN can bring through a widely authorized mandate, information and understanding to a country that has been manipulated by discriminatory propaganda, regarding other ethnic minorities.³⁰ In the overall context, this will leave little room of maneuver for a military regime to exploit peoples' fear and justify other genocide actions.

The ethnic issue has a pivotal role in the peace process not only because of its humanitarian consequences which have primacy, but also because of its force to determine the future political landscape. Dialogue with leaders of other communities should bring the possibility of constitutional reform that can protect them and maybe even a federalization, into practice. Such a scenario is powerful enough to reshape the path for Myanmar, especially since the idea of a Federal Union of Burma does not represent a new solution to an old problem, but rather the vision that stood in the middle of the independence and decolonization period.³¹ Facilitating communication between the alternative to the military governing and the ignored minorities provides a deeper understanding of the situation, and a desired bottom-up approach, that is neither intrusive, nor passive. It is important to note that the federalization card will be one coming from within the country, not imposed from the outside. But UN officials can coordinate the endeavor as mediators, given the fact that still many aspects related to the demands of ethnic minorities are not addressed properly.³² The talks about a new constitution have been on top of the priority list for the Burmese opposants. Still, nothing guarantees a safe and fair place in a post-coup society for the other groups. Discussions about federalization, conducted by UN have the potential to go as far as possible in assisting the needs of minorities. Even if in the end, the country will not experience a shift in its political system, the fact that talks happened at such a high level, will give better opportunities. Theoretically, this approach may seem to work, having antecedent in other operations and involving a traditional approach, with communities generating programs reflecting their own ideas of reconciliation.³³ A federalized Burma sounds to be the ideal solution for the ethnic diversity and differences that exist. The past experiences of the UN can provide knowledge and facilitate transition, all while stopping human rights abuses, the

²⁸ Khin Ohmar, Thinzar Shunlei Yi, The National Unity Government cannot afford to ignore past injustices if it truly seeks to free Myanmar from military rule, <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/the-national-unity-government-cannot-afford-to-ignore-past-injustices-if-it-truly-seeks-to-free>, last accessed on 20.01.2022.

²⁹ Unpublished UN Report #2, p. 6, para. 13.

³⁰ Paul Mozur, *A Genocide Incited on Facebook, with Posts from Myanmar's Military*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html>, last accessed on 20.01.2022.

³¹ Lowell Dittmer, *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity*, World Scientific, 1st Edition, 2010.

³² Myanmar Peace Monitor, *NCA-EAOs Welcome Federal Democracy Charter, But Need Time To Examine The Finer Details: PPST Spokesperson Says*, <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/nca-eaos-welcome-federal-democracy-charter-need-time-examine-finer-details-ppst-spokesperson>, last accessed on 20.01.2022.

³³ Eric Stover, Harvey M. Weinstein, *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity*, Cambridge University Press, 1st Edition, 2008, p. 12.

influence of military juntas and not imposing its own measures. Despite this, it is still questionable whether a federal state automatically means true democracy and if the military can be permanently eliminated from the picture.

Federalism should be analyzed for what it means in abstract and in the practice, for the Burmese citizens. It has been argued that federalization represents in fact only an institutionalized ethnic division and that the authoritarian generals should be involved in the process, in order to prevent eventual nationalistic propaganda, run by them with the purpose of inciting fear inside the population.³⁴ But this last idea is contradictory to the way UN peacekeeping usually works. Since the organization's main focus is reducing human rights abuse, there is usually a two-side conflict, one that will detrimentally reduce all possible cooperation. Including the authoritarian rulers can give short-term better results but it can also mean compromises, which, in the long run, can turn out fatal for the democratic problem Myanmar confronts. Still, it needs to be admitted that an inclusive nation, embracing all ethnic communities is more desirable.³⁵ Institutional separation by ethnicity is also part of the colonial heritage³⁶ and separating without building true reconciliation can leave a space for other bloodier conflicts.

The methodic approach can be based on the idea that the Burmese citizens have absorbed an initially Western model of federalization for their own benefit and that in the shadow of a hunting conflict that affects all groups, they can apply it for the purpose of peace and cooperation. Complementary, traditional reconciliation mechanisms can help in preventing a profound ethnic separation. In this dimension, the model of East Timor is a relevant one, being often described as the most ambitious UN peacekeeping operation of its time, mainly because of its task to design institutions and a governing apparatus for the whole country,³⁷ but also because of its use of traditional practices in reviving traditional justice from the outside in.³⁸ A combined institutional system provided by the UN, combined with traditional practices, managed to achieve post-conflict reintegration.³⁹

Besides offering a solution for the ethnic conflicts, the model of the East Timor intervention provided a correspondent for a democratic transition, which cannot happen without all ethnicities. Even more, no election should be held without revising the status of all citizens and the voting conditions for them. The United Nations, often viewed as a representation of the Western democratic model, seems to place elections high on the peacemaking scale. In Cambodia for instance, the organization was responsible for holding the elections, managing to improve the system by doing so.⁴⁰ In Mozambique, election represented only the last step, after assuring a peaceful settlement and demobilization.⁴¹ Elections have been treated so carefully not only because they mark a clear political and administrative transition, but also because the electoral process reflects the state of the country, the way its institutions function and the way the citizens respond. Besides observing

³⁴ Lowell Dittmer, *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity*, World Scientific, 1st Edition, 2010; Ian Holliday, "Voting and Violence in Myanmar: Nation Building for a Transition to Democracy", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 48(6), 2008, pp. 23-49.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-79.

³⁸ Horne, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-27.

³⁹ Amy Senier, "Traditional Justice as Transitional Justice: A Comparative Case Study of Rwanda and East Timor", *The Fletcher Journal of Human Security*, Vol. 23, 2008, pp. 77-80.

⁴⁰ S/23613, Report of the Secretary-General on Cambodia, 19 February 1992, Section II-B.

⁴¹ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

election, UN officials in El Salvador contributed towards a fair electoral system, registering people and showing good practices. This came hand in hand with surveilling further possible human rights abuse.⁴²

Elections can serve as a middle way for the final point of democratic rebuilding, namely institutional reform. It is important to keep in mind that although the mentioned examples illustrate good models, the sources of conflict are different. Other approaches are therefore required. In the case of El Salvador, the fight was led over ideological and economical discrepancies, while Myanmar needs institutions for its diverse population and for keeping away future military intervention.

The next stage can follow the footstep of East Timor as well. The pillar of governance and public administration consisted of development objectives and concrete measures. Besides forming elementary public bodies, it is important to mention that UN officials developed specific social programs (the national health care system was the most successful one).⁴³ In the case of Myanmar the discussion will shift from creating a parliament towards reforming one. The National Council of East Timor managed to integrate in a proportional number, opposing parties and communities with different religion.⁴⁴ This should be transferred for Myanmar as well, changing the quotas that offered privileges for members of the Security Council. Lastly, by offering social programs equally to all citizens, the division will be reduced, and it can contribute to the reconciliation process, even in the case of a possible federation.

The answer appears to be a mixture of concrete legislative and social measures, combined with cultural understanding which will serve as foundation. It is clear that no Burmese democratic transition can fully implement a Western model, without creating some specific and unique attributes to it. Not understanding this aspect can lead to failure, but the past examples show leaders of missions to be highly aware that an organic but slow transition, together with a permanent conflict resolution is preferable to an ideal institutional implementation.

Conclusions

In terms of resolving its political heritage, there is a long way ahead for Myanmar. The process includes various aspects, from reforming its laws, to embracing its diverse identity. Even if we were to admit that the UN operations have the ability to properly address all of these, there still remain some unquantifiable variables that may come into play. A mission will need what is called “favorable situational factors”, when coming out of conflict.⁴⁵ On top of that, the measure depends to a great extent on how responsive the community is. Conflict resolution is often perceived in international relations only from a technical perspective, leaving out the popular feelings in relation to an intervention. Nevertheless, generating support and consent among the population makes the process more efficient.

Another dilemma is evaluating whether the UN will use its complete set of tools to tackle all the layers of the conflict: peacekeeping intervention, reconciliation, federalism (should it remain a viable option) and institutional reform. The issue of federalism is

⁴² *Ibidem*, pp. 121-122.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp. 276-279.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 280-281.

⁴⁵ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

detrimental to the future of the country and the UN should proceed carefully in galvanizing structural changes. Many proposals designed specifically for appeasement of ethnic groups reinforce stronger divisions.⁴⁶

To summarize, one can conclude that conducting an intervention on these terms-coupled with a favorable international and local context- seems to offer a viable solution to a daunting problem. And even though a high mobilization of forces within the meaning of past interventions is unlikely, the UN might still intervene in a distinct way.

As regards the institutional alternatives to traditional peacekeeping (*i.e.*, peacekeeping operations organized by regional organizations or by multinational forces not under the control or direction of an international organization),⁴⁷ they strike as more efficient when there is no consent among the international community but bring their own risk. The often forgotten third pillar of the R2P, namely non-military intervention has been recognized as a feasible option,⁴⁸ focusing mostly on the International Criminal Court and other non-invasive ways of bringing justice. Even so, most of these options rely solely on solving the humanitarian crisis, without tracing its causes and how probable it is for them to re-emerge.

Accordingly, only a mission operated by an international organization can present impartiality assurances for operating a *broad* mandate, which can intervene in aspects of the political life. In the current stage of the international community, the UN represents such a body that disposes of measures able to guarantee safe and permanent transitions for states. Therefore, the idea of a multidimensional peacekeeping mission is the closest to solving the democracy deficit Myanmar suffers from.

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⁴⁶ See *E.g.*, the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁴⁷ Paul F. Diehl, "Institutional Alternatives to Traditional U.N. Peacekeeping: An Assessment of Regional and Multinational Options", *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 19(2), 1993, pp. 209-230.

⁴⁸ Xianghui, *op. cit.*

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS A FIELD OF STUDY

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Introduction

The Study of International Conflict Resolution (ICR) has seen a continuous evolution and is constantly being redefined. The scholarly literature in this field is consistent, and the last decades have expanded the overwhelming bibliographic abundance. It is a controversial field, both in relation to other subjects and within itself, between different promoters and different approaches. ICR research is a complex and sophisticated one, which incorporates different approaches to conflict, sometimes contradictory, but which represent necessary tools for any research on the phenomenon of conflict, being considered by most scientists in the ICR field as interchangeable and complementary. The knowledge extracted from research, theorization and the works of official and unofficial practitioners are oriented towards the identification and use of alternatives to war.

To date, the field of ICR is not a precisely defined subject, but a general approach¹. Attempts to define the concept of ICR have created two major distinct positions: one that focuses on “*conflict settlement*” and one that advocates the principle of “*conflict transformation*.”

Although these two positions offer sometimes contradictory interpretations of the conflict, we believe that they intersect and become fundamentally complementary in the conflict resolution process.

A third position, an ambivalent one, recognizes the coexistence of the two different concepts under the umbrella of the same field. This approach, formulated by Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, challenges the existence of two separate positions in the field of ICR; according to them, although there have always been tensions between the two approaches, conflict resolution has from the start encompassed *conflict settlement* at one end of the spectrum and *conflict transformation* at the other”². Here, “conflict transformation” is seen as the highest level of the conflict resolution tradition, rather than a separate position (...) „ the field does retain its coherence, that it is best left intact, (...) conflict resolvers and conflict transformers are essentially engaged in the same enterprise”³.

Oliver Ramsbotham (2011) uses “conflict resolution” as an umbrella term for the endeavour that incorporates conflict settlement at one end of the spectrum and conflict transformation at the other. Conflict settlement entails peace building between opposing parties in order to avoid direct violence. Conflict transformation means the deeper, long-term

¹ Louis Kriesberg, “The Conflict Resolution Field. Origins, Growth, and Differentiation”, in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, Washington D.C: United States Institute of Peace, 2007, p. 25.

² Hugh Miall, Tom Woodhouse et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 3rd Edition, 2011, p. 10.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

project of removing the foundations of structural and cultural violence and of transforming identities and relationships.⁴

From the perspective of the approaches that focus on “conflict settlement,” a definition of conflict resolution would be as follows: “conflict resolution is a social situation in which armed parties to a conflict in a **(voluntary) settlement** resolve to live peacefully with - and/or cancel out - their basic incompatibilities and thus stop using weapons one against the other⁵”. The key elements of these interpretations of CR are **settlement, strategic negotiations, diplomacy, understanding interactions and negotiation processes**.

Approaches that focus on “conflict transformation” have introduced wider CR research; beyond strategic negotiations and settlements, they included elements such as: building the conditions for peace, understanding the dynamics between groups, transforming relations between groups to avoid the recurrence of violence, reconciliation after the cessation of violence and others. Therefore, the key elements here are the **consolidation of peace and the transformation of relations**. “The contemporary manifestation of CR was initially focused on stopping violence but has greatly expanded to include building the conditions for peace, including post-violence reconciliation, strengthening justice, establishing conflict management systems, and many other issues”⁶ and the perspective of “conflict transformation” extended CR’s concern both to latent and active conflicts and to the increasingly marked challenge of rebuilding the so-called failed states. To achieve this, it called for an understanding of the dynamics of conflicts within and between groups, as well as between governments, and for exploring how relations between such groups could be substantially transformed – beyond negotiated settlements – in such a way that the violence does not reappear.⁷

Diana Francis, president of the CCTS (Committee for Conflict Transformation Support), from 1999 to 2009, in *“From Pacification to Peacebuilding”* claims that “conflict resolution refers precisely to the process of finding a way out of a destructive conflict through constructive dialogue and negotiation (although it was, and sometimes still is, also used to describe the broader set of processes encapsulated in the term *conflict transformation*)”. The author offers as an example in this regard the work *“Contemporary Conflict Resolution”* belonging to Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, cited above.⁸ Francis chooses the term conflict transformation “on the one hand because it is included in the CCTS name, and on the other hand, because of the ideas it incorporates⁹”. Thus, in a diagram created to describe the stages and processes involved in the transformation of conflicts, the term conflict resolution describes a stage, among others, within the framework of conflict transformation.

Despite the terminological disagreement, the two previously cited positions, however, establish a consensus regarding the objective of conflict resolution. Oliver Ramsbotham

⁴ Oliver Ramsbotham „ *Transforming Violent Conflict. Radical Disagreement, Dialogue and Survival*, New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 53.

⁵ Peter Wallensteen, *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2002, p. 50.

⁶ Louis Kriesberg, “The Evolution of Conflict Resolution”, in Jacob Bercovitch, Victor Kremenyuk, and I. William Zartman (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2009, p. 17.

⁷ Eileen Babbitt, Fen Osler Hampson, “Conflict Resolution as a Field of Inquiry: Practice Informing Theory”, in *International Studies Review*, No. 13, 2011, 46–57, p. 50.

⁸ Diana Francis, *From Pacification to Peacebuilding: A Call to Global Transformation*, New York: PlutoPress, 2010, p. 4.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

argues that “conflict resolution is a multidisciplinary, multi-level study of conflict, which began professionally in the 1950s, and which is, for most practitioners, both analytical and normative. The normative objective is most simply expressed as the cessation of violence. (...) The normative objective of conflict resolution is not to stop the conflict. Conflict cannot be stopped – it is an inevitable feature of social development. And the conflict must not be stopped; in combating an unjust situation, conflict might be necessary before it takes place. The objective, rather, is to transform actual or potential violent conflict into non-violent forms of social clash and social change¹⁰”; in the same vein, Francis concludes that “the profile of *conflict transformation* involves clear values and the recognition of the fact that it is not conflict that must be prevented but violence, and that sometimes conflict is necessary to bring about change¹¹”. Especially through comparison exercises or through criticism and satirization, supporters of the concept of “conflict transformation”, such as J.P. Lederach or John Burton, relegate the “conflict settlement”, identifying its weaknesses and emphasizing the contrast between conflict settlements and the deeper process of conflict transformation. Aligning with the same conviction, the third position too, of the ambivalence of the CR field, agrees that “over the long term, conflict settlement cannot manage the most serious conflicts unless conducted within a transformatory setting¹²”.

John Paul Lederach ranks the conflict settlement perspective below the conflict transformation perspective, arguing that it focuses on content rather than relationships, the objective is an immediate settlement rather than a long-term transformational process, and it is devoted only to de-escalation instead of including conflict escalation to pursue constructive transformation.

Another clear contradiction between the two positions is related to the **conflict management process**. The first approach, focused on settlement, considers it as distinct from the conflict resolution process: “**Conflict management** can help reduce the dangers of crisis, create a certain level of trust and reduce suffering (potential or actual). **Conflict resolution** is much more ambitious because it influences the basic issues, the incompatibilities that lead the conflicting parties¹³; instead, for the second approach, which focuses on conflict transformation, establishing conflict management systems belongs to the CR agenda. For the third position, however, it is only a matter of terminology: “it does not matter in the end which label is used as the umbrella term (candidates have included *conflict regulation*, *conflict engagement*, *conflict management*, as well as *conflict resolution* and *conflict transformation*), so long as the field itself is coherent enough to contain the substance of what is being advocated in each case¹⁴”.

The Evolution of Conflict Resolution as a field of study in International Relations

As a logical consequence, the two concepts have different visions also regarding the evolution of conflict resolution as a field of study. The approach that has as its central theme

¹⁰ Ramsbotham, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

¹¹ Francis, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹² Miall, Woodhouse et al., *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

¹³ Wallensteen, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Miall, Woodhouse et al., *op. cit.*, p. 9.

“conflict settlement” argues that ICR is a recent concept, more precisely, that systematic studies in this field can only be identified in the mid-1990s, the scholarly literature growing considerably from this moment.

According to this perspective, the CR field has extracted the necessary tools and knowledge from conflict theory, international law, integration studies, from the ideas of modern thinkers and trends in social science thinking.

In this view, conflict resolution has been part of the peace research agenda (making a clear distinction between peace studies in general and conflict resolution, which is seen as a sub-category of the more general field of peace studies¹⁵), which has known a continuous evolution starting with the germinal writings of authors such as Pitirim Sorokin or Quincy Wright; or represented a part of the field of conflict analysis and conflict theory that have their roots in authors such as Machiavelli or Clausewitz, however, the same cannot be said about the evolution of CR - this being a new field, which appeared only at the end of the Cold War, when the aversion to the negotiated solutions specific to the period of confrontation between the two great powers was overcome, leaving room for the possibility of reconciliation.

According to this perspective, although war has been studied since a long time ago by historians and sociologists, it was only in the 20th century that researchers began to accumulate systematic information about armed conflicts. Regarding the collection of data about war, the evolution of these projects has its origins in the study belonging to Pitirim Sorokin (1937) who, understanding war as a dysfunction of social and cultural relations, sought to research the patterns of war by collecting information about the long history of this phenomenon between different European powers. This démarche was continued by Quincy Wright (1942) who, in an attempt to formulate a theory of war, used lots of systematic information about the history of war. In this sense, Lewis Richardson also contributed, who focused on measuring the magnitude of wars. These projects meant to collect information about the war are mostly used in quantitative research (their usefulness for qualitative or so-called historical research is limited). From an institutional point of view, in 1963, the Correlates of War (COW) project appeared, which was to become a founding effort in terms of information about the conflict. Political Science Professor J. David Singer at the University of Michigan was joined by historian Melvin Small and together they continued the work of pioneers in the field (Pitirim Sorokin, Lewis Frye Richardson and Quincy Wright), writing two important books: *“The Wages of War”* (1972) and *“Resort to Arms”* (1982). COW provided not only a list of conflicts based on systematic definitions, but also additional information on these conflicts.¹⁶

As a result, researchers were able to explore the correlates of the conflict particularly through statistical analyses, COW remaining to this day the main data set for the accumulation of systematic knowledge about war.

Another important data collection project is the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) which has been collecting information on many aspects of violent conflict since 1946. The director of this program is Professor of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University in Sweden, Peter Walesteen. The dataset provided by UCDP is one of the most accurate and widely used sources of data on armed conflicts.¹⁷ Other such projects include International Development and Conflict Management (IDCM) established at the University of Michigan,

¹⁵ Michael I. Handel, *War, Strategy and Intelligence*, London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1989, p. 456.

¹⁶ The COW War Data, *Correlates of War*, <https://correlatesofwar.org>, 28 December 2022.

¹⁷ Uppsala Universitet. Department of Peace and Conflict Research, *Uppsala Conflict Data Program — an Overview*: <https://ucdp.uu.se>, 28 December 2022.

United States and AKUF (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kriegsursachenforschung / Working Group for Research on the Causes of War), at the University of Hamburg, Germany.

Using data provided by the UCDP, Peter Wallensteen, in the work "Understanding Conflict Resolution" (2002), argues that in the early 1990s peace agreements occurred around the world as frequently as other outcomes or victories, something that proves that conflict resolution was beginning to gain an international understanding. He shows that, in the period from 1989 to 1999, out of a total of 110 armed conflicts, some ended in the form of: (1) victory - meaning the capitulation of one of the parties to the other in the form of a settlement, a withdrawal or in other ways, (2) some of them continue at such a low level of action that they do not reach the frequency of 25 deaths during fighting, and (3), what is of particular interest to us here, through peace agreements - negotiated between the parties and explained by them to their supporters and the public. For example, if we take the case of Europe, during this period, out of a total of 21 conflicts, there were 8 conflicts concluded with victories, 4 conflicts concluded by peace agreements, 7 with other results and 2 unfinished. In the case of Asia, 10 conflicts out of a total of 30 were ended by peace agreements.¹⁸

However, Roy Licklider wonders if it is advisable to seek the establishment of negotiated settlements in the case of civil wars as well. He believes that, if we are talking about civil wars, negotiated settlements are a *second best solution*. He draws attention to the fact that negotiated settlements assume that all parties decide to accept this less attractive alternative at the same time and under the same conditions (less attractive because unlike wars between states, in civil wars the combatants will have to coexist in the same state after the war, constantly being in a risky situation with their former enemies). While not ignoring the fact that negotiated settlements of civil wars are less likely to be followed by genocide than military victories - which makes sense since a negotiated settlements is supposed to allow both sides to defend themselves against such policies - another troubling finding is that negotiated settlements of civil wars do not maintain peace as much as military victories do;¹⁹ and here the necessity of transforming relations becomes obvious.

However, returning to the evolution of the ICR field, Peter Wallensteen argues that it extracted its knowledge and working tools from already existing fields, a fact that led to the emergence of different but intersecting analysis models that are indispensable to any researcher - "as a result of different origins, different approaches have sprung up, all of which must be understood"; Wallensteen identifies the following three directions: *conflict dynamics*, *conflict origins based on basic needs*, and *rational and strategic calculations*. These constitute different forms of analysis.²⁰ The *dynamics of conflicts* as a form of analysis have their origins in the field of conflict analysis, developed in the early 60s, using tools such as game theory, and having Johan Galtung as its promoter. The analysis that focuses on *basic needs* has its origin in the field that deals with the study of the social psychology of conflicts, and the form of analysis based on *rational calculations* derives from realist and neorealist thinking about the origins of war.²¹

At the opposite pole, the CR position, which puts at the centre of its research "conflict transformation," agrees that the field of CR experienced a remarkable expansion after the end

¹⁸ Wallensteen, *op. cit.*, p. 28-29.

¹⁹ Roy Licklider, "Early Returns: Results of the First Wave of Statistical Studies of Civil War Termination", in *The Online Platform for Taylor & Francis Group*, pp. 124-125.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13698249808402384>

²⁰ Wallensteen, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 34-60.

of the Cold War, but this moment is perceived as one in which the field of CR has reached maturity, following an evolutionary process that has its roots in ideas and actions belonging to major historical events.

From this point of view, the evolution of ICR was directly influenced by the social developments specific to certain historical periods, and by the need to always discover alternative approaches to perceive, manage and end conflicts. Against the backdrop of the historical context in which it took place, the field of ICR has seen major transformations, involving research and innovation that have provided tools that can and must be integrated into any conflict resolution analysis project.

Next, we will briefly review the main developments in the field of ICR, as they are perceived by most scholars who support the approach of “conflict transformation,” and the contributions resulting from them.

As we have shown before, from the CR perspective of “conflict transformation,” although the field of ICR only reached “maturity” in the 1990s, precursors of efforts to build the conditions for peace can be identified in more distant historical periods. A starting point would be the time of the French and American Revolutions when intellectuals, especially from Europe and North America, discussed processes and procedures for managing disputes and avoiding tyrannies. During this period, the moral issues related to the management of different types of conflicts were also discussed. The criticism of the old regime found its theoretical foundations in John Locke’s philosophy - the theory of the natural rights of man (1689), J.J. Rousseau organized society based on the sovereignty of the people, Immanuel Kant wrote about eternal peace as a result of states as constitutional republics, John Stuart Mill talked about the value of liberty and the free discussion of ideas, and Adam Smith focused on how conflicts of interest can be resolved through the impersonal mechanism of the market. Thomas Jefferson, on July 4th, 1776, wrote the “Declaration of Independence” - initially only an announcement of some human liberties, it later became the dynamic force of the entire Western world -, containing two basic articles: the right of the people to choose their own political system and the right of the people to resistance.

In the period between the First and Second World Wars, peace research emerged from the need to understand the causes of wars through systematic analyses of historical war experiences. Pioneers of this field of study were authors such as Pitirim Sorokin (1937) and Quincy Wright (1942). They focused on the analysis of violent conflicts including studies related to arming races, revolutions, the frequency of wars and peace building.

Other authors from this period wrote seminal works researching and theorizing on the causes of conflicts in general, as in the work on psychological and socio-psychological processes, belonging to John Dollard (1939). This study formed the basis of the model of analysis that focuses on “basic needs” (the social psychology of conflict), continued by another classic author in the social theory of conflict, Lewis A. Coser, and rediscovered during the Cold War by authors such as Edward Azar, John W. Burton, Leonard Doob, Herbert C. Kelman or Ronald J. Fisher. More recently, scientists such as John Paul Lederach, D.D. Laitin, Marshall Montyg and Ted Robert Gurr, Louis Kriesberg, Nadim Rouhana and others have contributed to the new literature, continuing this tradition.

The genocides of this period led to the strengthening of pacifist sentiments and the creation of pacifist organizations both in the United States and in many European countries (e.g., the Dada Movement - which emerged during the First World War in Zurich, Switzerland, supports anti-war policies through demonstrations, public gatherings, and publications in artistic and literary journals). The League of Nations formulated principles of

international law and religious groups and other non-governmental organizations have mobilized in efforts to end wars (for example: The Interfaith Fellowship of Reconciliation "FOR" was organized in 1914, in Cambridge, England; in the following year "US FOR" was founded in the United States; in 1919 "International FOR" ("IFOR") was established to promote reconciliation and non-violence. In the United States these efforts were also supported by members of the Witnesses of Jehovah and the traditional churches - Brethren, Mennonites, and Society of Friends.

After the Second World War, the establishment of the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Coal and Steel Community (CEEC) took place. In 1947, Mohandas Gandhi introduced the strategy of non-violent resistance, a form of non-violent demonstration manifested by "arms-crossed protest" called "satyagraha".

During the Cold War, the field of ICR experienced a significant development in the attempt to understand the East-West conflicts. As we have already noted, studies based on the social psychology analysis model of conflict (or the model focusing on "basic needs") have continued, but conflict analysis also knew other new approaches, and perspectives in this field began to widen. Numerous publications have tried to contribute to the prevention of a possible nuclear war by approaching new methods. One of these approaches comes from realist and neo-realist thinking about the origins of war. The analysis model that focuses on "rational calculations" emerged. Two books were the basis of this model: "Getting to YES" (1981) by Roger Fisher and William Ury, and "The Art and Science of Negotiation" (1982) by Howard Raiffa. Also, the ideas of I. William Zartman made significant contributions to this perspective, and through more recent works: Charles W. Kegley and Gregory A. Raymond.

As the theory of negotiation migrated from its origins, from the field of administration and business to that of international relations, negotiation and mediation knew an amazing expansion in the field of ICR, through the contributions brought by authors such as P.H. Gulliver; Jeffery Z. Rubin and Bert R. Brown; Anselm L. Strauss; Maureen R. Berman; Christopher W. Moore, Saadia Touval, and Jacob Bercovitch.

Another approach that stems from the model of rational calculations is the analysis model that focuses on the dynamics of the conflict. The main tools of this model were developed from the Game Theory. Some of these tools, developed by authors such as Johan Galtung, Christopher Mitchell, Wiberg, Håkan, Louis Kriesberg, Dean G. Pruitt, Jeffrey Z. Rubin, Robert Axelrod or Anatol Rapoport were used at the beginning of the détente period.

Important movements in the development of ICR were: the creation of Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers in Washington and Moscow, the pacifist Nuclear Freeze Movement in 1980, the pacifist Beyond War Movement, 1984.

In the 1970s, ADR (*Alternative Dispute Resolution*) practices experienced a huge expansion amid political reforms in the US, which led to increased visibility and confidence in non-violent conflict resolution methods. ADR emerged as people sought to solve their problems locally.

In 1968, the Ford Foundation created the *National Center for Dispute Resolution and the Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution* to apply ADR techniques used in union-management labour disputes, civil rights disputes, rights of those living in campuses, and local disputes, and in 1973 the first environmental mediation took place: the Snoqualmie River Dam Project in Washington State. In 1974, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service expanded its mission beyond managing labour relations. What today is known as the Association of Conflict Resolution was originally created as an organization of membership

of all ADR practitioners, called Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution - SPIDR. In 1982, former US President Jimmy Carter established the Carter Center in Atlanta, with the aim, among other things, of using ADR techniques in international conflicts.²²

The mediations that took place during this period led to an increase in interest and confidence in these means of conflict management, as an alternative to the classic ones, in the *realpolitik* style, where “the strong do what they can, and the weak endure what is necessary” (Thucydides).

In 1978, US mediation in the Middle East took place, undertaken by US President Jimmy Carter and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The negotiations at Camp David, during which President Carter used the technique of the single negotiation text, led to the Israeli-Palestinian Accord.

In 1984, the Vatican mediated the Beagle Islands conflict between Chile and Argentina, and Adam Curle mediated the 1967-1970 conflict between Nicaragua and the secessionist state of Biafra, where these unofficial mediators facilitated dialogue between antagonistic ethnic groups to promote understanding of each other's positions and basic needs, to create a new opening necessary to build trust and install a decision-making process based on the consensual principle (of decision-making).²³

Ost-Politik, carried out under the leadership of Chancellor Willy Brandt, also contributed to the development of the ICR field, which determined greater interaction between East and West.

From an institutional point of view, ICR also experienced a continuous expansion, becoming institutionalized in colleges, universities, governmental and non-governmental agencies. In 1957, Professor Ken Boulding founded “The Journal of Conflict Resolution” and in 1962 Professor Johan Galtung created “The Journal of Peace Research”. Other important centres demonstrate the professionalization of the field: Center for Research on Conflict Resolution of University of Michigan; International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); Center for Intergroup Studies, Capetown, South Africa or the International Peace Research Association in London, UK.

The end of the Cold War created conditions for major transformations in the field of ICR. In 1992, the “Coordinating Committee for Conflict Resolution Training in Europe” was established, today known as the “Committee for Conflict Transformation Support”, CCTS, in response to requests from different parts of the former Soviet empire for training on the idea of - / and the skills needed to - resolve conflicts. These requests came from what today we would call civil society organizations, although in the small newly separated states the overlap between citizens and government was often considerable.²⁴

A significant aspect of this period is the expansion of the role of the UN; in 1992, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali decreed the United Nations “Agenda for Peace,” creating a general framework for the ICR that remains in place until present date. There is an increase in interest in human security, as the most important premise in building peace, but also an increase in the role of non-governmental players as adversaries or third parties in international conflicts. Research is being undertaken to create a set of duties to be implemented within a peace process (Boutros-Boutros Ghali, Edward Azar, C.A. Crocker, F.O.

²² Jerome T. Barrett, Joseph P. Barrett, *A History of Alternative Dispute Resolution. The Story of a Political, Cultural, and Social Movement*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004, p. XXV.

²³ Dennis J. D. Sandole, Sean Byrne et al., *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 4.

²⁴ Diana Francis, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Hampson, Pamela Aall, B.F. Walter, S.J. Stedman, D. Rothchild, E. Cousens, Mary Anderson,)), in which human security is put first.

There is a renewal of interest in the socio-psychological dimension of conflicts and in the dynamics of conflicts. The attacks of September 11th, 2001, but also the prevalence of international conflicts between different identity groups, highlighted the need to understand the concept of identity, be it ethnic or religious, which influences the violence between such groups. In the recent literature, authors such as: G.W. Allport, R. White, H.C. Kelman, D.D. Laitin, M.B. Brewer, S.L. Gaertner, E.D. Mansfield, J. Snyder have also contributed in this regard.

Research was conducted on the relationship between official and unofficial diplomacy (TRACK I and TRACK II) and multitrack diplomacy; valuable contributions were made by authors such as: P. Wallensteen, K. Axell, C.J. Chataway, Kofi Annan, L. Diamond, J. McDonald or W. Ury.

Among the organizations with an important role in ICR research, we mention: the General Secretariat of the UN, the African Union, the Organization of the American States, and last but not least, development agencies such as "Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development" or "Development Assistance Committee."

And to conclude, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall rightly note that, " in the late 1990s, approaches in the CR field were first given a central place in global politics in the context of the 'new world order.'"²⁵

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²⁵ Hugh Miall, Tom Woodhouse, et al., *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 3.

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