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RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATION AS A PUBLIC ACTION: THE CASE OF VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY'S PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC

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Abstract: *The article examines speeches delivered by Volodymyr Zelenskyy and focuses on analysis of rhetorical strategies implemented by the current Ukrainian President in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. The authors drew attention to the usage of political correctness and political incor-rectness as tools of rhetorical argumentation identified in speeches of Ukrainian President. To illuminate this area, they made an attempt to assess the efficiency of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's „going public" strategy in terms of the rhetoric efficiency in order to state and promote official position of Ukrainian authorities on the international arena.*

Keywords: Presidential rhetoric, political (in)correctness, political persuasion, leadership, Russia's war on Ukraine

1. Introduction

On 24 February 2022 the Russian Federation launched a full-scale illegal invasion of the territory of Ukraine that led to a wide range of implications not only for the Ukrainian state, but for the world stability and security in future as well. It was Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine, who became the key political figure actively engaged in convincing Western democracies to support Ukraine. Unprecedented usage of rhetoric and everyday addresses to different target groups of listeners led to increasing public, political and economic support for Ukraine on both domestic and international arenas.

Therefore, the major purpose of the article is to study the case of Volodymyr Zelenskyy in terms of the rhetorical argumentation as a public action on the international scene. Authors aim to explain the connection between presidential discourse and decisions that changed not only the situation in the battlefield in Ukraine, but also led to significant change in the transatlantic alliance and the relationship between the collective West (United States of America, the United Kingdom, the European Union) and Ukraine. Additionally, it is of equal importance to grasp the political reasons and motives that led to particular rhetorical argumentation. The article's assumption is that despite the West's display of solidarity and willingness of assistance for Ukraine Zelenskyy's rhetoric deliberately included politically incorrect messages addressed at Western democracies (U.S., UK, EU) as a collective actor that led to positive changes regarding the tempo and scale of Collective West's decision-making on their support of Ukraine in its fighting against Russia.

To accomplish the above-mentioned purpose, the main research task is to conduct comparative analysis of presidential rhetorical approaches to individual and collective international actors such as heads of Western states, national parliaments and international organizations. In order to evaluate the efficiency of Zelenskyy's rhetorical strategy, particular focus is put on the usage of political correctness and political incorrectness as rhetorical tools of presidential addresses. Delivering speeches on Russia's war in Ukraine, President Zelenskyy frequently used politically correct expressions to speak about the activity of the Ukrainian troops intentionally reducing negative effect on listeners or avoiding description of real situation on the ground. Simultaneously, while speaking about the acts of violence and atrocities committed by Russian army, or while speaking about the policies of the international allies who were unwilling to increase economic and political pressure on Russia, President Zelenskyy deliberately emphasized the negative aspects of their activity with the help of politically incorrect expressions.

The article is structured accordingly: the following section briefly explains the methodology and a research framework of the article. Then, attention is paid to the studies devoted to rhetoric as a political tool of presidential persuasion and leadership. Within such an approach, the authors made an attempt to assess whether rhetorical argumentation implemented by Ukrainian president led to the increase of his leadership among key international political

actors. Furthermore, the article presents the outcomes of the content-analysis of Zelenskyy's political addresses with a particular accent on his usage of political (in)correctness as an instrument of rhetorical argumentation aimed at getting international support for Ukraine.

2. Methodology and research framework

The major purpose and research task of the article determine application of a specific set of research methods in terms of political communication. First, it is a method of theoretical analysis of the scientific literature used in the subsequent section of the article. It is applied in order to analyze a wide range of scientific sources devoted to the connection between presidential rhetoric and presidential leadership and the role of the presidential rhetoric in the decision-making process.

Meantime the empirical part of the article combines quantitative linguistic analysis and qualitative rhetorical analysis and is based on two leading methods: process tracing and discourse analysis. The methodology of process tracing is employed in order to conduct a qualitative analysis of key political developments in the relationship between Ukraine and its western allies regarding the support of the European application for the EU and NATO membership, and increase of military support for Ukrainian army. On the other hand, the discourse analysis was based on a qualitative study of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's rhetoric with particular emphasis on his key addresses to the international institutions and organizations aimed at promoting the vision of Ukrainian authorities regarding the joint political, economic and military support for Ukraine in its resistance to Russian aggression.

Tackling the issue of presidential rhetoric of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the research framework is based on analysis of the rhetorical involvement into the decision-making process and negotiations between Ukrainian authorities and their western allies, its influence on particular policy frame and the language that was used to promote the given policy. In order to define and to assess the political persuasion tools used by President Zelenskyy during different periods of the Russo-Ukrainian war, the authors selected presidential international addresses and studied the dynamics of the international responses to Ukrainian official appeals and proposals.

In terms of chronological limitations of conducted analysis, the authors selected the speeches of President Zelenskyy delivered from 24.02.2022 to 24.01.2023 which makes it

possible to illustrate the efficiency of presidential rhetorical argumentation as a tool of foreign policy making and to expose how it evolved during the first year of the full-scale war in Ukraine. To be more precise, the authors divided the analytical framework into the following chronological stages related to crucial political decisions on Ukraine made by its western allies:

1. 24.02.2022 - 23.06.2022 - from a full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine to the decision of the European Council to grant candidate status to Ukraine;
2. 24.06.2022 - 30.09.2022 - from the decision of the European Council to grant candidate status to Ukraine to Ukraine's formal application for fast-track NATO membership;
3. 1.10.2022 - 23.11.2022 - from Ukraine's formal application for fast-track NATO membership to the resolution of the European Parliament designating Russia as a "state sponsor" of terrorism due to its actions in Ukraine;
4. 24.11.2022 - 24.01.2023 - from the resolution of the European Parliament designating Russia as a "state sponsor" of terrorism due to its actions in Ukraine to German official announcement to provide Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks.

The narrow focus on the presidential addresses of Volodymyr Zelenskyy is explained by his unprecedented rhetorical engagement as a public action on seeking international support for Ukraine in its struggle against Russian aggression. Additionally, it was President Zelenskyy who first announced certain arguments that were further reinforced by key Ukrainian authorities in their political discourse.

3. Literature overview. Rhetoric as a political tool of presidential persuasion and leadership

While speaking about the role of communication in the sphere of politics, Robert E. Denton stresses that the essence of politics is "talk" or human interaction. Such interaction may be formal or informal, verbal or nonverbal, public or private, but it is always persuasive, forcing us consciously or subconsciously to interpret, to evaluate and to act. As a conclusion scholar states that "communication is the vehicle of human action" (Denton, 1994, 3).

Denton illustrates statements delivered by Aristotle who recognized the natural kinship of politics and communication in his writings *Politics* and *Rhetoric*. In the former, he established that humans are "political beings who alone of the animals [are] furnished with the faculty of

language". In the latter, he began his systematic analysis of discourse by proclaiming that "rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion". Thus, it was recognized over twenty-three hundred years ago that politics and communication go hand in hand because they are essential parts of human nature. Furthermore, Denton asserts that because communication is the fundamental process of human interaction, it is only through communication that individuals find community. More specifically, institutions, legitimacy, statutes, leaders, sanctions, interests, ideologies, and coalitions are socially constructed through language (Denton, 1994, 3). Clearly, neither politics nor government can exist without communication. This statement is shared by Paul Chilton and John Joseph who argue that political actors recognize the role of language because its use has effects, and because politics is very largely the use of language (Chilton, 2004, 16; Joseph, 2006, 111).

When it comes to presidential rhetoric, Mary E. Stuckey's statement that "Presidents can no longer choose whether to engage in public leadership, only what form that leadership will take" (Stuckey 1991, 3) vividly proves the significance of presidential rhetoric studies not only in the United States of America, but in every democratic state whose president decides to use rhetoric as a political tool of persuasion and leadership. As George C. Edwards and Stephen J. Wayne put it, effective, responsible presidential leadership can play a vital role in providing the coherence, direction, and support necessary to articulate and achieve national policy and political goals (Edwards and Wayne 2009, xxii.).

As for persuasion types, Karwat (Karwat, 2009, 28-29) underlines two major ones:

- intellectually – rational (based on common interests and mutual cooperation);
- emotional (based on feeling of responsibility, mutual respect, general security, etc.).

According to the scholar, persuasion that is based on emotions may easily transform into manipulation, or sometimes, such type of persuasion is, in fact, a hidden mask of manipulation.

In addition to that, Richard Neustadt defined the chief executive as a sort of super administrator, one who eschews the flash of rhetorical tricks in a public forum for the intellectually substantive coordination of the government's constituent parts. In fact, Neustadt argued that the President should be an effective negotiator with his political colleagues. He wrote that the President "does not get action without argument…[since] presidential power is the power

to persuade" (Neustadt, 1990, 11).

In terms of other scientific reflections on account of presidential rhetoric and its role in presidential persuasion policy, it is important to underline the diverse ideas expressed by George Edwards who successfully proved that presidential rhetoric in the United States does matter. Even though it may differently influence the President, its influence has been always important. On the one hand, Edwards advances the strongest arguments for the central role of persuasion in the presidency, but on the other, shows negative outcomes caused by the presidential rhetoric. In his book *Public Presidency*, he quotes the words of Abraham Lincoln: "public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail, without it nothing can succeed". Further, he states that these words pose what is perhaps the greatest challenge to any President: to obtain and maintain the public support. Scholar emphasizes that this is the main task of the public presidency. Why is the public presidency such a critical component of presidential politics? Edwards answers it in the following way: as every student of the presidency quickly learns, the President is rarely in a position to command other to comply with his wishes. Instead, he must rely on persuasion (Edwards, 1983, xiii-xix).

In the political dimension, however, the link between leadership and rhetoric has been an uneasy one. Since ancient times, political leadership via rhetoric to influence the public has often been seen as dangerous. As for scholars who raise critical voices about the unreal nature of political leadership by rhetoric, Jonathan Rauch (Rauch 2000, 25) detected that people unknowingly "think a really fine President soars on majestic wings of inspiring rhetoric…[However], lofty rhetoric is no substitute for sound judgement in a tight corner". Taking into account these conceptions, Dorsey points that rhetoric is not about a union of a speaker and an audience who have the responsibility to share the means to define and to enhance their existence at any particular moment in time. Instead, being rhetorical appears to mean that someone is verbally creating a deceptive and ultimately detrimental reality in order to maintain control over someone else (Dorsey, 2002, 8).

However, Martin Medhurst makes an effort to react to all the criticism stated above and notices that an attempt to keep rhetoric apart from presidential leadership – to take the "rhetorical" out of the rhetorical presidency – brings with it its own set of limitations. For example, scholars who assume the negative connotation of rhetoric as being emotional rather

than enlightening, that rhetoric may be only useful in the realm of policy talk among elites, unnecessarily constrain the perspective of presidential leadership. Scholar emphasizes that embracing the dynamic changes in society – technological, cultural and spiritual – and examining how such changes affect a President's public and private messages, allows for richer and more diverse perspectives on the act of human communication as a means of political leadership (Medhurst, 2005, 5). What is more, Mary Stuckey labels the President as "interpreter-in-chief" who uses television as the means to distribute stories about the community: the President uses such stories not only to promote policy but also to influence conscience of the community (Stuckey, 1991, 4).

Due to the specific focus on the rhetoric of Zelenskyy as a political tool of his presidential persuasion and leadership, it appears topical to focus one's attention on military rhetoric. Campbell and Jamieson admit divisions of opinion that arise over the line to be drawn between appropriate actions to defend the nation and offensive use of the nation's military capabilities. The authors argue that the choice of rhetoric is dependent on the particular purposes and may be employed „only so long as it remains a functional response to the exigencies". That, in turn, illustrates the dynamic nature of certain rhetorical type and rhetorical action which change under the pressure of existing circumstances or purposes in order to find better forms „to achieve their ends". (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990, 106).

In this regard the following section of the article summarizes the research of rhetorical type employed by Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his "going public"[1] on Ukrainian resistance to Russian illegal aggression.

4. Categorization framework of Zelenskyy's international addresses

The empirical part of conducted research is based on the interpretative analysis of 100 presidential addresses of Volodymyr Zelenskyy[2] delivered on the international arena in terms of chronological framework that was described in the methodology section. As a matter of fact, the

[1] The principle of *going public* was described by Samuel Kernell who stated that the President must present his politics to the audience in order to get the support and be successful. According to the scholar, the chief executive *"goes public"* strategically managing the press as a means to generate support for his agenda by holding staged rallies, releasing selected information at designated times, and delivering major messages. More on this topic see: Samuel Kernell, *Going Public. New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 1986.

[2] All the political addresses that were analyzed in the article were retrieved from: https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/speeches

analyzed addresses contain a wide range of political correctness and political incorrectness aimed at persuading international decision-makers to change the transactional style of foreign policy making into the transformational one. Therefore, the authors shifted their attention towards the selection of politically (in)correct speech fragments and expressions in order to explain the persuasion strategy implemented by Zelenskyy toward the international public. The following sections of the article take a thorough look into the role of rhetorical argumentation and usage of politically (in)-correct expressions as tools of persuasion used by Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

In fact, the term “politically correct” has been accompanied by numerous definitions. Traditionally it has been used with ideas and decisions that are politically wise. Today, "politically correct" is being used as a "kind of linguistic jujitsu" to disable an opponent's diversity argument. "It is the case that words are weapons in political discourse, and they always have been" (Chow, 2016). In its turn, the term “politically incorrect” means failing to avoid language or behavior that may offend particular groups of people. “The cost of political incorrectness is that the speaker seems less warm, but they also appear less strategic and more ‘real,’” says Asst. Prof. Juliana Schroeder. “The result may be that people may feel less hesitant in following politically incorrect leaders because they appear more committed to their beliefs” (Counts, 2019). In this regard the case study of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s presidential rhetoric seems to be topical and necessary to understand its impact on the development of the western position toward Russia’s war on Ukraine.

To be more precise, *political correctness*, in terms of the international rhetoric of Zelenskyy that is analyzed in given study, refers to expressions and statements that changed the description of particular people, actions or facts in order to reduce the negative tone of the message, to hide the truth and consequently to promote a particular course or policy. The very same purpose of policy promotion is applied in the definition of *political incorrectness* that refers to the deliberate change of descriptive presentation of certain people, actions or facts in order to increase the negative connotations associated with them.

Thus, the categorization and comparative analysis of politically (in)correct expressions and political reasons for their usage make it possible to define connection between the rhetorical argumentation of Zelenskyy and Western sanction policy against the Russian Federation. What is more, it poses a question on the presidential rhetorical impact on international consensus

regarding such milestones of EU-Western relations as granting EU candidate status to Ukraine, official reaction to Ukraine's application for a fast-track membership, designating Russia a "state sponsor" of terrorism by the European Parliament, or unexpected decision of German government to provide Ukraine with such offensive weapon as Leopard 2 tanks.

It is of utmost importance to point out that the international support for Ukrainian appeals was not unanimous and therefore President Zelenskyy repeatedly argued for the need to transform the Western vision on the strategical significance of Ukraine and its democratic future.

Having conducted the content-analysis of selected international addresses delivered by Ukrainian president since 24 February 2002, authors divided the expressions that were used in both politically correct and politically incorrect manner into the main groups they were referred to:

1. Freedom and Democracy: 427 expressions (218 politically correct versus 209 politically incorrect).
2. Conflict terminology and politically correct change for military campaign in Ukraine: 679 politically correct expressions.
3. Security implications: 358 expressions (53 politically correct versus 305 politically incorrect).
4. Helping Ukraine, its importance and reconstruction: 930 expressions (410 politically correct versus 520 politically incorrect).
5. Collective West and its Unity: 790 expressions (189 politically correct versus 601 politically incorrect).
6. Russia, its aggressive actions and consequences for its war crimes: 803 politically incorrect expressions.
7. Crises as a consequence of war (energy, food, migration): 379 politically incorrect expressions.
8. The UN reform: 65 politically correct expressions.

The total number of analyzed expressions amounts to 4431 units that were analyzed manually in order to reveal the major elements of rhetorical strategy implemented by president Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his communication with different audiences.

As it is shown from a quantitative perspective on the proportionate usage of different

rhetorical tone, unsurprisingly, each of the group had different number of politically correct and politically incorrect phrases that could be primarily explained by the political and military context of given speeches. All in all, it is vocabulary that either increases or decreases the negative emotional connotation of the message that was a central element of Zelenskyy's rhetorical argumentation. Thus, selected examples of political correctness and political incorrectness are analyzed qualitatively in search of line of official argumentation of Ukrainian authorities aimed at convincing the western allies to increase pressure on Russia.

5. Zelenskyy's rhetorical argumentation: interpretative analysis

As a matter of fact, international rhetoric of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy illustrates both rhetorical continuity and adaptation to altered circumstances. The section of the article is focused on the interpretative analysis of rhetorical argumentation delivered by Volodymyr Zelenskyy and political context of his "going public" with certain line of arguments.

As it was mentioned in the methodology section, the article is based on combination of quantitative linguistic analysis of politically correct and politically incorrect expressions used by President Zelenskyy and qualitative rhetorical analysis of selected speeches delivered to foreign audiences in context of their impact on the international political decision-making process on Ukraine. The classification of selected expressions into eight main groups described in the previous part makes it possible to conduct a comprehensive analysis of their usage by Zelenskyy and his rhetorical adaptation to changes caused by military developments in Ukraine or political developments in cooperation with western allies.

As it has been shown, the most frequent expressions referred to the three major categories:

1) issue of "helping Ukraine", its importance for the international order, the need to support its victory over Russia and the importance of post-war reconstruction - 903 units;
2) Collective West and its Unity: 790 units;
3) Russia, its aggressive actions and consequences for its war crimes: 803 units.

Such a division of rhetorical accents vividly illustrates the major purpose of Zelenskyy' rhetorical message at different stages of the war since 24 February 2022: the Russia's war against Ukraine cannot be won without political and economic engagement from the side of western

democracies and their political consensus on supporting Ukraine's fighting for freedom and democracy:

I'm sure people will show how they support us. But politicians must also support freedom. All of them. They must support the struggle for life. We are waiting for meaningful steps. From NATO, the EU and the G7. We know that the Russians have already begun to lobby their interests. These are the interests of war. We know that they are working with some partners. We know that they want to put this issue out. The struggle against war. But this is the war that needs to be put out. Our firm position will be represented at these three summits. At these three summits we will see: Who is a friend, who is a partner, and who betrayed us for money. Life can be defended only when united (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

The quote above summaries Zelenskyy's argument on the need to stay together in the face of Russia's aggression. At the same time, it does have politically incorrect shadowing in reference to those western politicians who were reluctant to support Ukraine in the first weeks of full-scale invasion.

In this regard, it comes as no surprise that the Freedom and Democracy category comprising the expressions related to basic democratic values that are at stake in Russia's war on Ukraine served as persuasion tool in Zelenskyy's arguments on the need to increase the international support for Ukraine. Interestingly enough, out of 427 analyzed units 218 were used in politically correct manner stressing the Ukrainian efforts to protect the democratic future of Ukraine and Europe overall. The central message that Ukrainians "are fighting not only for Ukraine, but also for the security of the European Union!" has been repeatedly used by President Zelenskyy in different circumstances and for different audiences.

Meanwhile 209 expressions from the Freedom and Democracy category were used in politically incorrect context indirectly accusing hesitant position of certain Western states regarding the support of such decisions as granting EU candidate status to Ukraine. Examples below serve as illustrations of the intentional usage of political incorrectness to show the connection between transactional style of doing business with Russia by certain European politicians and its implications for freedom and democracy in Ukraine and in the European Union as a whole. These indirect accusations, however, were aimed at encouraging those politicians to change their approach to Russia from cooperation to isolation. Some examples below prove it.

- Address to the Parliament of Netherlands embraces numerous measures necessary for pressurizing Russia for its crimes that would help Ukraine in resisting aggression:

Freedom must demonstrate that it protects and provides for people better than tyranny, which has enjoyed a massive flow of money for oil, gas and other raw materials for decades… Together with other EU countries, you have to do everything possible so that Russia does not have the resources to continue this war, the war in Europe, and so that there is no political opportunity to hide criminals. Close your ports to Russian ships! (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

• Address to the Parliament of Denmark appeals to the unity of the European Union and its intention to maintain solidarity with Ukraine:

That is why I call on you to raise the issue of solidarity in the defense of freedom, in the defense of humanity at the level of the European Union…Everyone knows very well who in the European Union opposes humanity and common sense. Who does nothing at all to help establish peace in Ukraine? This must stop, and Europe must stop listening to any excuses from official Budapest (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

• Address to the Parliament of Portugal demonstrates Ukrainian president intention to get support from Portugal in several spheres, not only in military one, but also in the sphere of business activity. And President Zelenskyy demands increasing sanctions from businesses in Portugal:

When we turn to the nations of the free world for help, we say simple and clear things. We need weapons to protect ourselves from the brutal Russian invasion, which brought to our people as much evil as the Nazi invasion did 80 years ago. Leopard tanks, armored personnel carriers, Harpoon anti-ship missiles - you have them and you can help protect the freedom and civilization of Europe with them. Therefore, I appeal to your state to provide us with this assistance. We need increased pressure of sanctions on Russia, because only sanctions can force Russia to seek peace and deprive the Russian military machine of resources (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

Similar role was performed by the expressions from the Security group that concentrated on the role of Ukraine's victory for the European security and peace. Unlike Freedom and Democracy group of expressions, the Security group predominantly consists of politically incorrect units versus politically correct ones: 305 versus 53 respectively. By asking "Why must we do this together?" Zelenskyy gives a clear answer that "Each of you understands that Ukraine is not the last target of Russian aggression".

Political speech is purposefully-oriented which is to change status quo. It is a means of political, military and information struggle and Ukrainian case is a typical example of the situation when Ukrainian President makes everyday efforts delivering speeches, informing the world community about the situation in the country and persuading allies to stand with Ukraine.

"Every political speech is pragmatically oriented, i.e., it has strategic and tactical tasks" (Khudoliy, 2014, 200). A peculiar feature of presidential rhetoric of Volodymyr Zelenskyy was providing his audience with a solution that must be adopted by the addressee of the speech. Examples below clearly illustrate the solution promoted by Ukrainian president in terms of issue of security:

The European Union must finally adopt a principled decision and close ports to Russian ships…It is not normal when some European companies are still hesitant whether to leave the Russian market or not. And it is not normal when someone still hopes for cooperation with Russia in the energy sector. There can be no concessions to bandits! Only new sanction strikes against them (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

In his speeches President Zelenskyy stressed the necessity for Western countries, global and European institutions, to be united facing the challenges after the Russian aggression:

The world must make a choice. The UN must make a choice. The UN Security Council must make a choice. The International Committee of the Red Cross must make a choice. The OSCE must make a choice. EU countries must make a choice. NATO countries must make a choice. The G7 and G20 countries must make a choice. The US must make a choice and take this important step. Recognize Russia as a sponsor of terrorism. This time has come. Long ago. The global countdown has started. And then there are only 2 options. Determination, and therefore an end to the crimes and atrocities of Russia, or – more bomb explosions from these terrorists (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

Ukrainian leader expressed his point of view that Russia should be punished for the crimes committed in Ukraine. And the statement like that is quite numerous in his speeches:

A Special Tribunal should be created to punish Russia for the crime of aggression against our state. This will become signal to all "would-be" aggressors, that they must value peace or be brought to responsibility by the world. We have prepared precise steps to establish such Tribunal. They will be presented to all states. Ukraine will appeal to the UN General Assembly to support an international compensation mechanism. We count on your support. Russia should pay for this war with its assets. It is also a punishment. This is one of the most terrible punishments for Russian officials, who value money above everything else (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

The war initiated by the Russian Federation led to complex and unpredictable consequences, so Europe as well as the rest of the world face enduring crises migration, energy, food, finances, geopolitics etc.: "Due to the Russian war against Ukraine, Europe is experiencing the biggest migrant crisis in decades. When else was it that 12 million people lost their home and security in just a few months? Only World War II comes to mind." (President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Speeches).

And geopolitical crisis, enforced by the Russian warfare, illuminated problems within the United Nations. As a result, President Zelenskyy expresses his thoughts about reforming the organization due to its inability to tackle current vital problems:

We can ensure UN reform. So that all states abide by international law, so that no one violates the world order. The UN system and, in particular, the UN Security Council today do not provide a fair representation for most nations of the world. The voices of entire regions of the planet often cannot be heard when it is vital. If this reform had already taken place, we today would be able to respond to any aggression - not just that of Russia - at a truly global level (President of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Speeches).

Furthermore, one could have observed interesting feature of Zelenskyy's rhetorical argumentation comprising the exchange usage of politically correct and politically incorrect expressions. On the one hand, the interpretative analysis of expression from the group of politically correct change for military campaign in Ukraine demonstrates the attempt to decrease the negative impact on the listener and concentrate on cause of Ukrainian fight in order to persuade the international public in the need to constantly strengthen the support for the Ukrainian state. On the other hand, a significant number of expressions belonged to the group that highlighted the dramatic implications of energy, food or migration crises caused by Russian continuous aggression and barbaric attacks on civil infrastructure in Ukraine.

Such a rhetorical choice of Volodymyr Zelenskyy made it possible to send a clear twofold message to different target groups of his addresses: 1) despite dramatic losses and personal tragedies Ukrainian people continue to fight for the sake of their right to live in a free and democratic state; 2) Ukrainian defeat in the war will lead to unpredictable implications for European and Western security and functioning of liberal democracy system.

Interestingly, major messages promoted by Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his public addresses were reflected in political discourse of key EU institutional actors such the European Parliament or the European Commission. While analyzing political addresses delivered by presidents of key EU institutions one can easily find a wide range of repeated appeals and declarations to develop a more active role for the EU in the eastern region and transform the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union in light of the Russian war against Ukraine (Zheltovskyy, 2022, 221). What is more, there has been reached an agreement on the European forum regarding the commitment to the EU enlargement as – "a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united EU" (Zheltovskyy, 2022, 673).

6. Conclusion

Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has led to unprecedented and extraordinary Ukrainian resistance of different dimensions. In addition to military struggle, Ukrainian diplomacy has employed a wide range of tools aimed at building international alliances and coalitions against Russia. As a matter of fact, the president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy has become the main political actor associated with Ukrainian resistance. His regular TV messages to Ukrainian people and political addresses to national parliaments, international organizations and institutions led to promotion of Ukrainian vision of state development and unprecedented international support for its fight against Russian barbaric invasion.

The conducted analysis provided credible arguments in favor of the major assumption of the article that rhetorical argumentation of Zelenskyy played a significant role in the Western foreign policy shift in context of current and prospective relations between the collective West and Russia. As a matter of fact, aggressive Russian policies and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine have become a trigger for the reconsideration of the EU leadership in the Eastern Partnership region and a clear change of leadership style from transactional to transformational one. That shift led to EU unanimous support for granting the EU candidate status to Ukraine, strengthening sanction policy against Russia and bringing the issue of the EU enlargement back on the table of EU political agenda.

It is necessary to emphasize that conducted analysis of rhetorical addresses delivered by Ukrainian president makes it possible to confidently assert that usage of politically incorrect messages was deliberately chosen as a rhetorical strategy of Zelenskyy. What came as a surprise was the fact that the political incorrectness was used by Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his communication with Ukraine's biggest geopolitical allies despite the West's declared solidarity and unprecedented support for Ukraine. The idea behind such a rhetorical actin was to influence the tempo and scale of the western decision-making process on Ukraine. Therefore, the implementation of politically incorrect constituents of presidential addresses and indirect rhetorical attacks on western states regarding the scale of their support was an inseparable element of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's "going public" strategy.

Overall, the interpretative analysis of Zelenskyy's public rhetorical argumentation makes it possible to draw the following conclusions:

- regular rhetorical addresses to the international audiences have become an inseparable part of presidential political agenda;
- rhetorical argumentation was based on the white-black rhetoric that left no room for hesitance on support for Ukraine and could be summarized as follows: either you are with democracy or with the tyranny;
- the structure of rhetorical addresses centered on three major categories of expressions related to Ukraine, Collective West and Russia. As a matter of fact, the rhetorical addresses delivered by Zelenskyy positioned Ukraine in equal partnership with western democracies and put pressure on western politicians to increase and strengthen sanction policy against Russia;
- a significant number of addresses delivered in the first months of Russia's full-scale invasion were characterized by dominance of politically incorrect expressions aimed at indirect accusation of the EU states as a collective actor and particular politicians who expressed their opposition toward strengthening the sanction policy against Russia or crucial for Ukraine decisions such as granting the EU status to Ukraine;
- presented rhetorical argumentation of Zelenskyy as part of his public action aimed at increasing international support for Ukrainian state and army in particular resulted in unprecedented political decisions made by western partners such as EU candidate status for Ukraine or significant increase of weapons' delivery to Ukraine;
- reaching the diplomatic aims of Ukraine was reflected in change of tone of Zelenskyy's rhetoric which became more positive and concentrated on the strategical importance of Western - Ukrainian cooperation.

Despite the conducted research, there is no clear indication whether presidential rhetoric of Volodymyr Zelenskyy will continue playing a vital role in his policy agenda and be used as a tool of persuasion in foreign policy making. However, it is obvious that the rich database of Zelenskyy's presidential addresses will be a source of scientific interests among scholars interested in political communication and presidential rhetoric in particular. What is more, the database may serve as primary sources for researches doing analysis of Americanization of

political speech on the example of presidential rhetoric. In its turn given article has made an attempt to contribute to the discussion on the role of rhetorical argumentation delivered by a head of state in times of war and presented speech examples and application of political correctness and political incorrectness as key rhetorical instruments of presidential public action.

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THE LOGIC OF MULTILATERAL ASYMMETRIC CONFLICTS: THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR CASE

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Abstract: *One of the determining factors in the current system of international relations remains the de facto inequality of nations. This problem is key to the origins of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the world's reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.The international system today contains many connections and mediations, some of which are regulated, and others are informal. One of the common types of relations among actors in international politics is asymmetric relations, which are often friendly or of partnership but, under certain conditions, can become confrontational.The current conflict between Ukraine and Russia demonstrates how asymmetric relations become conflictual. In the example of this conflict, we also see that asymmetric relations form a whole complex of relations, which includes international actors at different levels – the Western community, Russia, Ukraine, and separatist entities supported by Russia in Ukraine.This situation is quite typical of several modern international conflicts. Its general logic is reproduced in various hot spots of the world. We propose to consider this model of relations as an example of a special kind of asymmetry – replicant asymmetry – when the same conditions and conflicts arise simultaneously at several hierarchical levels of international relations. The crisis possibility of replicant asymmetry is based on several motivational factors. Under certain conditions, they push the potential conflict on the escalation way. An increase in voltage or a rupture of one of the chains of replicant asymmetry automatically provokes a crisis in all other chains.*

Keywords: asymmetry, conflict, world system, Russia-Ukraine war

The current escalation of the existential conflict between Russia and the former USSR republic of Ukraine, which entered the phase of a full-scale military conflict on February 24, 2022, has put the issue of military security on the agenda of European politics as acutely as it can be imagined in post-war Europe. In her landmark Easter speech on April 27, 2022, the former British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss announced the "return of geopolitics" to the world agenda amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, to understand how the current geopolitics is the same as in the times of national liberation movements of the 19th century or clashes of hostile military-political blocs of the 20th century, we must take a closer look at the

characteristics of international politics and the specifics of their relations in modern circumstances.

One of the prerequisites for the transition of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict into an armed phase is the inequality of the economic, demographic and military potentials of the two countries, which gave the leadership of the Russian Federation reason to hope for an easy and quick success.

At the same time, several international relations researchers consider asymmetric relations to be more stable and less conflictual than symmetric ones. This ability of asymmetry to maintain the stability of the system of relations was noted by the founders of the theory of asymmetry in international relations. "…Asymmetry inevitably creates differences in risk perception, attention, and interactive behaviour between states, and it can lead to a vicious circle of systemic misperception. Despite such tensions, the international order is quite stable, and even asymmetric relations can rarely be forced by the stronger side." (Womack, 2004, p. 351).

Do asymmetric relations contain real crisis potential in the modern international system? What is the logic of the emergence and evolution of an asymmetric conflict, and which conditions provoke this evolution? We will try to answer these questions in this article.

Modern inequality of independent states

The inequality between an imperial metropolis and a former province (colony), which has taken the path of secession, is fundamental and obvious. However, such a struggle of the lesser against the greater and of the part against the whole is almost always successful in history. All empires have fallen apart, and none has yet been able to reverse the process.

Attempts at outright imperial revenge in the modern world are already quite rare. At the same time, inequality and dependence provoke conflicts in the modern world much more often than outright imperial ambitions.

Inequality in political science is traditionally considered destabilizing, which provokes, on the one hand, the stronger to use their power to subjugate the weaker and encourages the weaker to protest against the existing status quo factor (Beyer, 2014, p. 51).

The nature of the existing inequality and its causes are considered in various concepts of international relations. In particular, the most common classification of subjects of international

relations is the division of existing states into "great, middle, and small power". Researchers find this division in the works of Giovanni Botero, an Italian political thinker of the late 16th century. Leading academic institutions still use relevant academic classifications today (the University of Leicester, University of Nottingham, etc.)

It is quite convenient for assessing the potential influence and vulnerability of a state entity. However, it remains a purely formal feature that says nothing about a state's current place and role in the world, region, or in relations with another state.

It is also important to note that the modern world is not just a collection of "large, medium and small" states. Actors of international politics interact with each other within the framework of the global system of relations, which determines the place of each country and the form of its relations with other countries. Systematicity is an important characteristic of the sphere of international relations, as it is about the high integration of the globalized world and the significant mutual dependence of states.

The theory of systems (Bertalanffy) was most consistently applied to the field of international relations by representatives of the world-system approach (Wallerstein, 2004), which emphasizes the integral factors of world politics (economics, trade, and development). The proponents of this approach divide countries by belonging to the "core, semi-periphery and periphery".

The world-system theory mainly considers a country's participation in the world division of labor and its role in the global system of capitalism. However, it ignores most of political determinations such as political control, competition between global centers, and ambiguity of status (core, semi-peripheries or peripheries) that depend on the structure of existing unions and relations.

In the literature, the inequality among nations is considered in many contexts, but mainly in the context of asymmetry in international relations. The asymmetry of international relations stems from a certain inequality between nations and states, which natural objective or follows from the history and conditions of their relations.

Relations between large and small states and between core and peripheral countries, are asymmetric for purely objective reasons. Nevertheless, the concept of asymmetry is quite correct in defining a certain type of relationship. However, it says nothing about the nature and

causes of such asymmetry and ignores the systemic nature of relevant relations in the modern world, which is not a local phenomenon of relations between the two countries.

The functions of symmetrical or asymmetrical relations in the international system depend on what model of the world is currently functioning. It is suggested, in particular, that "the bipolar world predominantly forms symmetrical relations, the unipolar world is characterized by asymmetric relations, and the multipolar world – symmetric-asymmetric relations" (Perepelytsia & Subtelny, 2005, p. 25).

Theoretical reflection has not been widely provided on this issue. “Despite the prominence of asymmetry in empirical and theoretical arenas, however, asymmetry's significance is more often implied than explained” (Musgrave, 2019, p. 284).

Much more specific is, for example, the concept of patron-client relations, which was proposed during the most developed bipolar confrontation between East and West. Such relations are characterized as unequal but strong and mutually beneficial. They arise when one party cannot provide its security by military means but can be useful in securing the interests of the other, more influential and independent party.

The client plays a prominent role in patron’s competition with its counterpart. The more advantage the patron gains over its competitor through its association with its client, the more the patron will value the relationship. For example, Cuba was one of the most valuable client for USSR just because its key role in the competition USSR-USA. “There is also a critical perceptual dimension to patron-client state relationships. This (perception – *M.R.*) is derived from a consistent association between the two states for a recognizable, if sometimes only brief, period of time” (Shoemaker, 1984, p. 13).

Today's connection between the so-called center and periphery is becoming more multichannel and multidimensional. The whole system is evolving to a dynamic balance by an increasing number of actors and the growing diversity of their interactions. The definition of international politics as "anarchy", which emerged during the period of stabilization of the confrontation between Eastern and Western blocs (Bull, 1977), although rightly criticized, also takes on a new meaning in the new circumstances.

However, one should also noted the growing interdependence between actors at different levels and positions in the international division of labor, which results from dynamic processes

of integration and disintegration at different levels of interaction (political, economic, ideological, value, etc.). This raises the question of the conformity of existing institutions and concepts to the new conditions of their functioning. "Globalization is not changing the current system, but highlighting its structural limitations" (Bisley, 2007, p. 207).

Crisis potential of asymmetry as an issue

An important area of study of asymmetric relations is also the study of their dynamics, and the potential for change, including their development in a crisis scenario.

Classic asymmetric relationships arise when one party has less opportunity to influence the partner than the other and is therefore cannot defend their interests in confrontation. Therefore, in asymmetric relations, the weaker side tries to avoid confrontation, including through certain concessions in its interests (Womack, 2015, p. 10).

The asymmetry of relations becomes especially evident in the growing conflict between states that, for one reason or another, have a fairly close relationship or affect each other's interests. Such conflicts are becoming a significant tension factor in the respective regions or at the global level.

Thus, the former symmetrical confrontation between the USSR and the USA was replaced by asymmetric relations between the USA and the Russian Federation, which have entered a state of confrontation in recent years. Russia's relations with the countries of the former Soviet Union are also asymmetric. Moreover, in the case of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia, this asymmetry is mostly peaceful and even friendly, then in the case of Estonia, Lithuania, and Georgia, this type of relationship is rather hostile. The current status quo does not suit both sides, albeit for different reasons.

Sometimes reversals in asymmetric relationships occur quite suddenly. Thus, close and friendly asymmetric relations between the United States and Iran became sharply hostile since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Meanwhile, almost every hot spot in the world where the flames of actual or potential conflict are burning focuses on the asymmetry of relations between actors of different levels. At the same time, an asymmetric confrontation at one level of relations usually provokes tension and conflict in several areas of international relations. The situation is complicated bacause such

conflicts involve not only traditional states but also supranational structures and subnational entities.

The asymmetric conflict between Turkey and Cyprus has led to the formation of a third actor to this confrontation, the unrecognized Turkish Cypriot state. The Sunni majority of Arab states have a resource advantage over Shiite Iran but have been forced to oppose Iranian proxies in Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria for many years.

In this context, we can also mention the recent confrontation between the EU and the UK, on the one hand, and the related tensions between the UK and Scotland, on the other. Serb minorities, formed as self-governing communities in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, remain a factor in the instability of these Western Balkan countries, affecting not only regional security but also the overall context of the West-East confrontation.

Signs of asymmetric confrontation, which acquired a systemic character and went beyond bilateral relations, can be traced in several cases of interaction on the world scene.

The confrontation over the status of Taiwan, which intensified simultaneously with the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, has clear analogies. Despite significant differences in the legal, historical, and cultural background of these conflicts, their logic of emergence and development has significant similarities. There was a period of relative stabilization in the interaction within the USA – China – Taiwan triangle, during which, however, the mutual dependence and inequality of the partners was not eliminated. The inclusion of communist China in the capitalist world-system brought significant benefits to both the United States and the People's Republic of China. Mutual restraint in relations between Beijing and Taipei has also been beneficial for all parties. The US hold to the principle of "one China", while Beijing did not threaten the former island province with force.

The balance began to collapse simultaneously on all levels. The asymmetry in relations with America ceased to suit the Chinese and, approximately, since 2008, the rhetoric and actions of official Beijing have become increasingly ambitious and confrontational. At the same time, after the economic upheavals of 2008, the US took a course to restrict the access of Chinese goods and investments. Over the past decade and a half, relations between the two countries have entered a phase of global confrontation. As a result, stability in relations between Beijing and Taipei was also disturbed and almost reached the point of armed conflict.

Similar processes are unfolding in complex relations in the Middle East, which traditionally have a significant crisis potential. Asymmetric relations of the USA with Israel, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia have a different political and economic determinations, were formed and developed in different historical conditions, but some of them have their projections at lower levels:

Israel – Palestinian Authority (FATAH) – Hamas

Pakistan – Afghanistan – Taliban

Turkey – Kurds.

With the growth of the global influence of the PRC, new pyramids of asymmetric relations started forming also in the zone of Beijing's dominance, for example, China – Pakistan – Afghanistan (Taliban).

Putin's attempt to challenge the West is accompanied not only by a crisis in Russian-Ukrainian relations but also by increasing tension in the entire post-Soviet space. The conflict in West-Russia relations is reflected in others relations:

Ukraine – Crimea

Georgia – Abkhazia&South Ossetia

Moldova – Transnistria

Azerbaijan – Nagorno-Karabakh.

Thus, asymmetric today is not just particular to bilateral relations between countries. Asymmetric is the very structure of international relations that emerged and were established in the postwar world order, which was followed by the decolonization and the formation of new ties and dependencies between elements of the capitalist world system.

The concept of replicant asymmetry

Our basic hypothesis is that we can identify certain relatively stable constructions of hierarchical dependencies and vertically-oriented confrontations in the structure of modern international relations, which play the role of balances and instruments of self-regulation in the world system. Such constructions also can be identified as a source of crisis dynamics and various threats.

The circumstances of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and how it evolved allow us to build a model of relations that led to this conflict. On the one hand, this model is hierarchical, as it includes subjects of different levels of international politics, but at the same time, it has signs of reversible dependence from the higher levels of the hierarchy to the lower. This construction is also characterized by structural isomorphism, which considers each subject as containing features of the subject of the higher level and replicates the same features on the subject of the lower level.

This type of asymmetry contains a certain symmetry – the symmetry of relationships, not subjects. Subjects differ in their influence and the nature of their interests, but they become elements of a system in which the same type of relationship is reproduced at different levels of interaction between these elements.

From now on, we would call this type of relationship replicant asymmetry.

The origins of this complex positioning of the actors of the world system lie in the historical, cultural, ideological, and institutional dimensions of the system. The detailed study of the phenomenon of replicant asymmetry would be a matter of considerable interest to many fields of study. However, in the context of problems in international politics, the fundamental conditionality of this kind of relations should be noted for the system of international relations. We emphasize that this is not a simple hierarchy (a stepped dependence of lower levels from the highers) but a fundamentally new, dynamic, fairly stable construction of the international political space, reflecting some hidden mechanisms of formation and self-reproduction of the whole system.

Replicant asymmetry exists as a real dependence of subjects on each other and can lead to potential conflict produced by their mutual status. It differs from classical colonial dependence in its multilevel ties and the presence of both direct and inverse and "cross" connections, which arise between subjects of different levels "over the head" of the nearest dominus.

The current state of the world-system produces replicant asymmetric connections to balance it and maintain it in a state of dynamic equilibrium. These relationships are tense and have significant crisis potential, but they can be quite resilient, as they operate on a balance of interests and threats to all involved.

The phenomenon of replicant asymmetry needs to be studied in the context of security studies as one of the key factors of stability. This phenomenon is also of great interest to studying of world-system connections and the dynamic factors of global politics.

Ukrainian-Russian case and the replicant asymmetry concept application

In the context of asymmetric relations, in our opinion, we should consider the specific conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which has become one of the serious challenges not only to European security but also to the stability of the international relations system as a whole.

An essential characteristic of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which entered the stage of open war on February 24, 2022, is its asymmetric nature.

The conflict's asymmetric nature, in this case, is a consequence of asymmetric relations in the previous period. The resistance that Ukraine demonstrated in 2022 is a sign of its acquisition of full-fledged subjectivity, and therefore, of overcoming the unequal nature of asymmetric relations that connected the two countries in the past. So this asymmetric conflict is a form of escape from asymmetric relations of dependence for Ukraine and a way to preserve these asymmetric relations for Russia.

Therefore, the whole period of fierce ideological, political, and since 2014 armed confrontation between Kyiv and Moscow, for the Ukrainian side, could be appropriately to describe as the War for Independence, which entered its decisive phase in 2022.

However, the goals of the participants in the conflict are rapidly changing. The changes in mutual status has been realized as irreversibile by both sides since certain moment. That is why the former metropolis is now trying to cause as much damage as possible to its former province, by all means, to reduce its territory, economic and military potential, and limit its political subjectivity and its independence in foreign and domestic policy.

The collapse of empires is one of the cross-cutting themes of the history of civilization. Both the former provinces (colonies) struggle for their independence and the resistance of the imperial center and attempts to restore imperial unity have occurred many times in history and have been accompanied by large-scale bloody conflicts. Memories of violence in Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia are still fresh in Europe.

Today, we are witnessing the actualization of the logic of the transition of asymmetric relations to the stage of open conflict and the multiplication of this conflict in other problem areas of international relations. Some are even talking about the risk of starting a new World War.

Asymmetric Ukrainian-Russian relations entered a zone of turbulence after Ukraine's internal political crisis in 2004 when pro-Russian candidate Yanukovych clashed with pro-Western candidate Yushchenko during the presidential campaign. The civil unrest that became known across the world as the Orange Revolution marked an insurmountable conflict between the desire of the majority of Ukrainian society to strengthen state sovereignty, liberal reforms, and European civilizational choices and the opposite course to restore Soviet imperialism adopted by the Kremlin. This course of Russian leadership could eventually be supported by part of the population of Ukraine. That is why the Kremlin decided to start struggling to regain its control over Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries as well.

At that time, a broader structure of replicant asymmetry was formed around Ukrainian-Russian relations, involving both external actors (the Euro-Atlantic community) and domestic actors in Ukrainian politics at the subnational level. With the escalation of the contradiction between Moscow's intention to restore the empire and Kyiv's desire to preserve its independence and join the West, this structure evolved into an imbalanced state and began to disintegrate.

So, in the case of the current Russian-Ukrainian confrontation, which started at the end of 2013, we see a whole system of asymmetric relations, the structure of which resembles a Russian "Matryoshka doll" (or similar Chinese and Japanese dolls).

Such a model of relations included the following subjects of the world system: the West, Russia, Ukraine, and Crimea.

The crisis probability of replicant asymmetry type of relations is based on a several motivational factors. Under certain conditions, they push the potential conflict to escalation.

Difference and dependence are the characteristics of the relationship that form a constant (or periodic) desire for a lower-level subject to change the status quo, to break the "unnatural" partnership, and finally form a more "natural" one with a higher-level subject. When certain threats stimulate such motivation, we usually see strong and rather unexpected reactions, such as the identification of the West with the scarecrow of "fascism" in the minds of Russians, the

willingness of protesters in Kyiv to die for "European integration", the desire of Crimean pensioners “to die in Russia”, and also the blue-yellow Ukrainian national flag in the hands of Crimean Tatar activists (which means a significant risk for them in the “Russian Crimea”).

As early in 2022, the President of the Russian Federation defined the war in Ukraine as Russia's struggle for its existence, for the right to be Russia (Putin, 2022).

For Putin, it is clear that his country's “right to be itself” actually means his right to remain in power for life. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize a shift in Russian propaganda from the local goal of the "special operation" in Ukraine to the scale of the so-called "civilizational" confrontation between Russia and the West. It happened less than a month after the start of hostilities. Then the axis of asymmetric Russia-West confrontation was articulated as the main one for the Russian establishment three months after the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Trenin, 2022).

Using the categories of life and death emphasizes the existential nature of the actors’ motivations, their connection with the basic structures of identity, and the matter of instinct of collective self-preservation. Thus, it is not a question of fictional entities or situational categories of self-determination but of a serious conflict that has large-scale social consequences in the case of its "detonation". The cases of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, Bosnia, the Gaza Sector, and the territories controlled by Boko Haram in Africa have provided many examples of this kind of crisis worldwide.

An increase in voltage or a rupture of one of the chains of replicant asymmetry automatically provokes a crisis in all other chains. At the same time, the crisis that arises at lower levels of the relation (sub-national and national) is usually easily removed from the political agenda by higher-level actors if the breakup is not part of their current intentions. For example, that happened during the 1995 Crimean crisis, when Russia was busy suppressing Chechnya's independence and did not support Meshkov's separatist uprising in Crimea.

On the other hand, the lower levels have virtually no alternative to counter the crisis scenario if a corresponding gap emerges at the higher levels.

The case of Crimea, and later Donbas, clearly shows that regional identity detonates under the influence of external factors. Vertical relations (centre-region, metropolis-colony) can be in a state of latent tension for a long time, but if they have been stabilized according to certain

principles of coexistence, they go into open conflict only in an extraordinary situation. Ancient and modern history is full of such examples.

The "Spring of the Nations" in the Habsburg Empire in 1848 was only part of the socio-political changes associated with the emancipation of entire classes and influential social groups. It is difficult to imagine the Russian Revolution of 1917, which led to the emergence of newly independent states, without the defeats at the warfront and the institutional crisis of the monarchy. The Chechen independence movement of the 1990s was based not only on the precedent of the collapse of the USSR but also came as a result of the deportation of the Chechen people after WWII.

An external factor in the relationship of replicant asymmetry is almost always the conflict of higher-level entities, which is projected onto the behaviour of the lower-level entity. One can argue that what marked the start of a new round of Russia's confrontation with the West – was a revanchist turns in the policy of the Russian leadership (2002-2003) or the color revolutions in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine. However, the new delimitation was officially declared in Putin's 2007 Munich speech. Furthemore, the next escalation of the conflict around Ukraine's signing of the Association Agreement with the EU in 2013 was originally determined by the logic of restoring the realities of the Cold War.

Significantly, the Ukrainian political elite and the majority of Ukrainian citizens were unaware of the scale and severity of the confrontation almost until the beginning of the armed conflict.

Until the end of November 2013, the country's leadership continued to bid on the condition of economic integration and the provision of credit from the EU. President Yanukovych had been considering the situation as a kind of "auction", selling his loyalty according to the logic of the *patron-client* (Shoemaker) relationship.

Most Ukrainians also saw no reason for a conflict with the former metropolis. All opinion polls still showed the positive attitude of Ukrainians toward Russia and Russians (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2015).

Meanwhile, the Russians are deteriorating their attitude towards Ukrainians precisely in the context of growing hostility against the West. Russia's public opinion "entered" a state of conflict before the situation in Ukraine entered a crisis phase. The Russian propaganda machine

prepared its internal audience for the apocalyptic scenario in Ukraine and acted as a donor of tension and violence inside Ukrainian society.

The projection of Russia's perception of reality into starkly opposed categories, i.e., "our's own – another's", "we-fascists", and "defeat-victory" applied to the internal political conflict in Ukraine was an additional destabilizing factor of Ukrainian crisis 2014. These applications stimulated fear and hate in Ukrainian society which broke the peaceful existence and ideological inertia of this country that lasted all 22 years of independence. Moreover, only at this stage was the real source of aggression finally identified by the collective mind, which formed a powerful anti-Russian trend in Ukrainian society.

The reaction of rejection was formed in the process of the conflict itself unfolding. Furthemore, if at the end of 2013, the concept of "European choice" stood for most Ukrainians in the context of modernization (and did not contradict maintaining the status quo in relations with Russia), it became synonymous with the war for independence within a year. It meant the war against Russian control.

This war brought Russia's followers in Crimea and Sevastopol a new reality. According to sociological studies of the previous period, the number of principal opponents of the peninsula's belonging to Ukraine in the pre-crisis period in this region amounted to 25% (Rating Group, 2011).

Therefore, when Russia and Ukraine were at peace, the Crimean people adhered to the status quo. However, with the onset of open conflict, the identity of its pro-Russian population began to evolve rapidly in the direction of incompatibility with the recognition of Ukrainian jurisdiction. At least such a mechanism was envisaged by the tactic of annexation of Crimea, implemented by the Russians in March 2014.

The new political face of Crimea and its inclusion in the logic of the war on the side of Russia has aroused a sharp reaction from the Crimean Tatars.

Previously, after repatriation from Central Asia, the community of Crimean Tatars became almost adapted to the system of checks and balances that emrged between Kyiv, Simferopol, and Moscow. The conflict with pro-Russian residents of Crimea has entered a latent phase and did not tend to grow. However, when the status quo in Crimea had been violated the peaceful mode of the Crimean Tatar presence on the peninsula changed immediately.

Ukraine's removal from the system of replicant asymmetry leaves this group alone with the pro-Russian community of Crimea and Russia definitely as the successor to the repressive policies of the USSR and the former Russian Empire against Crimean Tatars. In these conditions, the active part of the Crimean Tatar community has mobilized and has demonstrated the same reaction of rejection that we have seen before in relations Russia-West, Ukraine-Russia, and Crimea-Ukraine.

An interesting pattern is observed in the evolution of the most significant phenomenon in crisis story – the Donetsk separatism. The appearance of the Donetsk separatism is not recorded in the political history of independent Ukraine. It was not recognized by sociology surveys until early 2014. However, from 2012 to 2014 the number of supporters of the separation of Donbas from Ukraine (similar to the western Ukrainian province Galicia) increased from 2% to 8% (Rating Group, 2014), which indicates not the emergence of a separate "nation of Donbas", but the growing political polarization within Ukrainian society and reducing of the possibilty of compromise.

The Donetsk and Luhansk separatists emerged in an organized manner, according to a scenario tested in 2004 by the pro-Russian politicians of Ukraine at the Congress of Deputies in Severodonetsk. This separatism was nothing more than a form of political blackmail in the face of the group's potential loss of power in Kyiv. This time, the separatist scenario was prepared and directed by the Russian propaganda machine and Russian security services (FSB and the military intelligence GRU). The representatives of the Yanukovych regime played a subordinate role in its implementation.

The formation of these pseudo-republics took place against a wave of maximum emotional arousal and open panic among the population of the region, which assessed political events in Kyiv through the prism of Russian TV channels in the context of the above-mentioned semantic constructions of "we vs fascists" and "victory-defeat". The case of Crimea, which was easily annexed by Russia, played an important role in the emergence of separatist projects. Therefore, the proclamation of "independence" by the political opponents of the new government in Kyiv was perceived as a temporary, mostly imitative act.

Under these conditions, the organization "Donetsk People's republic", which emerged a few years before the conflict as a marginal group of several people and had no political

representation or public support, was suddenly accepted as a basic political project and began to shape the way of behaving and thinking of local elites and active masses. The “Lugansk People’s republic” as an organization did not exist at all until 2014, and sociology has never recorded the phenomenon of "Luhansk separatism" in Ukraine.

Thus, Donbas has never been part of the system of replicant asymmetry associated with the relations between the West, Russia, and Ukraine, but it has become an element of it, replacing Crimea in this role. With the advent of this element, the system regained a chance to restore its stability and move the conflict from an exacerbation stage to a remission stage.

The thawing of the conflict at the initiative of Russia in 2022 has led to a new escalation of tensions at all levels of asymmetric confrontation.

Who will win in the asymmetric confrontation between Ukraine and Russia? The theory of asymmetric relations warns against precise predictions on this issue. “Power asymmetries that favour the stronger state are often combined with asymmetries that favor the weaker one: disparities in intensity of interests, externalities with regard to other relationships, and information about the workings of the other state tend to favor the weaker member of the dyad more often than naïve expectations would suggest” (Musgrave, 2019, p. 284).

In addition, including the two countries in a multilevel system of asymmetric relations encourages consideration of the development of this conflict within the logic of the model of replicant asymmetry.

The crisis in the system of relations based on replicant asymmetry can develop according to three scenarios: a) return to the status quo; b) loss of one of the elements of replicant asymmetry; c) the collapse of the entire system of relations.

Scenarios are ranked according to the degree of probability. Most crises end with the restoring the status quo (for example, Ukrainian-Russian relations in the period 2005-2013). If one of the elements of the system "falls out", it is replaced by another element that has not yet had the appropriate self-determination or had a different positioning (examples – Donbas instead of Crimea in Ukraine, Gagauzia instead of Transnistria in Moldova). Precedents for the complete breakdown of the chain of replicant asymmetry are rare in the modern world. They are associated with the consequences of large-scale conflicts or other civilizational changes (for example, Central Europe in the postwar period, postcolonial West Africa, etc.).

Are there potential scenarios for Ukraine's "falling out" of the asymmetric pyramid – which means its complete withdrawal from Russia's sphere of influence? Yes, they exist, but only if the West takes full responsibility for Ukraine, just as Russia did in the case of the "withdrawal" of Crimea from Ukraine. In that case, we might see a new system of replicant asymmetry, in which the United States, the European Union, and perhaps some autonomous entity inside Ukraine would become the chains of new relations.

Instead, asymmetric relations between Russia and, for example, Kazakhstan, would probably lead to the emergence of a new political actor such as the Russian-speaking autonomy movement of North Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

The concept of asymmetry in international relations is relevant to the nature of interaction between modern states, both in partnership and in confrontation mode. At the same time, this concept only partially describes unequal interaction.

Asymmetry mostly indicates the inequality of potentials and the difference in the interests and strategies of the actors in international politics. A wide range of accompanying phenomena and circumstances forming asymmetric interaction belong to the sphere of integral characteristics of politics. Integrity and interdependence are its key characteristics, which gives reason to consider the phenomenon of asymmetric relations as an important part of the world system.

Asymmetry today is not just particular bilateral relations between countries. Asymmetry is an important part of the structure of international relations that emerged and was established in the postwar polarization, decolonization, and full-scaled global transformations of the 1990s and 2000s.

Actors in international politics are traditionally ranked, depending on their influence, into large, medium, and small states. The world-system approach also operates with the concepts of world core, periphery, and semi-periphery. The relationship between these spheres is mediated by a significant number of asymmetric connections that form a complex mechanism of balances and dependencies.

Asymmetric interactions and relations that arise between actors at different levels of this system form entire chains of dependencies. In this chain, the same nature of relations is reflected from one level to another. Such a phenomenon can be called replicant asymmetry. Not only independent states but also certain autonomies, minorities, and other non-state actors become participants in these relations and interactions.

Some pyramids of asymmetric interaction formed historically; others became the result of situational alliances. These structures differ from traditional international alliances because of unequal relations between their elements. Replicant asymmetry also differs significantly from traditional vassalage because its structure is dynamic and its elements are largely autonomous. Mutual obligations in this system are mostly conventional and temporal.

Under certain conditions, the dynamics of replicant asymmetry become confrontational. Usually, this happens when one or more elements of the system cease to be satisfied with the status quo. Since all levels of asymmetric dependence are potentially conflictual, a crisis in one of its elements is immediately projected onto another.

Tensions that arise at lower levels of replicative asymmetry tend to be moderated by higher-level actors, unless they are conflict-minded. However, a conflict arising at higher levels of interaction is inevitably projected to lower levels. Then, voltage induction occurs at all levels of interaction, which can lead to certain elements falling out of the system or to its complete destruction.

Studying the immanent logic of the formation and development of asymmetric relations and the risks of destabilization they contain is a promising area of research in national security and international relations. The conclusions drown from such research would help to more convincingly understand the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its perspectives for the future.

Considering asymmetric relations in the context of the stability of the existing system of international relations, the sources of its dynamics, and the risks of destabilization opens opportunities for a more accurate and adequate assessment of the driving forces of modern history.

It can also be assumed that the patterns and causal links found in this conflict will be productive for studying other specific conflicts of our time that go beyond the traditional

understanding of the causes of conflicts due to territorial claims, national irredentism, or ideological/religious incompatibility.

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THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR AS A FACTOR IN REVIVING JOINT PROJECTS BETWEEN THE STATES OF THE INTERMARIUM REGION

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Abstract: *Various studies have revealed a revival of the cooperation projects of Central and Eastern European countries. This reality has been materialised by the emergence of projects such as the Three Seas Initiative or the Bucharest Format. The thesis of the present research is that the main cohesive factor of the "inter-seas" states is the Russian aggression in Ukraine together with the aggressive policy undertaken by the Russian state. The investigative approach of the research followed the missions, goals, or media reports of the mentioned programs. The objective of the investigation is to capture the link between Russian aggression in Ukraine and the stimulation of regional cooperation. As will be revealed throughout the paper, the subject is gaining an increasing attention. In this aspect the significance of the research grows. Various hypotheses have appeared regarding the emergence and purposes of TSI or B9. The present research attempts to clarify the main reason for the collaboration of the mentioned states. It captures an important dimension of the projects by confirming a major general reason for their existence. The results of the present investigation reveal that Russian aggression in Ukraine and the aggressive nature of the Russian Federation's foreign policy have been a real leitmotiv in the formation and development of joint projects in the Intermarium area. Both TSI and B9 emerged from the desire of the Balto-Pontic Isthmus states to ensure the security and resilience of the Eastern flank of the Western World.*

Keywords: The Intermarium Region, Bucharest Nine, Three Seas, Russo-Ukrainian War

Introduction

In his inaugural speech, Polish President Andrzej Duda (2015) said that stronger guarantees from NATO are vital not only for Poland but also for the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. The reason given was that the political situation is challenging. From the vision he expressed, it follows that there is a need for dialogue of the states in the territory between the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic Sea. In the same year the Polish President along with the President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, launched the political platform "The Three Seas

Initiative" (Popławski & Jakóbowski, 2020, p. 7). The efforts did not stop there and at the initiative of the Polish President and the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, the Bucharest 9 format was launched in the autumn of 2015 (Gerasymchuk, 2019, p. 5). Most states in the Intermarium area are in NATO and the EU. Therefore, the research raises the following question: Is the Russian aggression in Ukraine the main external factor that stimulated the emergence of the current projects in the Intermarium region?

The thesis of this paper is that the Russian-Ukrainian war is the main external factor that led to the materialization of projects aimed at regional cooperation between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Sea states. Our research addresses the Russian-Ukrainian war and focuses chronologically on the period from 2014 to the present, not just the full-scale invasion. The approach distances itself from the analysis of the plan for a confederal Central and South-Eastern Europe and it does not deal with the plans of a particular federal political unit. The proposed investigative method is a qualitative one, namely discourse analysis. The first objective of the approach was to identify organisations that are based on the concept of cooperation of the "between seas" states. The second objective aimed to capture the link between Russian aggression in Ukraine and fostering regional cooperation. After reviewing the relevant literature, the methodological approach targeted to identify the sources recorded adjacent to the topic. To this end, the information concerned was analysed and extracted from the speeches of the organisations' officials, the missions and goals presented in the projects related to the "Between Seas" region and press reports. The information on the external cohesive factor component was investigated, reviewed, and presented in relation to the research question to answer it.

The subject is enjoying growing attention. As Laruelle & Rivera (2019, p. 4) found, the concept is among those that have experienced a "renaissance" in the contemporary period. In addition to popularization, the concept of Intermarium has become important in academic research and, as Ištok et al. (2018) noted, the most significant for Polish debates on local geopolitics. The present research is a contribution to the academic debate on an important topic. Its significance increases given the importance of the ongoing war in Eastern Europe and the complex response generated by regional states.

The first part of the paper discusses the conceptual history of Intermarium, followed by recent literature on the current understanding of the concept and concludes with perspectives on Ukraine as related to it. The second part investigates the reinvigoration of the Intermarium idea through the regional projects Three Seas Initiative and The Bucharest Nine Format. The third section of the research is the most significant. It captures and presents the link between regional cooperation projects "between the seas" and the Russo-Ukrainian war. The end is represented by the conclusions of the research and its perspective on the topic.

1. Intermarium: history and literature

From a historical perspective, the concept of Intermarium has its origins in the 19th century. It was designed by Polish thinkers following the failure of the November Uprising. They targeted nationalist aspirations to resist the powers that divided their territories. The concept was further developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It gained popularity in the interwar period thanks to Józef Piłsudski. The politician proposed the creation of a bloc of confederal states to counter both Eastern and Western expansionist tendencies. The central idea of Intermarium was to form a military alliance, the other links being considered of secondary importance. States would remain sovereign. Originally, the project was intended for Slavic states such as the Baltic States and Ukraine. For strategic reasons, the project was later extended to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia. After Piłsudski's death, the failed project was adapted by Józef Beck but again remained unsuccessful (Nałęcz, 2019, pp. 2-4). The project was also conceived in the post-war period by thinkers in exile. The idea was revived after the fall of the Iron Curtain (Ištok et al., 2018). As can be seen in works such as that of Crețu & Ardeleanu (2018), a revival of projects adjacent to the Intermarium space is taking place through newly established organizations such as the Three Seas Initiative or Bucharest Nine.

Numerous sources are investigating the present concept of "Intermarium". Early on, Troebst (2003) presented the "Intermarium" concept in the context of the mental mapping of Central Europe. There is historical research such as Chodakiewicz's (2012) which analyses the space between the Baltic and the Black Sea as a particular whole. Smyrgała (2014, p. 36)

concludes that the Intermarium states constitute a definite geopolitical entity based on common history and culture. We also find that although they have a strong sense of European identity, they have had to fight constantly to the south and east and remain a main eastern "bulwark" for the West. Authors such as Crețu & Ardeleanu (2018) have tried to indicate the revival of the Intermarium projects from a Romanian perspective and attempted to capture the implications for Romania. Laruelle & Rivera (2019) addressed the different points of mental design. In this respect, the project has also been investigated from the perspective of a "New Europe" with trans-Atlantic sympathies or as a dream of the Ukrainian radical right. There are favourable prospects for ideas like Tycner's (2020). It confirmed the popularisation of the concept, its strategic importance in the context of post-2014 events and made recommendations on adapting the idea to the current situation.

Ukraine has particularly benefited from the attention of Intermarium-related projects over the years (Kushnir, 2019). From this point of view, it is relevant to grasp the connection between the conflict opened by the Russian Federation in the Ukrainian territory. According to some views (Smyrgała, 2014, p. 36), Ukraine follows specific Intermarium policies and fights for the defence of Europe. On the Ukrainian side, there is research that has geo-strategically indicated the need to revive such projects in a modern manner (Todorov, 2016). He indeed emphasized the traditionalist, Christian and nationally centered component of the Intermarium states. For him, the project would revitalise traditional Europe and constitute an informal anti-Russian union. Boichenko (2020, p. 9) criticized the perspective of authors such as Laruelle & Rivera (2019) who attribute the Intermarium revival to the Ukrainian far right. According to the author, the Intermarium option is the wish of most Ukrainian citizens and various citizens of Central and Eastern Europe due to close historical political, economic, and religious experience. He also said that relations between the EU and other forms of European integration should not be based on destructive competition or mutual hostility. According to Boichenko (2020, pp. 9-11), they should be complementary.

General examples and those of Ukrainian literature confirm that the concept of "Intermarium" has been explored by numerous sources that contribute to the understanding and mental mapping of its revival. Debates and opinions on the identity and implications of the

projects are varied. Therefore, elucidating the main external factor generating the current cohesion of this part of Europe is a part of ongoing thematic research.

2. The Three Seas Initiative and Bucharest Format: A revival of Intermarium projects

It was not until 2014 that the concept returned to the mainstream (Tycner, 2020). It seems that in this tense context related to the war in the region, new projects are emerging to promote cooperation between "Intermarium" states. Researchers such as that of Crețu & Ardeleanu (2018) concludes that there has subsequently been a revival of ideas related to the project. This revival has been attributed to various issues. Wishart (2018), for example, considered that the project is predominantly supported by the Ukrainian far right. Laruelle & Rivera (2019, p. 3, 27) also supported the same idea but completed the conceptual dimension by adding two elements. The first is the American encouragement of a Central and Eastern Europe seen to be more Atlanticist than Western. The second is the deepening socio-political differences between Western Europe and the predominantly conservative Eastern Europe, which claims to be the protector of true European values. A similar view was taken by Umland who, together with Fedorenko (2017), concluded that the Intermarium revival among some EU states is due to the conservative views of some Eastern European politicians.

Even if economic and political projects such as Via Carpatia, Three Seas Initiative (TSI) or Bucharest 9 (B-9) are of marginal relevance, they evoke the interwar idea of Intermarium (Fedorenko & Umland, 2017). Since their creation, the presidents of the TSI or B9 states have made it clear that they are only seeking regional cooperation and cohesion. Presidents such as Klaus Iohannis (Romania) and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović (Croatia) stressed that while they are pursuing the transatlantic relationship, the initiatives are pro-European. It was also stated that among the main goals pursued was the development of their states as they did not enjoy the historical privileges of those in the West (Ene, 2017, pp. 115-116). It has been noted that the Three Seas Initiative and the Bucharest 9 format evoke the interwar idea of Intermarium, but what are TSI and B9?

The Three Seas Initiative was launched in August 2015. Subsequently, various annual summits were held in the capitals of the member states. The member states of the Initiative belong to the EU and, except for Austria, to NATO. In addition to Austria, TSI members are the three Baltic States, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The geopolitical potential of the organization has been confirmed by the attendance at TSI meetings of many important leaders from the United States, the European Union and even the People's Republic of China. The Three Seas Initiative openly set out to strengthen transatlantic ties. Furthermore, its stated aims were to strengthen the integrated economy and build an infrastructure network linking the region from north to south. Mentions of the desire for cooperation within the EU were clear. However, in this respect, various fears have arisen that the member states of the Initiative could be more strongly influenced by Washington or even Beijing. As the TSI did not directly address the security issue, there was pressure from Romanian and Polish officials to set up a sub-group to include this component. It was in this context that the Bucharest 9 format emerged following a small summit of NATO's Eastern European states. It was held in Bucharest in November 2015 (Soroka & Stępniewski, 2019, pp. 14-23).

Nine of the member states of the Three Seas Initiative signed a joint declaration at the Bucharest Summit. The initiative is attributed to Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and Polish President Andrzej Duda. States that have targeted special regional cooperation within NATO are Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. They aimed to create a credible military alliance. All the Bucharest 9 states were under Soviet influence or even part of the Soviet Union in the past. They are all part of NATO today. Among other objectives, they have sought to meet the 2% of Gross Domestic Product investment in defense (Gerasymchuk, 2019, pp. 5-6). The format has not been popular and has not been viewed favorably by Western European leaders. At the other end of the spectrum, Washington looked favorably on the idea. This again raised fears that the initiative would serve the interests of the overseas state more than those of the continent. However, in line with Umland & Rotaru's (2017) observations, the Bucharest 9 format is indistinguishable from NATO missions. One of the B-9 objectives is also to improve security and stability in the region. It is

precisely from this point of view, I find, that it is important to identify the main factor for the revival of regional consolidation projects related to Intermarium.

3. Related to the Russo-Ukrainian War?

The war in Ukraine is historically framed between 2014 and the present. In summary, Ukraine's pro-Russian president has opted to reject deeper ties with the European Union. He was removed from power following violent protests. A pro-Western government has taken power in Ukraine. The Russian Federation responded by annexing the Crimean Peninsula. In addition, the Russian state has started to support separatist movements in Donetsk and Luhansk. The eastern regions of Ukraine as well as the whole country have become unstable. The ongoing military conflict has resulted in thousands of deaths. Western countries have united in sanctioning Russia over its activity in Ukraine. Later, Russia has amassed large numbers of troops on the Ukrainian border. On 24 February 2022, it launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian state has occupying various territories. Western states tightened their sanctions and openly supported Ukraine through various means including the sending of lethal weapons while Belarus, on the other hand, sided with Russia (Walker, 2023).

According to The Joint Statement on the Three Seas Initiative (2016), Central and Eastern European countries would become more secure by expanding cooperation in energy, transport, common development of digital communication and of economic sector. One of the targets of this cooperation is therefore security. However, it is presented as necessary within the framework of the EU and NATO, complementary, not opposed. Soroka & Stępniewski (2019, p. 20) noted that several projects were subsequently launched, including the construction of offshore liquefied petroleum gas terminals, pipelines, oil pipelines and other facilities necessary for the development of industry and energy sector infrastructure. This necessity implies the security component as the 3SI states were dependent to varying degrees on energy supplies from providers associated with the Russian Federation. If energy supplies were dominated by Russia and diversification was the goal, the clear objective was to reduce dependence on the Russian Federation. The emergence of 3SI following the annexation of Crimea supports this hypothesis. Measures to diversify energy resources are justified as the dependence of the „between seas”

states on the Russian Federation were greater than that of the rest of the EU in this respect (Zbińkowski, 2019, pp. 110-111).

The evolving tensions between Russia and Ukraine have revealed internal IST divergences. Both the Trump administration and the Biden administration have sought to support the diversification of the 3SI states' energy resources (Tchakarova & Benko, 2021, pp. 1-2). The Baltic States, Poland and Romania have shown a major willingness to cooperate with the US. Poland, on the other hand, could not agree on anti-Russian mobilization with the Visegrád member states even though it had positive cooperation with them on immigration policy. Hungary, for example, has shown a friendly attitude towards the Russian state. For these reasons, Górka (2018, p. 60) argues the view that Poland attempted a discreet political arrangement that included Balkan states with similar problems. The TSI's goal of diversifying energy resources, he says, is similar to Poland's goal of reducing Russian influence in the region, ensuring energy security and strengthening the US presence in the region in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea. The diversification of energy resources in the context of the monopoly held by the Russian Federation in the 3SI states sends a clear message, but the subsequent information chronologically completed clarified the anti-Russian character.

In a communication from Derek Chollet (2022), Advisor to the US Department of State, he said his state has been a strong supporter of the TSI Investment Fund to increase the resilience of companies in the region to Russian and Chinese economic pressure. Of the five proposed internal objectives of the Three Seas Initiative (2022), one addresses the geopolitical component. It aims to strengthen ties between the Initiative countries and to strengthen the transatlantic link in a violent geopolitical context. Also, the focus on the energy component remains in the template of mentioning the geopolitical environment. "Resilient" energy infrastructure is listed as a top priority.

Sprūds & Vargulis (2022, p. 203) confirmed the statement. They framed the national perspectives on the priorities targeted by each state in relation to the Initiative. The first or secondary priority for most countries was the dimension of energy security. On average, the component is primary for 3SI. The only state to rank 3 out of 4 was Estonia. It placed the geopolitical dimension first. The information is important if we consider the securitization

approach proposed by Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde (1998). It suggests focusing on the discourse of the problem indicated as security. Securitization information contrasts with the Russian import monopoly. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 confirmed the fears of most of the 3IS states and the need for regional cooperation.

In the preamble to the Joint Declaration of the Seventh Summit of the Three Seas Initiative (2022), there is information of particular concern about the geopolitical and economic context shaken by the invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. The preamble condemns the military activity undertaken by the Russian state and, typical of most NATO states, urges the withdrawal of military troops from Ukrainian territory. Among the statements signed by representatives of the 12 TSI states, Russian aggression is strongly condemned. The TSI has shown itself to be willing to get involved in the reconstruction of Ukraine and to engage it in its projects. Internal EU cooperation and transatlantic ties also appear as a leitmotif. Ukraine was present through representatives as a special guest. The message is clear: developing digital infrastructure and services enhances security. Security is therefore not only important in the energy component. The partnership supports the EU and the US, and the threat that generates the need for cooperation is the tense geopolitical context generated by the Russian Federation.

Presented as a sub-set of the TSI, the Bucharest Format (B9) specifically addresses the issue of security (Soroka & Stępniewski, 2019, p. 24). Joint Declaration of the Heads of State Bucharest 9 (2015) strictly addresses the security component of NATO states in the 3 seas region. The act invokes security issues in the South and East and recalls Russia's aggressive activity in Ukraine, territorial annexations, mobilization and destabilization of regional security and stability. The founding motions are aimed at strengthening the military capabilities of allied states in the region. It is Russia's continued aggressive policy that dictates 'concern' and requires firm responses. The Platform is presented as remaining open for consultations, projects, and common approaches due to challenges and threats.

Subsequent B9 summits have reinforced the original position. A year after the Bucharest summit, the foreign ministers of the B9 states highlighted again the unprecedented security problems. The first of these is the activity of the Russian Federation which endangers the security of the whole of Europe. The leaders expressed their support for the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of Ukraine. The same was reiterated in 2017 when a new meeting was held between the foreign ministers of the Bucharest Nine. Moreover, it called for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. Russian aggression was also a constant leitmotif in the joint statements of 2018 and 2019 (Gerasymchuk, 2019, pp. 5-6). To address the security challenges on the Eastern flank, the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State Bucharest 9 meeting (2018) proposed to ensure a coherent response focused on the region supported by a NATO command structure, strengthening maritime and air positions to discourage the enemy. The 2021 Summit was also attended by the US President. In the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State Bucharest 9 Meeting (2021), criticism was strongly directed at Russia accused of military build-up on the border with Ukraine or hybrid activities threatening security undertaken.

The statements are indeed not only specific to the B9 format. However, to answer the research thesis it is essential to note that the states between the Baltic and Black Seas have coalesced to have a common response posture. In the Joint statement by the leaders of Bucharest Nine (2023), state leaders agreed that the Russian state is the most significant threat to allied security. Among the points listed is support for countries such as the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia which are said to be at risk of being destabilized by Moscow. To deter the wider escalation of Russian Federation activity, the B9 states have set themselves the goal of increasing the military presence of NATO troops and equipment on their territory.

Beyond the meetings that reconfirmed the B9 format meeting, the Forum states have increased defence spending or made sure they diversify their defences to ease the pressure of the Russian Federation (Gerasymchuk, 2019, p. 9). The events of 2014 are important in this respect. From the economic crisis of 2009 until 2014, the future B9 states have had to cut back on defense investment. The creation of B9 changed the trend by creating a common upward ramp for security spending. By 2017, countries like Latvia and Lithuania had doubled their military investment. Romania invested 50% more than in 2014. The other countries had increased their defense budgets with percentages between 15% and 30% in the period 2014-2017. Among the other measures to increase defense through budget investment, we can identify

the increase in the number of soldiers and the modernization of military technology (Terlikowski et al., 2018, p. 3).

Some Western states were fueled by the idea that countries like Poland or the Baltic States were Russophobic. Meanwhile, B-9 members have shown the need and necessity for US involvement in the region (Banasik, 2021, p. 28). The intention was, as Banasik pointed out, to deter Russian aggression and defend the strategic interests of the states between the three seas. Central and Eastern European states have started to look for solutions to their security problems. Compared to some powerful NATO countries such as Germany or France, the countries of the Baltic-Pontic area do not have the same financial and human resources. Therefore, they have not had a major chance to influence decision-making at the overall NATO level. The issue of the lack of influence of Central and Eastern European states mattered because not all NATO countries saw the Russian Federation as a major threat (Calmels, 2019, pp. 13-14).

The B9 states are both EU and NATO members. However, the historical experience and international aggression of the Russian Federation have spurred these states to cooperate and voice their concerns within the larger alliances. The desire for a common response and rapid response to the international crisis provoked by the Russian Federation gives a higher degree of regional security to the Intermarium states. The states of the New Bucharest format sought to provide a defense adjacent to the US presence that would be insufficient in the event of a violent attack by the Russian Federation (Banasik, 2021, p. 45). It is true that the perception of the Russian Federation is not the same across the Format. While some states view the Russian state as an imminent danger, others are only concerned with strengthening security (Calmels, 2019, p. 2). In any case, the Russian aggression that began in Ukraine has brought NATO member states in Central and Eastern Europe together in the Bucharest-9 format (Umland & Rotaru, 2017), and these are aiming for a common position that provides security for the entire region.

Conclusions

The results of the investigation confirm that Russian aggression in Ukraine is the main external factor that led to the materialization of cooperation projects of some Central and Eastern European countries. Projects such as the Three Seas Initiative or the Bucharest Nine format have

brought together countries between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas. These have often been interpreted as a revival of the interwar Intermarium projects. Some scholars have attributed the revival of these projects either to the conservative vision of Central European states, to the desire for US involvement on the European continent, or to Russophobia. On the other hand, some authors have tried to highlight the positive aspects of such projects for European security. Despite speculation, the initiatives have been aimed at strengthening both EU and NATO ties.

The Three Seas Initiative aimed at cooperation in several areas such as energy, transport, digital development and improving the economic level. The notion of security has been emphasized behind this cooperation. One of the main objectives pursued in this direction was to reduce dependence on the Russian Federation. This has been particularly visible in the measures taken regarding energy supply, which is seen as the main priority by the 3SI countries. Central and Eastern European states were more dependent on the Russian Federation than the rest of the European Union. Through various statements, the Initiative states have fervently pointed to the Russian threat and mobilized against its aggression. The Bucharest Nine format was strictly focused on the security component of the Intermarium states. The countries „between the seas" perceived the Russian state as a danger to a greater extent than the countries of Western Europe. B9 was set up to deter the enemy and strengthen NATO's eastern flank. In the end, the leaders of the Format states agreed that the Russian Federation is the main security threat. Although there are different perceptions, the B9 states are pursuing a common position to strengthen security because of the threat from the East. Therefore, the aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine has been a real leitmotiv in the formation and development of joint projects in the Intermarium area. Both 3SI and B9 arose out of the desire of states to ensure the security and resilience of the Eastern flank of the Western World.

In terms of cooperation, the 3SI and B9 projects are marginal. It is true that they can be effective in reducing dependence on the Russian Federation. Therefore, it can be considered that cooperation between the Intermarium states can strengthen regional prosperity and security. Ukraine, unable to join NATO and the EU, could be included in a regional structure. But while energy, digital or infrastructure collaboration are beneficial, decision-makers in countries such as Hungary are not as keen on deterring Russian aggression. Therefore, even the war in Ukraine

reveals the limitations of cooperation and the diverging perspectives of the "between the seas" states.

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"DEMOCRACY" IN INTERWAR AND POSTWAR ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Towards the end of the Second World War, political life was beginning to reorganize itself and seek the path to democracy. But the new path led the country towards a new type of "democracy", a new totalitarian regime, which, like any new regime, will rewrite history, being prepared even to redefine terms, an example of this being the term "democracy". This article aims to capture Romania's transition from the expectations of a democratic regime, to the establishment of an extreme left "democracy", with an emphasis on the way in which the term "democracy" was used in the communist discourse in the press of the time. We will use samples from the most important publications of the time, including the press of the opposition parties, to capture the differences between the definitions given to the same term."Democratization" according to the communist dioptres was possible in an internal context unfavorable to a communist regime, due to the fact that, on the way to power, the fragile Romanian Communist Party would be supported externally by Moscow, while internally it led a constant effort to legitimation, being always willing to assume events, redefine terms or rewrite history.Because the success of any regime lies mainly in political practice, in the way this system imposed itself on the whole society, we will insist on the event of August 23, 1944, which, initially, meant the return of Romania to the interwar status, with the exception of the legislative institution. But subsequent events will shape Romania's future contrary to expectations.*

Keywords: Romania, communism, democracy, dictatorship, press

Introduction

In the fall of 1944, the Communist Party was a "pocket party", with about 1000 members. Founded on May 8, 1921, from the transformation of the Socialist Party into the Communist Party of Romania, affiliated to the Third Communist International (April 11, 1924), PCdR was banned by the liberal government, being accused of "anti-Romanian actions", promoter of Soviet interests in Romania. Despite the ban, in the interwar period, the communists also tried other variants of front organizations, such as the "Worker-Peasant Bloc" (founded in 1925) or the "Labour League". The WPB was more successful than expected in the 1931 elections, managing to gather over 2.5% of the votes and send five deputies to parliament, including Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. However, procedural defects were invoked to

invalidate all five communist deputies en masse and, after the Grivița strikes in February 1933, the WPB was banned, at which point its role was taken over by the "Labour League", also prohibited after one year of existence. The communists were left to work within non-profit organizations (Silivestru, 2017). The outlawing of the CP provided the authorities with the legal framework to take action against this party. Working illegally, many communists were imprisoned until the end of the war, among them the future leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (escaped on August 12, 1944 and sheltered by members of NPP) (Silivestru, 2017; Cioroianu, 2014; Copilaș, 2018). The low number of party members was therefore the consequence of the party going underground, but in August 1944 many communists escaped.

Towards the end of World War II, given the victories of the Soviet army, the communists in Romania, although few, became very vocal. Inspired and supported by Stalin, the Communists behaved like an elite paramilitary formation. They acted disciplined and made intelligent use of propaganda and the weakness of traditional parties. They were the first to launch a sustained struggle to punish the so-called war criminals, collaborationists, fascists and chauvinists who had been active during the war, as the local social and political landscape had to be cleared in order to be occupied by communists or by those who pretended to be communists. The "bill" of the war had to be paid, and they were very willing to identify the culprits. Thus, many people fell victim, especially those who opposed the Communist Party, being brought down by accusations of fascist crimes, when, in reality, their fault was that they belonged to an undesirable social group, were affiliated with a traditional political party, or simply because they were too popular in the local communities.

To capture the reality of this period, in this article we used the historical method through the study of documents, archives and press. In this regard, we have undertaken a comparative approach between edited, official sources, from the period under study and up to now, and unofficial ones, some ined (archival), using Romanian and foreign sources. The focus is on the discourse of the elites of the Communist Party, of the political leaders of the opposition and its effects on the masses, with an emphasis on the main source of information of the era, the press.

I. RCP in the Struggle to Define the Term "Democracy"

I.1. Historical Context: the Act of August 23, 1944 – An Important Step Towards Legitimizing the Romanian Communist Party

The transformations produced between 1944 and 1948 in Eastern Europe led to the same result: the seizure of power by the communist parties, allied or not with other sympathetic political forces and the establishment, in this way, of "people's democracy". In Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia the

communists and their allies gained power quickly. By the end of 1945 in these countries the communist regime was already strongly and irreversibly implanted.

The communist regime was not established by a revolution, but by coups d'état or civil war. The thesis of the revolutions, however, was firmly supported by the communist regimes, because the communist leaders needed legitimization through a success story (Marin, 2017), by imposing a state of alert and by highlighting a solution given by the communists in the context of an exhausted society, impoverished of resources and eager for a better life. Communist practices, imposed by "a minority", deserve to be studied, because the success of the communist regime was due to the techniques it used to seize power, and then to keep it.

Taking Romania as a case study, the documents reveal the fact that in the spring of 1944, the political groups in Romania, which opposed the war and Antonescu's dictatorship, became more daring. The need for coordination of the traditional parties, affected by the dictatorship of Charles II, by the fascist regime of the legionnaires, then by the authoritarianism of General Ion Antonescu, led the National Peasant (NPP), National Liberal (NLP), Social Democratic (SDP) and Communist (CP) Parties to create, at the beginning of June, the National Democratic Bloc (NDB), with the objective of concluding the Armistice with Allies, withdrawing from the Axis and supporting the Allied war effort, overthrowing the Antonesian dictatorship and replacing it with a democratic regime (Bărbulescu et al., 2007: 390). However, the rapid succession of events took the democratic opposition by surprise. Although within the NDB discussions had been held regarding the form and composition of the new government and the military aspects of the planned coup d'état, it was not until August 20 that the day of Antonescu's overthrow was established. Iuliu Maniu, from the National Peasant Party and Constantin I. C. Brătianu, from the National Liberal Party, collaborating with King Mihai, the main organizers of the coup, set the date for August 26, but finding out that the Marshal was going to leave for the front on August 24, they opted for the 23rd.

The first step was taken by King Mihai, who summoned Antonescu to the Palace. Refusing the immediate conclusion of the Armistice, the king ordered the arrest of the marshal, the same fate shared by his other collaborators (Bărbulescu et al., 2007: 391-392).

Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu was the first party representative to reach the Palace after the arrest of the Marshal, and those who were arrested were guarded by the Patriotic Guards, the communist militia organized by Emil Bodnăraș, a Soviet officer parachuted into Romania. The representatives of the traditional parties, NPP and NLP, could not be found. These facts were used by the communists to support

their claim of having played a leading role in the coup (Deletant, 1997: 37; Gheorghiu and Roman, 1956: 20-21).

If some see in this action a personal decision of King Mihai, others are of the opinion that the role of the communists in making the decision was much more important than it seems at first glance, the entire scenario being written in Moscow. The communists themselves tried to deny the merits of the king and the main "historical" parties in the coup d'état, assuming them exclusively, thus claiming the legitimacy of their regime (Deletant, 1997: 37). Moreover, after the communists took over all the power, in addition to the fact that the act of August 23 was presented as being exclusively the work of the Communist Party, "the leader of the popular masses", the communist press wrote that the King would have been forced to sign the insurrection "under the pressure of the revolutionary struggle of the masses". "Studies" and "documents" based on this idea will abound after December 1947.[1]

Lavinia Betea states that there are serious arguments in favor of the version that the events of August 23 were not directed by Moscow, but took place without Moscow's knowledge, at the initiative of some national forces, with the king at the head (Betea, 1997: 53-54). In the proclamation to the country on August 13, broadcast on the radio, the king assured the Romanians that *"the dictatorship has ended and with it all oppression ends. The new government means the beginning of a new era in which the rights and liberties of all the country's citizens are guaranteed and will be respected [...] With full confidence in the future of our Romanian nation, let's step resolutely on the path of building the Romania of tomorrow, of a free, strong and happy country"* (Rusan, 1997:45-46).

Fully confident in the King's words and full of hope, the Romanian people awaited the establishment of a new era in which rights and freedoms would finally be guaranteed. To support this promise, King Mihai decreed, on August 31, 1944, the affirmation of the rights of Romanians within the framework of the Constitution of 1866, along with the amendments made on March 29, 1923. This Constitution represented the interwar period in Romania and was characterized by a mixed economy with elements of capitalism and state intervention. Although it allowed for private ownership and entrepreneurship, the state played a regulatory and interventionist role in key sectors. This was a period

[1] See R. Florian, "The armed insurrection of August 23, 1944 - the beginning of the popular revolution in our country"; F. Pârcălab, Gh. Timofi, "From the struggle of the workers from Cluj and its surroundings, under the leadership of the communists, for the defense of the destruction and evacuation by the fascists of the enterprises and institutions in the period August 23-October 12, 1944"; Gheorghe Moţ, V. Ştefănescu, "From the contribution of the youth of our country, led by the Utecists, to the RCP struggle. for the victory of the armed insurrection of August 23, 1944"; "Documents regarding the preparation and execution, under the leadership of the RCP, of the August 23 armed insurrection", in *Annals of the Institute of Party History attached to the Central Committee of the P.M.R.*, Year V, No. 4, 1959, pp. 21-51, 92-139.

marked by political instability and social inequalities, which posed frequent challenges. The system had elements of equity but was plagued by corruption and social disparities.

Romania becomes now a constitutional state by law, but it lacked the parliament and the communal councils for a full constitutional life. The political parties that had been dissolved on March 30, 1938, and after September 6, 1940 restricted their activity, are being reorganized. Also, on August 23, 1944, taking into account the fact that it was still involved in the war, Romania was a well-organized state, with an intact administration, with a healthy economy, with a strong army, being the fourth military power in Europe, after Germany, England and the Soviet Union. Benefiting from these advantages, he had every chance to be reborn. According to Focșeneanu, nothing was missing to become a truly democratic state, if it were not for communism. But from the first moment, gradually, but tenaciously, the Soviet and communist pressure began to be exerted in the sense of disregarding the Constitution, continuously claiming derogations and "modifications" of it, pretexting, in the absence of other arguments, reasons for war. It took two stages for democracy to be destroyed: 1. the removal of the opposition represented by the historical parties and the annihilation of the army, in order to isolate the king; 2. the overthrow of the monarchy and the banishment of the king (Focșeneanu, 2008:138-140).

I. 2. The Rise of the Romanian Communist Party

The USSR was, with the exception of Czechoslovakia, behind the Stalinization of all Eastern European countries that were integrated into the Soviet geopolitical orbit after the end of the war. It did not matter the size or strenght of the communist parties in these countries, as long as they had Moscow's support. Some historians believe that the rise of the communists to power, after August 23, 1944, based on the support of the USSR, was a surprise even for the communists. This insignificant party was not ready to take over the machinery of the state. Realizing that the lack of qualified personnel is enough to block their access to the key positions of the country's leadership, the communists accepted in their ranks "companions", "bourgeois" opportunists ready to become the executors of Moscow's orders in exchange for often illusory privileges.

After the arrest of Marshal Antonescu, the king appointed General Constantin Sănătescu, a participant in the act of August 23, as prime minister, in turn appointing the members of the government. The government was composed mainly of the military, with the relatively ornamental addition of the leaders of the four political parties: Iuliu Maniu (NPP), Constantin I. C. Brătianu (NLP), Constantin Titel Petrescu (SDP) and Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu (CP.), with the role of to guide the new government from the

National Democratic Bloc (Bărbulescu et al., 2007: 391-392). Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu was the only civilian who was granted a portfolio, that of Justice.

The main problem of the government, after the liberation of Bucharest from the German troops, was that of signing the armistice with the United Nations as quickly as possible, "to give legality to the international status of the country, to participate in the fight against Hitler's Germany" (Faur, 1995: VII).

I.3. The Armistice Agreement with Romania. The Beginning of the End of the Hope for True Democracy

From the first days after August 23, 1944, Romanian problems were, in fact, those of the Soviet Union. The international situation of Romania after this date depended decisively on the secret agreements concluded between the major partners of the United Nations. In August 1944, the countries of South-Eastern Europe had already been divided into spheres of interest, through inter-allied agreements of a temporary character, renewed in October 1944 in Moscow and maintained after the end of the general conflict. Numerous documents from Romanian and foreign archives highlight the continuous deterioration of Romania's international status immediately after August 23, 1944.

The removal of the Antonesian dictatorship automatically coincided with the cessation of Romania's state of belligerence on the side of the fascist Axis, a fact immediately made known by the Royal Proclamation, and during the night of August 23/24, 1944, with the *de facto* enrollment of our country in the United Nations camp, situation established *de jure* on August 24, 1944, by the official declaration of war of the Constantin Sănătescu government, broadcast by radio stations. At the same time, Romania pledged to immediately sign the armistice with the powers of the United Nations (USSR, USA and Great Britain), which officially sanctioned the end of hostilities with them. The Armistice Convention was signed on the night of September 12/13, 1944 in Moscow.

Article 1 of the Convention recognized the fact that "from August 24, 1944, at 04:00 a.m. Romania completely stopped military operations against the USSR, in all theaters of war, left the United Nations war, broke relations with Germany and its satellites". But art. 3 highlighted the obligation of "the government and the High Command of Romania to provide the Soviet forces and the other allies with facilities for their free movement on Romanian territory, in any direction, if required by the military situation.

Worth mentioning is Article 11, which obliged Romania to pay 300 million dollars payable within 6 years in goods (oil products, cereals, maritime and river vessels, cars, etc.) (Armistice Convention, 1944). Since the Soviet Union held the monopoly of its interpretation, the Armistice

Convention became a mechanism for capturing Romania (Deletant, 2010: 54). This seizure resulted from the interaction of two elements: while the fighting continued on the front, the Soviet army needed order behind the front, but in Romania the only order acceptable to the Russians was the one guaranteed by the Romanian Communist Party. His role was to prevent the regime established after the coup d'état from establishing order in other terms. This requirement involved, first of all, the neutralization of the means of maintaining social order, i.e. the army, the judiciary and the police, and their restructuring on the Soviet model. Secondly, it aimed to create mass support, which the Communist Party was completely lacking, and which would have provided the new regime with the necessary theoretical legitimacy. Both actions claimed a reliance on terror, which would have led to the destruction of the vestiges of support for the "western" monarchy and democracy (Deletant, 2010: 54).

Returning to the Armistice Convention, it is worth noting that between September 12, 1944 and October 30, 1947, more than 60 legislative acts were drafted, which, through their transposition into practice, established a legal framework for the general effort to implement the provisions of the Armistice Convention both at national and local level. For a period of time, this Convention was the fundamental act on which the relations between Romania and the USSR were based, and the problem of Northern Transylvania represented one of the landmarks of Romania's foreign policy. Although liberated, the territory of Northern Transylvania had for several months a status of quasi-autonomy guaranteed by the Soviet military leadership and managed through the local administrations of the National Democratic Front (Popescu-Tanasie, 2012: 115).

The 20 articles and 6 annexes of the Armistice Convention offered the Russians the opportunity to intervene in the political, economic and administrative field of the country, something proven by the situation that Northern Transylvania went through between November 1944 and March 1945.

Until the development of the necessary legal framework, the Convention will be at the basis of the purification of the entire society from "fascist" and "Hitlerist" elements.

I. 4. The Birth of the National Democratic Front, the Collapse of the National Democratic Bloc

The Communists tried their best to convince the country that its recovery depends entirely on the close relationship with the Soviet Union, that "*the backbone of the connection between us and the USSR it is formed by the loyal application of the Armistice Convention*" (Faur, 1995: XXII). But for this to happen, a government agreed to by the Soviet Union was needed. The Sănătescu government and the Soviet occupation authorities found themselves in a permanent conflict, despite the collaboration on the

front, especially due to the fact that those who decided the direction of Romania's political development were the Soviet advisers, both civilian and military.

The internal conflict between the traditional (historical) parties and the Communist Party was growing in scale. The main content of the struggle between the self-titled "democratic" communist forces supported by the Soviets and the so-called "reactionary", historical forces (NPP, NLP), confident in Anglo-American support, was the problem of political power. In this sense, the fall of 1944 was a period of mobilization for all these political parties. Suffering from the interruption of their normal activity during the Carol and Antonescu dictatorships, they now concentrated all their energy on re-establishing national and local organizations and increasing their membership. This effort resulted in the dismantling of the National Democratic Bloc coalition, under the pressure of contradictory political ambitions.

Just one week after the overthrow of the Antonesian regime, the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party declared its intention to transform the NDB in a mass organization, calling on the workers to organize their own political committees, under the auspices of the Bloc (Bărbulescu et al., 2007: 392-393). In turn, NPP and NLP they also worked intensively for the revitalization of the organizations in the capital and in the province. Even now, the socialists and communists were laying the foundations of another political alliance, called the *National Democratic Front* (NDF), accusing the historical parties of supporting the government of generals and technicians presided over by Sănătescu, of maintaining and strengthening the state apparatus left over from the fascist dictatorship. Maintaining the Sănătescu government, the communists loudly declared, "seriously endangered the democratic development of the country" (Savu, 1961: 70).

Officially established on October 12, the National Democratic Front (NDF), the new political coalition promoted by the PC, led to the termination of collaboration with the former partners in the National Democratic Bloc, which put an end to the coalition that had overthrown the Antonesian dictatorship. The NDB, the communists believed, constituted an obstacle to the concentration in a single front of all "democratic" forces. In addition to communists and socialists, the coalition includes the Ploughmen's Front, an organization of poor peasants, founded by Petru Groza in 1933, in Transylvania.

The NDF got off to a strong start. Through the press, manifestos, in the framework of numerous meetings organized in cities and villages, the communists intensified the work of "exposing" the government and the bourgeois parties, of clarifying to the masses about "*the grave danger that the fascist remnants represented for the fate of democracy in our country* ". A real assault on Romanian society will begin. "*Following the call of the communist party, the workers in numerous enterprises drove out the*

fascist elements, in the villages the peasants went on to conquer town halls in which they installed democratic authorities, chosen from among themselves." (Savu, 1961: p. 71).

The next step, the withdrawal of the communist and socialist representatives from the government, on October 18, 1944, "*made it easier for the masses to see the anti-popular character of the government and contributed to the intensification of the fight for its overthrow*" (Savu, 1961: p. 71). Therefore, the "merit" of the overthrow of the first Sănătescu government, according to the writings of the 60s, belongs to the popular masses led by the communists. Under the guise of the "popular masses", P.C. he tried to hide his own ambitions.

On November 4, 1944, a new government was formed from the representatives of the political parties, whose president continued to be General Sănătescu. In the new government, the NDF held the vice-presidency of the Council of Ministers, 6 positions of ministerial secretaries of state (in the ministries of: Communications, National Education, Justice, Labour, Social Insurance, Minorities) and 3 undersecretariats of state (*Tribuna Ardealului*, 1944: 1).

The NDF was conceived as a front to convey on the political stage the image of a front of parties and representative structures, at a time when the communists represented an insignificant minority in the political landscape, which could only rely on the support of the Soviet Union and its army who had occupied Romania. The NDF will also have branches in Northern Transylvania, having been established on December 25, 1944 (*Plugarii*, I/5, 1944: p. 3).

The Role of the Romanian Communist Party in the Sovietization of Romania: 23 August 1944 – 6 March 1945

The period 23 August 1944 to 6 March 1945 includes three governments. The first two of General Constantin Sănătescu (August 23 – November 4, 1944 and November 4 – December 6, 1944) and General Nicolae Rădescu (December 6, 1944 – February 28, 1945) were marked by considerable efforts of the democratic forces, represented by the historical, traditional parties, to establish and preserve the democratic regime, in the face of the accelerated offensive of the communists, under the shelter of the numerous Soviet troops present in the country. to seize the main levers of power. The Red Army's contribution to the installation of communism in our country and to the removal of opposition while stationed on Romanian territory was a fact acknowledged by the leadership of the CP: "*The presence of Soviet armies on the territory of our country, without interfering in our internal affairs, paralyzed the actions of reactionary forces."* (Gheorghiu, Roman, 1956: 23).

Following a visit to Moscow, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Ana Pauker were ordered to request access to power. Therefore, the next step was the forced dismissal of Rădescu, presented as fascist and philo-German, dismissal preceded by a virulent campaign to discredit his government, accused of "*lamentable failure to fulfill the obligations imposed by the armistice*" (Rothschild, 1997: 158-160). Reluctant to the actions of the Communist Party, he was accused of shooting at the people, a strong accusation that led to his dismissal. Another accusation concerned the decision to unleash a civil war (Gheorghiu, Roman, 1956: 35), on the occasion of the speech of February 12, 1945, in the "Aro" hall in Bucharest. (*Annals of the Institute of History*..., II/5: 87).

In this context, in the country the "people's forces, led by the PCR.", conquered numerous local state bodies, prefectures and the municipalities, and installed at their head representatives "elected by the people" (February-March). Thus, according to the communist speech, "*the power of reactionary elements in the central apparatus was seriously limited*." (*Annals of the Institute of History*..., II/5: 86-87).

The "Democratization" of Romania Between March 6, 1945 and April 13, 1948.

The First Pro-Communist Government: "The Government of People's Democracy"

On March 6, 1945, after unsuccessful attempts to form a new government, in the context of the visits of Andrei Vishinsky, assistant to the Soviet Foreign Minister, the presence of the Red Army and under threat of abdication, and with the tacit consent of U.S. President Roosevelt (who did not consider Romania a good place to compete with the Russians), King Michael approved the new government of Petru Groza, fully NDF, despite the protests of opposition representatives, Iuliu Maniu and Constantin I.C. Brătianu. The Red Army disarmed and disbanded any military unit Romanian which could oppose the communist seizure of power, measures that were part of the general Soviet policy in the occupied areas, in order to support the communist parties in their total seizure of power.

Thus, after three transitional governments, a pro-communist government is appointed, for the first time in Romanian political history. Illegal until August 23, 1944, here in a short time the communist political discourse receives a substantial bonus in the legitimization of its political capital, which would become, in a short time, the only discourse available (Ştefan, 2001: 48). However, it should be mentioned that in Romania's neighboring countries or in the immediate area, the situation was similar. Bulgaria was ruled from September 1944 by the Fatherland Front (led by the Bulgarian Communist Party). In Yugoslavia, the communists were already ruling since November 1943, as well as in Poland,

Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Unlike these, however, the Romanian Communist Party was only the formal representative, in the government the communists had only 5 of the 18 ministerial portfolios, of which two were decisive: the Ministry of the Interior, headed by Teohari Georgescu, and the Ministry of Justice, headed by Lucrețiu Patrăşcanu.

Worth noting is the fact that the number of members of the CP increased very quickly, so that on March 6, 1945, the Romanian Communist Party already had over 30.000 members.[2]

From the very first days, the new government tried to consolidate its position by channeling its efforts towards the fulfillment of several objectives: the reinstallation of the Romanian administration in Northern Transylvania, the installation of a "popular-democratic" state apparatus and agrarian reform. Legislation of the agrarian reform was necessary, this being one of the accusations brought by the communists to the Radescu government, but also due to the fact that the NDF had requested, as early as February 10, 1945, the division of the large properties, which led to the occupation and division of some properties by the activists of the Ploughmen's Front, an action that would ascalate after March 6.

The concession of March 6 was not without a reward, materialized on March 9, 1945 by the return of the Romanian administration in Northern Transylvania. This action represented a great advertisement for the National Democratic Front government. The official "Pravda" glorified the liberating Red Army on this occasion as well, which expelled the German invaders from Romanian land. Cleaned by the Hitlerites, Romania thus gained the possibility of a free development of the State. "*The Red Army also expelled the German-Hungarian troops from Transylvania, on whose territory the Romanian administration began to function*" (*Sânteia Ardealului*, I/21, 1945: 5).

The Romanian communist press copied the model, avoiding, however, to publish the true role of the presence of the Red Army on Romanian territory, as Stalin himself stated in a meeting with a Yugoslav delegation, that "*to ensure the installation of the communist regime in the occupied territories*" (Brucan, 1993: 58-59). In addition, with the help of the Red Army, the Romanian military and security system was transformed according to the Soviet model. The maintenance of Soviet troops on the territory of the people's democracy states was aimed at ensuring control over them, using them to repress any attempts

[2] If on August 23, the RPC had only 80 members in Bucharest and less than 1000 in the whole country, including those in prisons and concentration camps, during three months, until October 1944, the RCP had reached a number of members between 5,000 and 6,000. In February 1945, the RPC already had 15,000 members, and by April 23, 1945, their number had reached 42,653. Iosif Rangheț, head of the organizational section of the Central Committee of the RCP, indicated these figures at a meeting with the active party that was held between April 25-27, 1945. Rangheţ also stated that the PCR already had 55,253 members at that time, while the Communist Youth Union (UTC) had 62,925 members (The Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, *Final Report*, 2006, Bucharest, p. 35, available online, https://www.juridice.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf, accessed on 10.03.2023).

at dissent within the system, as well as to ensure the necessary force for the communist bloc to "*defend itself against imperialist aggression in Europe*" (Gheorghiu-Dej, 1946: 17).

Anul I. Nr. 14 — 2 pagini 3 Lei — Luni, joi 14 Septembrie 1944

Gazeta
P O P O R U L U I
ORGAN NAȚIONAL-DEMOCRAT

LIBERTATEA
și independența balcanilor

Armata Roșie
ne vine ca prietenă și aliată
— Declarațiile unui Locotenent Colonel Sovietic —

"The Red Army Comes to Us as a Friend and Ally", in *Gazeta Poporului*, National Democratic Organ, Year I, No. 14, September 14, 1944, p. 1.

The Groza government consisted mostly of RCP and SDP members, to which were added several positions occupied by NLP dissidents Gheorghe Tătărescu (foreign minister) and NPP dissidents Anton Alexandrescu (minister of cooperation). It is known under the generic name *"The Government of People's Democracy"*.

March will be full of important events. The day after the return of the Romanian administration to the liberated Transylvania was announced, on March 10, the Workers' University of the RCP was inaugurated in Bucharest, initiated by the CC of the RCP and following the guidance of comrade Ana Pauker. It did not want to become an isolated scholarly body, "broken from the great battle that is going on around us", but it aims to fulfill and increase the "commanding posts of the proletarian battalions" with those elements which, before venturing into the realm militant writing and speech, they will prove their qualities of courage in the "theatre of social battles", proving skills and determination that some commanders necessarily need. Those enrolled at this University had to be equipped "with that indomitable theory and tactic which is Marxist-Leninist doctrine." At the head of those who taught at the Workers' University were "the greatest teachers of mankind": Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin. The novelty of the "first theoretical school for workers" consisted in its content: "working class philosophy" and "dialectical materialism" (Chiciuc, 2006).

Also on this day, the purges from the local public administration began, which affected the prefects, mayors, assistant mayors, praetors, notaries, along with the other officials appointed by the previous governments.

It was followed, on March 13, in Cluj, by the solemn meeting of the Romanian government on the occasion of the establishment of the Romanian administration over the whole of Transylvania, the legislation of the agrarian reform (March 23), the decree-law for the purification of the public administration (March 29), the promulgation of Law no. 271 for the purification of the public administration, education, the press, media institutions (March 30), used to eliminate from public life numerous valuable intellectuals.

Another measure of the Groza government, immediately after the installation, was the action directed against Iuliu Maniu, put under police surveillance, his house being searched three times (*Patria*, XXVII/17, 1946: 1). An attempt was even made against him, but without success. The NDF press started a campaign to denigrate the peasant president, never before seen on that scale in the Romanian press.

This government, the communist publications will write 10 years later, was radically different from all the governments that came to power before March 6, 1945. "*While the frequent changes of government that took place in bourgeois-landlord Romania did not constituted nothing more than the replacement of the leadership of one group of representatives of the exploiting classes by another, the installation of the democratic government based on the class alliance of workers and peasants, under the leadership of the working class, marked the transfer of decisive political positions from the hands of the exploiting minorities to the hands of the overwhelming majority of the people." Thus was established "popular power, capable of ensuring a real and broad democracy for working people, to defend and develop the conquests of the working people*" (*Annals...*, 1957: 5). About the same "alliance", non-existent in reality, Pavel Bojan, a member of the Cluj Regional Plowers' Front, opined in May 1945, just two months after the installation of the Groza government: "*the ploughmen see only Bolsheviks in the workers, who are persecuting them*" (*Fond Regional Committee PMR Cluj*, 1/1945: 65).

II. Democracy – A Manipulated Definition

During Romania's short existence until the period we studied, we find elements of similarity between the fascist and the communist propaganda, and there are also similarities between the way the “historic parties” and the carlist regime used communism and fascism in their own propaganda to gain legitimacy.

At a closer look, both fascist and communist propaganda emphasized a strong sense of nationalism and patriotism. Both communism and fascism portrayed their respective ideologies as the true representation of the nation's interests and glorified their leaders as saviors of the country. Fascism was presented as a solution to the increasingly visible decay of the parliamentary democratic regime in Romania. Both regimes developed propaganda machinery to spread their ideologies and utilized state-controlled media, censorship, indoctrination, and cultural events to disseminate their propaganda and control public opinion. Both propaganda narratives depicted enemies or perceived threats to the regime in a demonized manner. Whether it was political opponents, minority groups, or Western influences, they were presented as adversaries seeking to undermine the nation's well-being. Both propaganda promised a utopian future under their respective ideologies. They painted a picture of a society free from class struggle (in communism) or a racially pure and powerful nation (in fascism) once their ideologies were fully embraced.

The "historic parties" also utilized communism and fascism to manipulate public perceptions. They portrayed these ideologies as threats to the existing social order, urging people to support the "historic parties" as their protectors.[3] By highlighting the dangers of extreme ideologies like communism and fascism, the "historic parties" positioned themselves as the moderate and responsible choice. They argued that supporting the established parties was crucial to maintaining stability and avoiding the chaos associated with these radical ideologies.

The "historic parties" sometimes engaged in political bargaining with extremist factions, using the specter of communism or fascism to gain concessions or form alliances. This strategic maneuvering helped them maintain a semblance of control and power.

The manipulation of historical events in the interest of the ruling party's propaganda has often caused confusion in the interpretation of events, which is why official documents will never be able to reflect reality in its entirety. During the communist regime, however, the manipulation included not only facts and events, but also established terms such as "democracy".

The established definition of democracy, the power of the people, the rule of the people by the people or *the way of participation of the members of a state community in the exercise of power, having*

[3] At the center of the national-peasant doctrine was the idea of protecting the less favored categories of Romanian society, the idea of compensating the injustices suffered by the majority of the Romanian people and which, having been frustrated for centuries of elementary rights, had to be put back afloat through a. special protection granted until the leveling of the gap between the Romanian peasantry and the other social groups. The liberals represented the bourgeoisie of the cities and the people of this country higher in terms of income, while the peasantry was not a social class, but a category composed of infinite social classes (Corneliu Coposu (1996) “Confesiuni: dialoguri cu Doina Alexandru”, Ed. Anastasia, p. 31).

as its essence the establishment of political equality between the members of the respective community, was interpreted by the Communist Party according to its own recipe, which sounded inviting to some, but materialized in terror for others. Thus, the establishment of the Petru Groza government under Soviet military pressure, followed by the formation of a new government, in which the key ministries were owned by communists, meant the country's entry into a new era of history, of setting itself on the "right" path of "democratization", according to the communist discourse. "Democratic“ or "true/real democracy“ included any person or act/event that aided the usurpation of power by the Communist Party. People with a compromising past were welcome, provided they were prepared to work unconditionally for the Communist Party, following the same logic, according to which anyone who opposed the Communists, regardless of his action against the Nazi Reich, could be considered a "fascist". Thus, the main criterion of appreciation became the desire to obey and act according to the orders and directives of the new regime. As trust could be proven and verified only by being a member of one of the "democratic" political formations, all those who had, as Ion Zainea will write, a conscience to sell, wash or transform could access important positions. The others, those who kept their verticality, were mostly removed from services and positions (Giurescu, 1996: 156-157; Zainea et al., 2004: 319).

III. Communist Type "Democracy" vs. "Bourgeois Democracy"

On the way to the establishment of communist-type "democracy", the Communist Party monopolized the hope for a better world, fought the existence of a bourgeois democracy, identical to the democracy of the so-called historical parties, due to the opposition between the dominant exploiting classes, which held the political power and the dominated, politically oppressed and economically exploited classes. This opposition was motivated by their differences in private ownership and the means of production. The Communist Party expressed its conviction that political equality between social groups remained a wish and could never be a reality before the establishment of the communist regime. By its nature, the political power specific to societies based on exploitation prevents the establishment of authentically democratic relations in social life in general, not only in political life, these societies being incompatible with a democratic reality.

Nevertheless, communism came to accept the existence of certain democratic freedoms before they came to power, but it remained on the idea that the fundamental democratic rights - regarding freedoms of political choice or real participation in decision-making in the system of state administration - were annulled by the system of social relations. For example, they continue, "*the access of working people to the macro-social decision was prevented*", certain categories of working people being excluded

from voting or in the event that the participation in the political life of some revolutionary parties of working people was formally admitted in the various countries, their participation in the exercise of power was practically excluded, these parties failing to participate in governance. It was the bourgeois state that gave up limited democracy and opted for a fascist-type dictatorship when it felt "*threatened by the working people, due to their conquest of the majority position in the parliament*" (Tudosescu, Cazacu/1983: 11-15).

Although the actions undertaken to remove dictatorial regimes took part alongside working people and some sections of the bourgeoisie, the re-establishment of organizational structures with a "democratic" character did not eliminate the "limits of bourgeois democracy", its restrictive and formal character. The exit from bourgeois democracy, continued the communist discourse, entailed the revolutionizing of social relations, primarily the removal of the essential differences between citizens from the point of view of their position in relation to the means of production - the abolition of private property, which, in addition to economic inequality, led to political and social inequality, as well as economic and cultural inequality (Tudosescu, Cazacu/1983: 11-15).

Along with the mentioned "benefits" of communist democracy, unlike fascism, the new "democracy", the communist press continued, was "organically linked" to science and culture. If fascism put a barrier between the intellectuals and the mass of the working people, if culture was decreed the prerogative and exclusive work of an elite separated from the people, communist "democracy" was the one that "brought the masses closer to culture and culture to the masses", allowing them access to public life (*Contemporanul*, XXI/10, 1946: 1).

The major dissatisfaction consisted in the fact that the "reactionaries" of the past and present, cataloged by "Scânteia" as "the Pharisees of democracy" (*Scânteia*, III/XVI/531, 1946: 1), in the person of the opposition leaders, were refractory to "democratization" and implicitly to the actions of the National Democratic Front: "*Due to the anti-popular policy carried out both in the government and outside the government by reactionary elements in the ruling circles of the national-peasant and national-liberal parties, by preventing the absolutely necessary economic-social reforms - our country is still in a serious situation today and is threatened with economic and national collapse. […]*

The experience from August 23, 1944 until today clearly demonstrates that the country and the Romanian people need a true democratic government, emerging from the concentration in a single front - NDF - of all democratic forces" (Plugarii, II/19, 1945: 3). The communists declared themselves convinced that they had exclusivity in solving all the problems faced by the country: "*Only an NDF government will be able to break the distrust of the Soviet Union and its allies. Only an NDF government*

will be able to put an end to specula, expensiveness, economic chaos and remove an hour earlier the sufferings of the popular masses: workers, farmers, officials and intellectuals. Only an NDF government can bring the security of normal activity for all factors of the national economy willing to collaborate in the economic and financial recovery of our countries: industrialists, traders, craftsmen, etc. […] *The NDF government [...] will be able to achieve that Romania becomes from a defeated country, an equal member in the great family of democratic countries, thus ensuring the independence, sovereignty, security and economic advancement of the Romanian State." (Plugarii,* II/19, 1945: 3).

The objectives of communist-type democracy were exposed, in the middle of the election campaign, by Vasile Dima, a journalist at "New Transylvania": consolidating the success achieved in Paris (the return of the territories of northwestern Transylvania to Romania), through determined actions against chauvinism, the fight for peace, combating the effects of the drought through a vast aid campaign, and "*vigorous support of the Bloc of Democratic Parties in elections against the Manisto-Brachianist reaction*" (Dima, 1946: 1).

At the opposite pole, the "reactionaries" from the historical parties, the supporters of burgeoise-type democracy, stigmatized the so-called "democracy" of the RCP, considering the use of this word as a pretext for the anti-democratic actions of the communists. In the name of the so-called democracy, the Communist Party undertook a series of actions contrary to this term. Referring to this, Transylvanian university professor Onisifor Ghibu accused Petru Groza of having set out by deceiving the people with the formula of "democracy", of the rule of the people, in order to actually introduce the most cursed dictatorship, not only political, but also economic and cultural. Instead of freedom, the professor continued, communism introduced slavery and terror, in all their cruelest aspects, making Romania a huge prison for the absolute majority of its citizens. The communist regime turned the country into the most sadistic exploiter of its own sons, mocked the country as neither the odious fanariots of the past, nor the foreign rulers under which the country was doomed to groan for centuries, allowed themselves to do (Ghibu, 1992: 113).

The same opinion was shared by the journalist Nicolae Carandino, a member of the National Peasant Party, who wrote in one of his articles in "The Justice": *"The most significant and dangerous effect of the F.N.D. government will remain, when all balances are made, the compromise of the democratic idea among the masses", because it will remain in memories, linked to this regime, a pejorative notion of democracy... If for some doctrinaires there are two kinds of democracies, the political and the social, for the man in the crowd a third kind was born - fruit of experience - namely the camouflaged dictatorship"*. From the opposition's point of view, public liberties have remained textbook

values, terror is felt in very wide circles and the surveillance of everyone by everyone has made important progress. Or, under these conditions, one cannot speak of democracy (*Dreptatea*, XXI/ 21, 1946: 1-2).

After a few days, the "Patria" newspaper, in the words of Gheorghe Ohăbeanu, again criticized the so-called communist democracy: "*Democracy means etymologically: the rule of the people. But the people cannot rule in their collectivity and permanently, but will elect their representatives. The representatives of the people are those who received the majority of votes. In the final analysis, therefore, democracy is nothing but the validity of the majority representative system [...] we ask ourselves, can we speak of a democratic regime in Romania today? The FND do not want to hear about the elections and the people"* (Ohăbeanu, *Patria*, XXVII/13, 1946: 1). All these "reactionaries" will be punished for the courage to stand against the current in the same way in which during previous regimes the communists were, in turn, punished.

Conclusions

During the interwar period, Romania experienced a complex socio-political and economic landscape. The system during this time was not a true, pure capitalism or socialism; rather, it had elements of both and could be categorized as a mixed economy. It was the period when the country faced political instability with frequent changes in government and political coalitions. Various parties representing different ideologies were present, contributing to a dynamic political landscape. Corruption and clientelism were challenges during this period, affecting governance and economic fairness. Some segments of society, especially the elite, had disproportionate influence and access to resources, and there was a considerable gap between the wealthy elite and the majority of the population, especially in rural areas. It was the perfect context for labor movements, and the working class began to organize and demand fair treatment, advocating for workers' rights and better conditions.

Karl Marx's communist project envisioned that in all countries under the Soviet umbrella the proletarians exploited by the capitalists - represented by all those who opposed the regime - would establish a dictatorship of the proletariat from which all would benefit. But because the proletarians did not want or failed to impose a revolution, they decided to set up a party of "professional revolutionaries" so that the party would establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in the place of the proletariat. After that, there was no more talk about the dictatorship of the proletariat, but about the dictatorship over the proletariat" (Marin, 2017). The recipe was particularly applied from country to country, region to region.

In Bulgaria, for instance, shortly after Soviet troops entered Bulgaria on September 8, 1944, the communists from the Fatherland Front started a general insurrection and the following night seized

power. A government of the Patriotic Union was formed in Sofia, which signed an armistice with the commander of Soviet troops, and decided to participate in military operations against Germany. The new government immediately proceeded with a radical purge. Members of the royal family and governments that ruled the country after 1941, members of parties that did not accept collaboration with the communists, and senior officials were arrested. Officially, between December 1944 and April 1945, there were 11,122 people, of whom 2,138 were executed, including the three regents (Bichicean, 2023; Znepolski et al., 2019: 58).

The elections of November 18, 1945 were a success for the Fatherland Front, which received 88% of the vote. The opposition, convinced of the electoral fraud of the communists, challenged the election results in vain. Following this success, the government began reforming institutions. This was followed by a referendum of 8 September 1946, in which 92.7% of Bulgarians voted for the Republic, the monarchy was abolished (15 September 1946), the communist Vasily Kolarov became the first President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and the Constitution of 4 December 1947 made Bulgaria de jure a popular democracy (Bichicean, 2023).

In Romania, the act of August 23 is a controversial subject, but almost 70 years after the execution of this act, King Mihai described the course of events in several interviews. It is certain that August 23, 1944 will become the country's biggest holiday for the next four decades, the beginning of the "people's revolution" in our country, a "revolution" initiated and supported by the Soviets, through a process of social and political transformation, through purges, expropriation, expulsion, arrests and executions meant to eliminate the opponents.

The communists thoroughly dealt with the punishment of fascists, nazis and chauvinists, which they seriously compromised, using it, as Ioan Roşca said, as an alibi for triggering the destruction of Romania (1995). All the protests of the "historical babes", as the communists liked to call the opposition parties, will be quickly suppressed for the next decades. By eliminating these innocent people, whose "fault" was only their refractory position to the new regime, the Communist Party perverted the work of punishing the true fascists, hitlerists or chauvinists, whose destructive activity should not be minimized. We must not forget the ordeal that Romanians and Jews from Northern Transylvania went through during the Horthy regime, and especially that most of the guilty escaped unpunished. However, their punishment did not evaporate, but fell, in many cases, on the backs of the same victims. The same people who suffered from the ethnic purging undertaken by Horthy's regime had to go through a second purging, this time on political grounds. The whole of Romania would go through a dictatorship camouflaged under the name of "democracy".

From the advantageous position of the present, the question "*Did people believe in the ideology on which communism was based?*" is a legitimate one, since in Romania the regime was maintained for over 4 decades. The answers given to this question are many. Thierry Wolton, for instance, opines that the opportunism of some and the servitude of others seem to have mattered more than the creed. Adherence to communism was a means of social success, communists had advantages, they had special shops, etc. The success of communism was also due to the opportunism of party members. But there was also a voluntary servility of those who prospered under communism, which is one of the reasons why there were no large-scale riots.

However, some sincerely believed in the promises of the communists, in a better world, a uniform world, in which the social class differences, present in capitalist societies, disappear (Balas, 2000: 52-54). Communists appealed to *egalitarian passion based on human mechanisms such as envy, which Communists used, promising "perfect equality,*" a lie, Wolton opines, because leaders never lived like ordinary people. The defects of capitalism, especially the exploitative side and the cyclical crises, did nothing but encourage the new regime in the so-called innocent dimension, "the struggle of good to defeat evil."

Of course in Romania, similar to the other states on which the communist regime was imposed, there was resistance, but it was not widespread as it was in other countries. For instance, in Poland there was a strong anti-communist resistance, of over 300.000 people. Churchill believed that there should be no intervention. A false judgement, says Wolton. The Soviets did so, with the approval of some Western leaders: they invited 12 Polish resistance leaders to Moscow to negotiate. The 12 disappeared without a trace and there was no protest from the West. And the resistance movement was suppressed over time (Brîndușa, 2022). In Romania, as a whole, people accepted their fate, even if the number of victims was consistent.

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THE CHALLENGES OF EUROSCPETICISM IN CROATIA: TEN YEARS AFTER EU ACCESSION

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Abstract: *This article addresses the issue of Euroscepticism in Croatia after its 2013 EU accession. It starts with a theoretical section that explores the phenomenon of Euroscepticism and particularly examines the insufficient agreement between elites and citizens on the issue of European integration. The central section starts with the analysis of the general lack of support for the EU integration in the form of regime and exit scepticism in the opinion polls. Subsequently, the general party-based Euroscepticism is analysed primarily through the lens of the 2019 European Parliament election campaign in Croatia which emphasized profound divisions between its mainstream and populist parties. Separate section of the article is dedicated to the analysis of elite and public Euroscepticism towards specific EU policies: Eurozone membership, enlargement policy, common security and defence policy as well as the rule of law. The analysis of the public opinion in all sections of the article relies mostly on standard Eurobarometer reports and compares the results for Croatia with the EU average. The article shows that after Croatia's EU accession, public sentiment about the EU has not significantly changed, with opinion polls still showing a high degree of Euroscepticism on selected topics. Simultaneously, there is an increase of party-based Euroscepticism.*

Keywords: **European integration, Euroscepticism, public opinion, political parties, populism**

1. Introduction

Croatia is the EU's newest Member State, having joined on 1 July 2013 after more than six years of negotiations. Croatia's EU accession process was characterised by a consensus among all major political parties on the strategic importance of EU membership. The citizens, however, were less enthusiastic about EU membership throughout the accession period, as seen

in the public opinion polls held at the time. In 2010, one year prior to the conclusion of accession negotiations, only 27% of respondents in Croatia considered that membership in the EU would be a good thing for their country, while 29% said that it would be a bad thing and 41% thought that it would be 'neither good nor bad'. Similarly, 46% of respondents in Croatia thought that their country would not benefit from joining the EU, while 39% took the opposite view (Eurobarometer 2010, p. 35).

The results of the EU membership referendum held in 2012 pointed towards polarisation between the elites and citizens. The referendum had a low turnout, 43.5% of the electorate, and of those who voted, 66.3% voted for and 33.1% voted against (DIP 2012). Such results were in contrast to the advice offered by almost all political parties, which overwhelmingly expressed their unreserved support for EU membership and exhorted the electorate to vote for accession.

The polarisation between elites and citizens on EU membership has continued nearly a decade after Croatia's accession. This article aims to delve deeper into the reasons behind this divergence of opinion through the analysis of several important EU-related discussions held in Croatia since 2013. In so doing, the article will present the broader national context within which the debates were undertaken. The paper argues that in order to contain and eventually reduce the present level of Euroscepticism among the public, the elites in Croatia need to engage in open and frank discussions with citizens, and to become more responsive to their EU-related concerns.

The methodology of this paper is based primarily on the analysis of secondary sources: public opinion polls, academic articles and media sources. To examine the public perception of the EU during the past decade we rely mostly on standard Eurobarometer surveys, which offer comprehensive coverage of the period since Croatia's EU accession. In conceptual terms, we adopt the distinction previously used by De Vries (2018, p. 44) that EU attitudes are constructed along two principal dimensions: the first refers to institutions and the second concerns the policy dimension.

Our aim is to verify whether public and party-based Euroscepticism has decreased since EU accession. In that context, the primary research question is: What is the level of EU-related consensus within and among elites and citizens in Croatia after EU accession? The starting hypothesis is that the level of consensus is highly dependent on the topic being discussed, and

that greater levels of polarisation could be expected on issues that have a direct impact on the people's economic and social situation.

The article starts with a theoretical section that explores the insufficient agreement between elites and citizens on the issue of European integration. The central section of the article firstly examines the general lack of support for the EU integration, i.e., the citizens' negative perceptions of principal EU and national institutions and their exit scepticism or degree of agreement with the idea of leaving the EU. Party-based Euroscepticism is also examined hereprimarily through the lens of the 2019 European Parliament election campaign in Croatia. The issue-specific expressions of Euroscepticism are subsequently addressed through an analysis of the opposition of Croatian public opinion to specific EU policies. These concern Eurozone membership, the EU's enlargement policy, its common security and defence policy, and the implementation of the EU's rule of law principles at the national level. The article ends with a section that presents conclusions and some recommendations.

1. Theoretical background

European elites tend to display varying levels of support for European integration, i.e., the EU institutions, their policies or goals. However, they are generally stronger supporters of the EU than the population (Best 2012). The elites are not a homogenous group. For the European political elites, support for the EU is founded on the fact that it offers opportunities to accomplish political goals that cannot be pursued at the national level. Furthermore, the EU has created many new political posts and career paths within its institutions (Haller 2008, p. 76). The economic elites were strong advocates of EU integration from its inception due to the dominance of neo-liberal economic theories within this process (ibid., p. 78). Finally, the bureaucratic elites represent a significant driving force behind EU integration, and suffice it to say that EU officials are among the most privileged public servants in the world (ibid., p. 83).

Despite their differences, individual members of elite groups often adjust the extent of their support for EU integration according to the level of support shown by the other national elites. It is therefore unsurprising that perceptions of the EU are more closely aligned among members of the three groups of elites than they are with those of the citizens (Müller et al. 2012).

The level of support for EU integration among elites also depends on the social and political context within each country (Best 2012). According to Max Haller, while in Sweden the EU is commonly perceived as a necessary evil, in Germany it is viewed as a substitute for a national identity. Whereas the French tend to view it as a means to gain global influence, in the new post-communist Member States, EU integration is commonly understood as an end in itself (2008, p. 87).

In policy areas that take a long-term perspective and deal with transnational issues, elites tend to be pro-European (Real Dato et al. 2012). However, typically, mainstream parties in Europe have tended to focus more on traditional left-right dimensions rather than on EU-related polemics. In contrast, EU politicisation is frequently driven by smaller Eurosceptic parties, especially from the radical right (Grande-Hunter 2016). Categorical federalists and radical Eurosceptics used to be uncommon, with the vast majority of elites being weak advocates or weak opponents of European integration (Best 2012). Today, while this broad categorisation still applies, the picture is changing with an overall increase in political polarisation (Casal Bértoa-Rama 2021).

Pro-Europeanism is generally stronger among the elites than among the general population, since there is a sizeable minority of citizens that reject the idea that European integration is beneficial for their respective countries (Mattila-Raunion 2012). The root of the problem is that the EU was designed as a protected sphere of policymaking, free from direct democratic pressures (Hix 2008, p. 3). For this reason, some scholars qualify it as an elitist or Schumpeterian model of democracy, characterised by the strong dominance of politicians and bureaucrats, with only a minor role for the citizens (Pausch 2014). The polarisation of attitudes between elites and citizens has intensified over the last 30 years. Political parties have become less representative and have drifted further away from citizens at the EU scale (Mattila-Raunio 2012). On the one hand, citizens are becoming more educated about and critical of this process, while on the other, the EU has increasingly taken on competencies from the national states (Haller 2008, p. 89).

Citizens are more polarised than parties on a range of issues across EU Member States. Higher income earners tend to benefit from EU integration as it creates increased investment

opportunities, while lower income earners are subject to diminishing levels of socio-economic support brought about by increased capital liberalisation. Similarly, younger Europeans seem to be more pro-European as they are more cosmopolitan, mobile and flexible (Loveless-Rohrschneider 2011, p. 10). Still, there are obvious differences between citizens and elites on particular topics. For example, while elites are more pro-integrationist on issues such as foreign policy or the EU army, the general population is often more pro-integrationist about taxation and social security systems (Müller et al. 2012). Overall, it seems that citizens who are less knowledgeable about the EU tend to be more closely aligned to their preferred party's positions on EU-related topics, compared to those that have a more in-depth understanding of the issues (Goldberg et al. 2020, p. 316).

This division between elites and citizens is problematic for the EU's legitimacy. As with any political system, if the public supports it, endorses its institutions, and evaluates its performance positively, the system is considered robust. If the public rejects the core principles of a political system and is unhappy with its outcomes, the system is in a dire condition (Loveless-Rohrschneider 2011, p. 7). The Treaty of Lisbon (2009) represented a positive step towards addressing the polarisation between elites and citizens by attempting to improve the democratic accountability and effectiveness of many of the EU institutions.

Nevertheless, over the past decade, the EU's crisis of legitimacy has arguably deepened. Faced with financial, migration and health crises, as well as the Russian military aggression on Ukraine, EU decision-making has become even more technocratic (Behr 2021). To reverse this process, some authors argue that national conversation on the EU should be strengthened to encourage a process of citizen socialisation, i.e., the internalisation of norms within the new political reality of supranational EU governance (Loveless-Rohrschneider 2011, p. 20). Moreover, some have suggested that EU decision-making will need to become increasingly responsive to the needs and concerns of citizens (Schmidt 2016). In practical terms, this means that some responsibility for policies will probably have to be decentralised to the national level, without jeopardising EU-level coordination.

When discussing support for European integration, it is crucial to address the meaning and implications of the term "Euroscepticism". This term was coined by the British media in the 1980s and has since been adopted and widely used by many scholars and commentators (Spiering

2004). The most widely known effort in defining Euroscepticism has been given by Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak. These authors recognise two kinds of Euroscepticism, 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism. The former implies outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration and opposition to one's country joining or remaining a member of the EU. The later, by contrast, involves contingent or qualified opposition to European integration. It may take the form of 'policy' Euroscepticism or 'national-interest' Euroscepticism, although these often overlap (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004).

More recently, Catherine De Vries (2018) introduced a novel typology of EU support and scepticism that intends to capture public opinion in its full complexity. De Vries contends that public opinion can be divided into four types: Exit Scepticism, Regime Scepticism, Policy Scepticism and Loyal Support. Exit sceptics oppose the EU because they view that a more viable alternative political system exists, namely their nation state. The opposite type, loyal supporters, more positively evaluates EU policy and regimes compared to the national ones. Regime and policy sceptics sit in between these two opposites. On one hand, regime sceptics evaluate the ways procedures operate at the EU level as less positive compared to the alternative of their county being outside of the EU. However, they feel that EU membership entails significant policy benefits. On the other hand, policy sceptics are sceptical of policies at the EU level but supportive of the regime.

For De Vries the EU support and scepticism are a result of a comparison between two sets of evaluations, between how people evaluate the perceived benefits of their country's EU membership vs. the perceived benefits associated with their country being outside the EU. Looking at Euroscepticism from this perspective, she concludes that in countries with high unemployment and low quality of government, people tend to be less Eurosceptic because they are unsure about the ability of their nation state to deliver public goods and services if it were to exit the EU (De Vries 2018, pp. 36-38).

2. General lack of support for EU integration

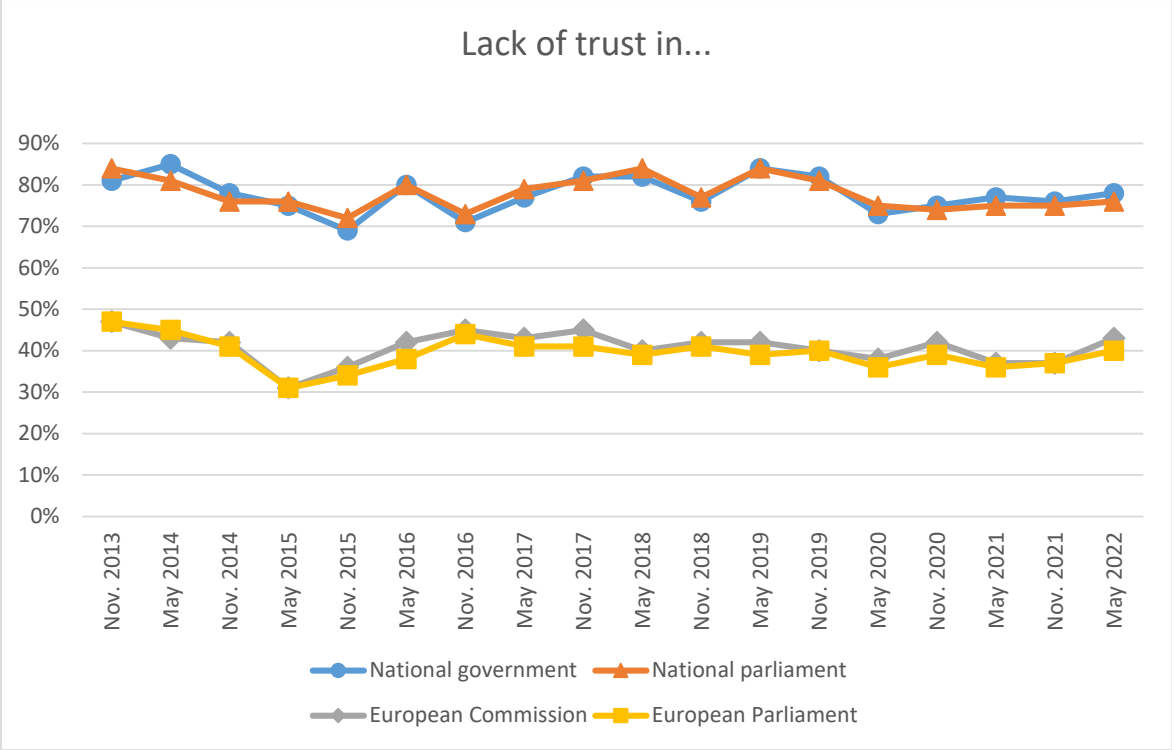
2.1. Regime and exit scepticism

The exploration of public opinion in Croatia since its EU accession demonstrates a sharp distinction between the level of trust expressed towards the main national and EU institutions. Throughout the past decade, the lack of trust in the national institutions has always greatly surpassed that expressed towards EU institutions. Generally, it can be stated that the lack of trust in the national institutions was twice as high as that expressed towards the EU institutions (see Figure 1). A comparison with the EU average shows that while the lack of trust in EU institutions in Croatia is similar to the EU average, EU citizens at large show much lower distrust (for some 20%) of their national institutions (see Figure 2).

When we evaluate the two sets of attitudes together, it is also notable that from the year 2016 onwards, EU citizens started to express slightly more trust towards both their national and EU institutions. The same general trend however cannot be as clearly observed in Croatia, where greater fluctuations in the level of trust are present. The increase in the level of trust among EU citizens could possibly be attributed to the end of the recession caused by the 2008 financial crisis, which began to be visible in around 2016. The same economic realty also affected Croatia, though recovery in the country was particularly slow due to severe effects of the financial crisis, which brought negative growth trends throughout the 2009–2014 period (Samardžija et al. 2017, p. 32).

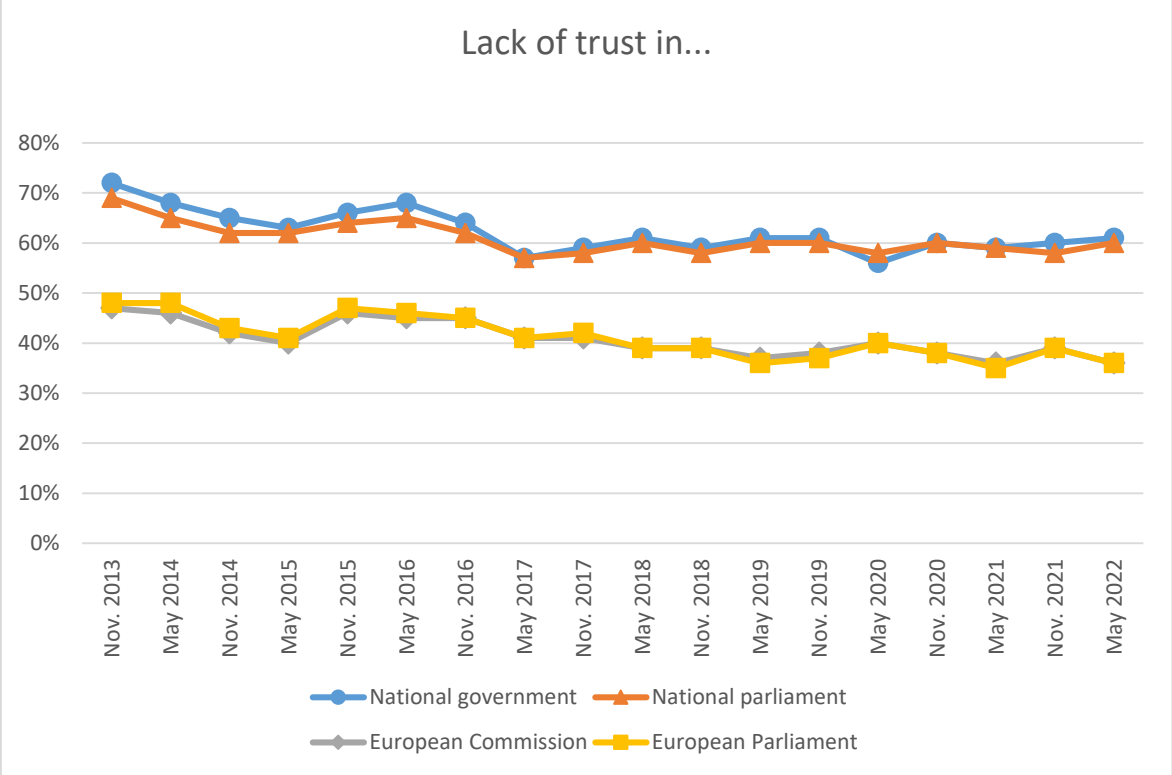
As a new EU Member State, Croatia has immensely profited from EU funds but was also exposed to certain negative side effects of EU membership. Namely, the opening of the European labour market to Croatian citizens has led to a mass emigration of a sizeable proportion of the labour force (around 10%), leading some to question the apparent benefits of EU membership (Butković et al. 2022, p. 107). A noticeable increase in trust in 2020 could likely be attributed to the efficient response to the health and economic challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: Regime scepticism in Croatia (2013–2022)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2013–2022. All data downloaded from the Eurobarometer portal

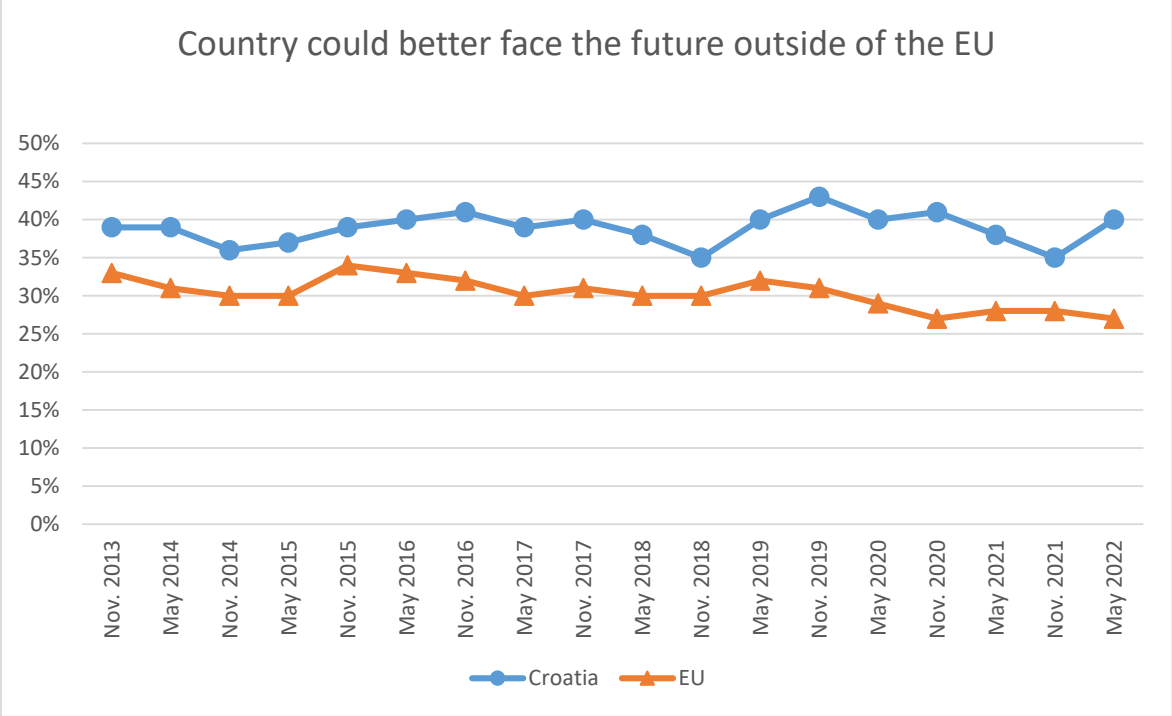
Figure 2: Regime scepticism in the EU (2013–2022)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2013–2022. All data downloaded from the Eurobarometer portal

Exit scepticism can be considered an indicator of hard Euroscepticism among the general public. In Figure 3, this kind of scepticism is presented as the share of citizens that believe their country could better face the future outside of the EU. The comparative data show that throughout past decade, the percentage of Croats who agreed with this claim has generally been around 40%, or some 10% above the EU average. The slight trend of declining support for exiting the EU, observable in the EU since 2018, cannot be as clearly established in Croatia. Nevertheless, support for exiting the EU remains a minority position in the country. The number of indecisive responses to that question tends to be minor while over 50% of Croats consistently oppose it.

Figure 3: Exit scepticism in Croatia and the EU (2013–2022)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2013–2022. All data downloaded from the Eurobarometer portal

2.2. Party politics

The fact that Croatia's EU accession process was characterised by a consensus among all the major political parties on the strategic importance of EU membership fits into the broader picture of a post-1989 Europe, where a pro-European stance was a general rule that determined the behaviour of legitimate political actors (Neumayer 2009, p. 184). After joining the EU, the Eurosceptic discourse within the two major mainstream parties, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), became more visible, especially when these parties were in the opposition, though in general it was confined to isolated cases and rare occasions (Arapović, 2020). Eurosceptic arguments became more common within protest parties located on the fringes of the political spectrum, which used it as an element of wider discourse against the existing system (see Grande-Hunter 2016; Pirro and Taggart 2018).

Ever since Croatia's EU accession at the national level two protest parties strongly established themselves: the Bridge (Most) and the Human Shield (Živi zid). It is common to place the Bridge party to the right of the political centre and the Human Shield party to the left, although leaders of the latter often claim that they cannot be placed on either side. Both of these parties could be considered populist in accordance with the definition of Cas Mudde, for whom populism represents an ideology that considers society to be separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' (2004, p. 543). One prominent analysis of the activities of these two parties differentiates between the kind of populism they represent. It argues that the Bridge party represents a milder variant of populism since its anti-elitism is targeted only towards the political elites that were or are in power. The populism of the Human Shield party is considered to be of a stronger kind since it is critical of all political elites (Grbeša and Šalaj 2018, p. 22). This distinction is logical because the Bridge party, unlike the Human Shield party, participated as the junior partner in two short-lived HDZ led governments in the period 2016–2017.

The Euroscepticism of the Bridge and Human Shield parties is not entirely consistent, but rather appears in waves as it intensifies in the run-up to the elections (see Grbeša and Šalaj 2018; Arapović, 2020). It was particularly strong during the 2019 European Parliament elections. At that time, the president of the Bridge Party Božo Petrov stated that bureaucrats in Brussels want to turn the EU into a superstate to the detriment of national identities. He also pointed out that if elected, their MEPs would not be loyal to European political families but instead the 'Croatian interest' as defined in their programme (Petrov 2019). The political secretary of the Bridge party, Nikola Grmoja, was even more resolute, "We don't want new joint institutions that should replace national institutions, we don't want deeper political integration, we don't want European taxes, or a European army, or a European federation in which the Brussels bureaucracy would shape Croatia's destiny. We want a Europe of nations, not a European nation!" (Tokić 2019).

The Human Shield party stated in its programme for the 2019 European Parliament elections that it is not, in principle, against the EU as a community of equal states and peoples that develop democracy and human rights, but that such an image of the EU seems utopian. The EU for them represents a project of neo-feudalisation and totalitarianisation of relations in

society. They accuse the EU of not working for the benefit of the Croatian population, but of only being interested in the resources and wealth of the Croatian territory (Arapović 2020). The presented rhetoric of the Human Shield party is sharper than that of the Bridge party, and could even be positioned at the border between soft and hard Euroscepticism. However, not even the Human Shield party has explicitly stated that it advocates Croatia's exit from the EU.

At the 2019 European Parliament elections, the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the strongest opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) each won four of a total of 12 seats allocated to Croatia. One additional seat was won by the liberal Amsterdam Coalition. The Eurosceptics won a total of three seats: one by the Human Shield party, one by the far-right Sovereigntist Coalition, and one by the independent candidate Mislav Kolakušić. It should however be underlined that with the possible exception of the borderline case of the Human Shield party, all other parties adopted a soft Eurosceptic stance, avoiding straightforward rejection of European integration. In other words, they promised their supporters that as critical insiders they would "change the EU from within".

In terms of percentages, things at first appeared grim for pro-European parties because Eurosceptic parties and candidates won 36% of the popular vote (European Parliament 2019). This was much higher than the usual result of Croatian Eurosceptic parties at the national elections, where they hardly ever surpass 20% of the total vote (see SEC 2023). Nevertheless, it should here be added that the phenomenon of stronger voting for the Eurosceptic parties in the European elections compared to the national elections is not a Croatian specificity, but is observable everywhere. Some authors explain this by the fact that since the European elections are generally perceived as second-class elections of a lesser political importance, voters are more inclined to express their frustration with the mainstream parties (see Freire and Santana-Pereira 2015).

The problem of Croatian Eurosceptic parties at the 2019 European Parliament elections was their fragmentation, since many of these parties and candidates came close but failed to cross the 5% electoral threshold (European Parliament 2019). Furthermore, the low turnout in these elections of only 29.9% compared to the EU average of 50.6% shows that despite their strong rhetoric, the Croatian Eurosceptic parties ultimately failed to mobilise a significant portion of their electorate (ibid.). A large number of citizens who express Eurosceptic views in opinion

polls decided to stay at home, confirming widespread distrust of the political parties, both the mainstream and protest ones.

3. Policy based scepticism

3.1. Eurozone membership

Croatia is the newest newcomer to the Eurozone, joining on 1 January 2023. The journey towards that goal started in 2017 when the centre-right HDZ government, led by Prime Minister Plenković, concluded that Croatia was ready to start the process to adopt the euro. In April 2018, the government, in cooperation with the Croatian National Bank, published their strategy for the adoption of the euro as Croatia's national currency, underlining that the benefits for Croatia of introducing the euro outweighed the costs. It argued that adopting the euro would eliminate foreign exchange rate risks, reduce interest rates and transaction costs, and support investments (VRH 2018).

The 2017–2023 period has been marked by discussions among Croatian economic experts on the potential benefits and negative impacts of joining the Eurozone. Most experts supported the government's programme, noting that in small, open and integrated economies with a labour force that is mobile across borders, monetary union is the logical final stage of integration (Šonje 2019). Furthermore, they argued that the euro in Croatia is already omnipresent because most citizens save in euro and most remittances sent from abroad are also in that currency (Žigman 2018, p. 36).

Critics of the government programme argued that the Croatian economy is not structurally ready to adopt the euro. The problems, in their view, lie in the lack of structural reforms, low labour productivity growth, and the lack of structural convergence that would make the Croatian economy more aligned to those in the Eurozone (Vizek 2021). They acknowledged that according to the 2013 Treaty of Accession, Croatia was required to introduce the euro once it fulfils the convergence criteria. They noted, however, that Croatia could have easily delayed adopting the euro given that other non-Eurozone Members States deliberately fail to fulfil their convergence criteria so as to not be required to start this process (Hadulka 2019).

Croatian industry leaders and banking associations supported the euro project. They believe that Eurozone membership will lead to improved economic policies and increased institutional reforms, which will outweigh any potential costs relating to the loss of monetary sovereignty (Šonje 2019). The trade unions never formed a united position on this issue. However, the leadership of MATICA, one of three representative trade union federations, was very critical of the move towards euro adoption. They argued that the euro is potentially a suitable instrument in economically prosperous times, but that it is far from optimal in times of crisis when not being able to devalue the currency leads to wage reductions and job losses (NSZVO 2022).

In 2019, the largest opposition party, centre-left SDP, expressed their concerns about the rapid introduction of the euro. However, smaller parties have voiced much stronger opposition in the national parliament. On the right of the political spectrum, parties such as the Homeland movement, the Sovereigntists coalition and the Bridge party have expressed dissent, while on the left, this has been voiced primarily by the We Can party (Raos 2021). This situation reaffirms the notion that EU politicisation is frequently driven by smaller Eurosceptic parties from the radical right (see Grande and Hunter 2016). Nevertheless, over time, criticism of the Croatian government on this issue has lost some of its momentum as several MPs from left-leaning opposition parties have started to actively support the euro adoption process (Zebić 2021).

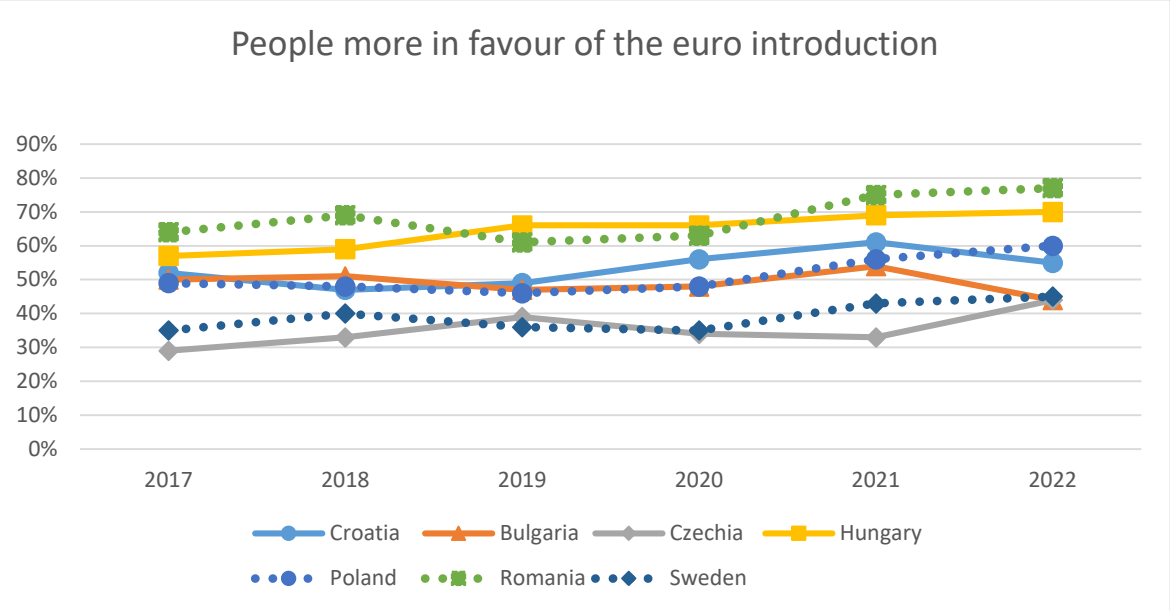
The results of Eurobarometer reports between 2017 to 2022 on introducing the euro show that Croatian public opinion has gradually shifted in favour of the process, although in the year prior to introduction, support dropped significantly to only 55% for and 43% against, returning very close to 2017 levels, when 52% Croatian citizens were in favour of adoption and 43% were against (see Figure 4).

According to a 2022 Eurobarometer report, only 37% Croatian citizens polled believed that the country was ready to introduce the euro, whereas 58% expressed reservations (Eurobarometer 2022). An even worse result from perspective of the government policy, was obtained on the question of when the euro should be introduced. Only 25% answered ‘as soon as possible’, 34% opted for ‘after some time’, while 39% replied with ‘as late as possible’ or ‘never’. Sharp polarisation of public opinion was seen in the question of whether Croatia would

lose control over its economic policy with the euro as its national currency: 49% agreed with that statement and 47% opposed it.

One of the major issues throughout the process of euro introduction was price stability. The government claimed that prices would not rise, but the public was largely sceptical. The 2022 Eurobarometer report clearly showed this, with 81% of respondents saying that 'prices will be increased', 16% replying that 'prices will be stable' and 1% believing that 'prices will be reduced'. However, it seems that these fears were exaggerated since a preliminary analysis of the European Central Bank and Croatian National Bank issued in March 2023 concluded that the impact of the introduction of the euro on consumer prices in Croatia has been in accordance with the experiences of other countries that have already introduced the euro (Falagiarda et al. 2023).

Figure 4: Public support for the introduction of the euro in countries that have not yet entered the Eurozone (2017–2022)



Source: Compiled by author using Eurobarometer result on the introduction of the euro 2017–2022

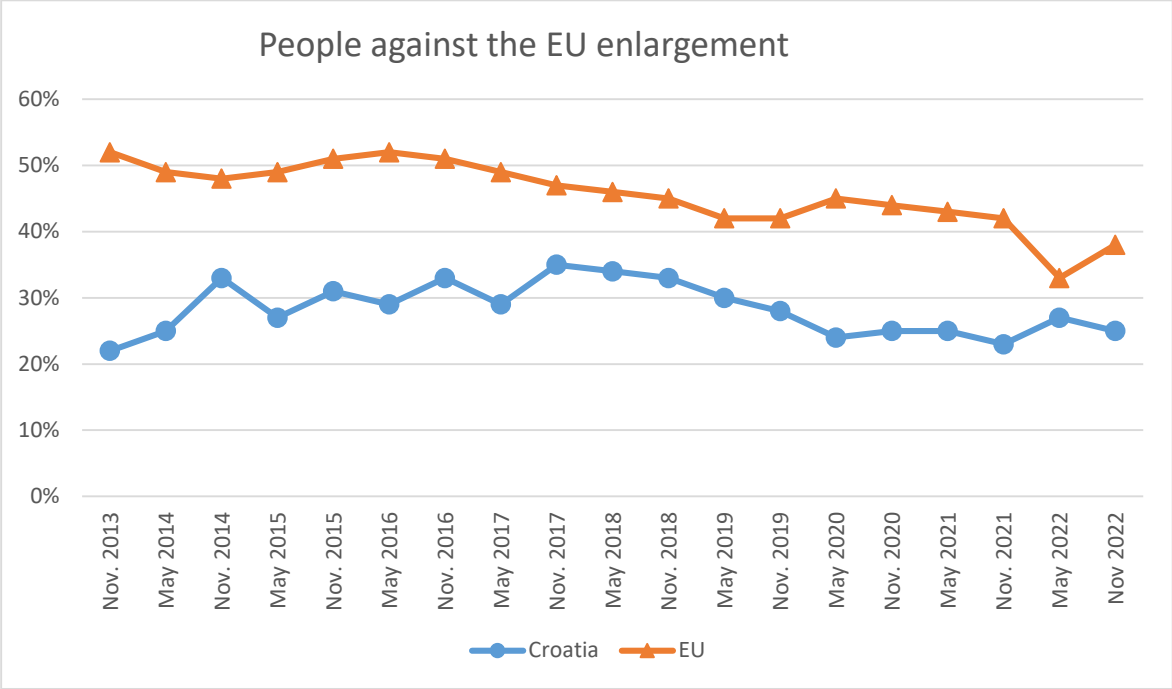
From the outset, the government argued that a referendum on the euro was not needed because this issue was settled in 2012 with the referendum on EU membership. To challenge this

view, the Sovereigntist coalition attempted to collect enough signatures to trigger a euro referendum in late 2021. After two weeks, they collected over 90% of the required number (334,582), however, they ultimately failed to assemble enough signatures. Part of the problem was that other parties on the right did not support this initiative (Thomas 2021). This shows that opponents of the fast-track Eurozone route were unable to generate the synergy needed for postponement of this government programme.

3.2. *Enlargement vs. common security and defence*

Croatian governments have always viewed the continuation of the EU enlargement as an important factor for stabilising the Western Balkan region (Butković and Samardžija 2014). The reasons for the support for the EU enlargement policy are both economic and political, because with three of the Western Balkan countries, Croatia has the longest external land border of any EU member state. If one were to select the topic that the 2020 Croatian Presidency of the EU Council pledged the most, this is definitely further enlargement in the Western Balkans. Back then, the EU Council reached an agreement on the new enlargement methodology, allowing for the opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia.

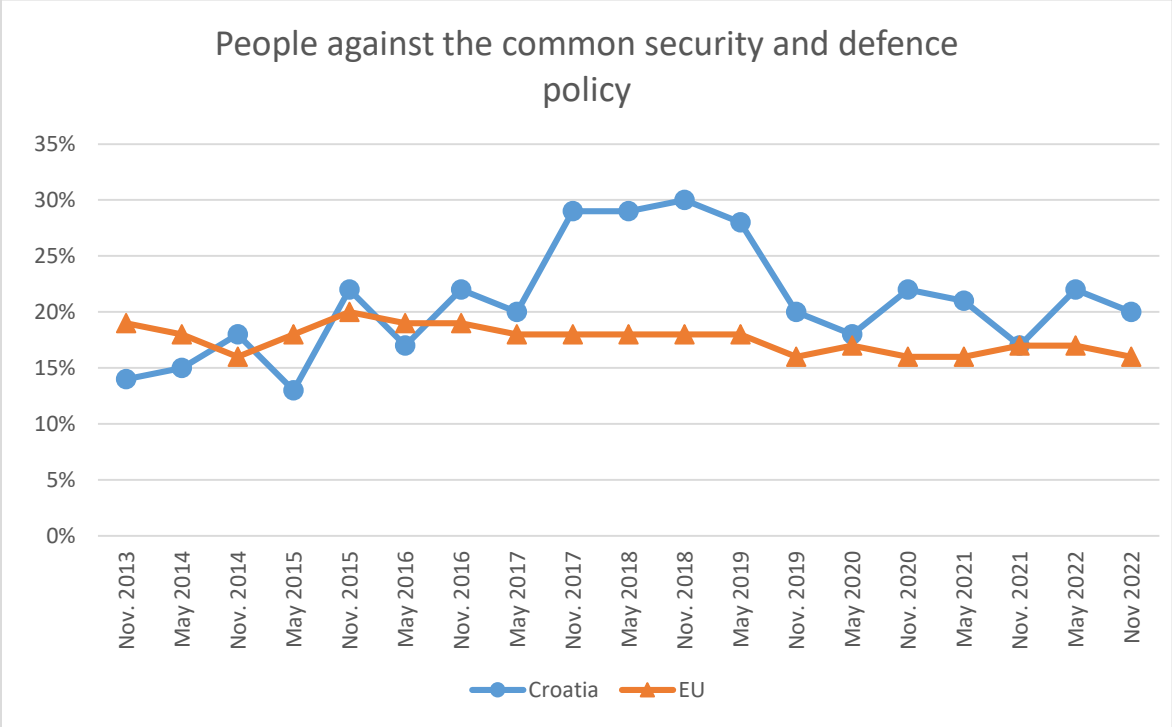
Figure 5: Opposition to further EU enlargement (2013–2022)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2013–2022. All data downloaded from the Eurobarometer portal.

Croatian support for the continuation of enlargement is not just an issue driven by its political and economic elites. The results of the Eurobarometer surveys conducted over the last decade show that within the EU, Croatian citizens are among most enthusiastic supporters of further EU enlargement (see Figure 5). Although public opposition to enlargement varied over the years, in Croatia it clearly represents a minority position with an average of 30% of citizens taking such views. Moreover, as shown in Figure 5, since 2019 there has been a clear trend of further decline in such opposition. All this stands in clear contrast to the EU average where the percentage of people opposing EU enlargement has been much higher. Prior to 2017, such opposition was around 50%. Since then, the trend has shifted and opposition is weakening although it remains higher than in Croatia.

Figure 6: Opposition to the common security and defence policy (2013–2022)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2013–2022. All data downloaded from the Eurobarometer portal.

Since 2008, Croatia has been a member of the NATO alliance and since its EU accession, it participates in developing the common security and defence policy. As shown in Figure 6, public opposition to the common security and defence policy revolves around the EU average of about 20%. However, increased public opposition become noticeable in the 2017–2019 period, which corresponds with the launching of the idea of a European army by French President Emmanuel Macron. The public in Croatia is sensitive to the topic of the Croatian Army and its possible transformations, since in the 1990s Croatia gained its independence through a defensive war. Negative public sentiments around the idea of launching a European army were used during the 2019 European Parliament elections by the protest parties in order to rally support (see Tokić 2019; Arapović 2020).

Despite differences concerning enlargement and the common security and defence policy, it is common in both cases that critical views were held by a relatively small number of

Croatian citizens. This stands in contrast to the opposition towards a common currency where the public opinion was much more divided.

3.3. Rule of law

Although at first glance it may seem that implementation of the rule of law is not closely related to EU membership, that impression is incorrect. This is particularly true in the case of Croatia which negotiated these issues under a separate chapter (Chapter 23 "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights") which as such did not exist in the previous enlargement rounds. The closing of Chapter 23 was associated with the implementation of numerous reforms that were generally difficult to negotiate (Goldner Lang 2012). These reforms were closely followed by the media and civil society, which raised the awareness of the general public that implementation of reforms in this area represents one of the most important preconditions for joining the EU.

According to the European Commission (2021), the EU accession of Croatia created a solid legal framework for securing the rule of law, though problems remain with its implementation. Also, more work remains to be done as some laws are over-regulated while other seem insufficient. The governing politicians in Croatia never stopped claiming that in the last 20 years, the country has been making progress within the EU's rule of law framework. The mainstream parties in the opposition criticised this standpoint, though their criticism was mostly directed at isolated issues such as individual appointments rather than at larger systemic issues. The citizens never agreed with the government's claims (see Malenica and Jeknić 2010).

The special Eurobarometer on the perceived independence of the national justice systems in the EU, which represents an important segment of the rule of law, reveals that Croatia is situated at the very bottom (Eurobarometer 2021b). In Austria, as the best performing state, 60% of surveyed citizens believe that there is no interference or political pressure from the government on the national justice system, while in Croatia only 12% of surveyed individuals agree with that claim. Similarly, 58% of Austrians think that there is no interference with their justice system from economic or other special interest, while in Croatia only 11% of the public agrees.

Commenting results of several similar polls, a group of Croatian legal scholars concluded that the popular perception of judicial independence in Croatia is the lowest in the EU. They noted that this is a longstanding trend that has not been altered with EU membership (Bečić-Selanec et al. 2020). On the contrary, the scepticism of Croatian citizens concerning their judiciary is rising. The government for its part is trying to downplay the significance of these figures by claiming that, unlike perception, the real situation is not as problematic. Nevertheless, even if this government's claim is partly true, the figures on the perceived independence of the national justice systems seem indeed worrying (ibid.).

Much like judicial independence, the fight against corruption could be characterized as a subset of the rule of law principles. Croatia recently adopted the new ambitious Anti-Corruption Strategy 2021–2030, complemented by a three-year implementation plan. The push towards this new strategic framework was caused, among the other things, by the highly negative public perception of the government's efforts to fight corruption. Findings of the Special Eurobarometer on Corruption published in June 2020 show that 97% of Croatians surveyed said that they thought corruption was widespread in the country. At the EU level, an average of 71% agreed with that statement, while in Finland, at the very top, only 22% agreed (Eurobarometer 2020b, p. 21).

The results of these public opinion polls indicate that Croatian citizens are united in their scepticism towards national level policies conveying the European framework in the ambit of the rule of law. In other words, they are not satisfied with their government's attempts to promote the rule of law, regardless of their political orientation or whether or not they have personally benefited from European integration.

5. Conclusions

Croatia was required to make significant transformative efforts in order to join the EU. However, as in other Member States, EU accession was essentially an elite-driven process that encountered a combination of resistance and indifference from sizeable segments of the population. The article has shown that after entering the EU, public sentiment about membership

has not significantly changed, with opinion polls still showing a high degree of Euroscepticism and polarisation on selected EU-related topics.

Analysis of the general level of support for the European integration shows that in Croatia, the lack of trust in the national institutions has greatly surpassed that expressed towards the EU institutions. The same phenomenon is visible when observing the EU average results, although there this discrepancy is less pronounced. Therefore, we conclude that regime Euroscepticism in Croatia at least in part represents a reflection of a more general crisis of trust in political institutions following the 2008 financial crisis, which was particularly severe in the country.

Exit scepticism can be considered an indicator of hard Euroscepticism of the general public and is relatively high in Croatia compared to the EU average. This runs contrary to observation of De Vries (2018) that economically and institutionally underdeveloped countries tend to be less Eurosceptic. Nevertheless, support for exiting the EU remains a minority position in the country. Much like regime Euroscepticism, exit scepticisms could probably be attributed to the general loss of trust in political institutions but also to some negative economic side-effects of EU membership, such as the movement of key skills and labour towards wealthier EU countries.

The EU represents a low-salience issue for Croatian mainstream parties, although party-based Euroscepticism has increased somewhat during the past decade within mainstream parties that find themselves in the opposition. Avoiding polemics on EU issues by the mainstream parties was used by the protest populist parties such as the Bridge or Human Shield parties. These parties developed various EU critical positions as a rule during election campaigns, disclosing their Euroscepticism as part of an election strategy rather than a genuine ideological standpoint. However, this approach taken by the populist protest parties was only partly successful because at the national elections they continuously failed to gain more than 20% support. Results of the 2019 European Parliament elections in Croatia indicated comparatively higher support for the Eurosceptic parties and candidates, which is in line with the experiences in other countries. Still, due to the inability of these parties to create pre-election coalitions, their support was transferred into just three out of 12 seats assigned to Croatia in the European Parliament.

The most widespread EU policy related debate was on Eurozone membership, which started in 2017 and ended in 2023 when Croatia adopted the euro as its national currency. The national-level political and economic actors were overwhelmingly in favour of introducing the euro, while those who opposed it were unable to create a united front. Yet, from the start of the process, opinion polls have shown a fairly high level of resistance and scepticism (over 40%) among the public. It could be argued that the initial change in public sentiment was due to a one-sided government campaign which has accentuated the potential benefits and underplayed all the potential risks. Nevertheless, in the last year prior to joining the eurozone, many citizens faced with the immediacy of the currency change shifted their views towards more sceptical positions. With that in mind it remains highly uncertain whether a referendum on the euro if held would be successful.

Public opposition towards the EU's enlargement policy in Croatia clearly represents a minority position, with levels far below the EU average. The opposition towards the EU's common security and defence policy is somewhat within the range of the EU average. Relatively mild opposition towards these two prominent EU policies, reinforces this article's initial hypothesis that the level of agreement between Croatian elites and citizens is contingent on the topic, and, specifically, that greater levels of polarisation occur around issues that have a direct impact on the citizens' economic and social situation.

From the results of opinion polls, it is evident that on the application of the rule of law, there is a profound division between representatives of the government, who tend to act as though Croatia does not have a problem, and the overwhelming majority of citizens, who are sceptical about the government's accomplishments in this realm. This sentiment is in line with our earlier conclusion that Euroscepticism in Croatia is partly rooted in the crisis of confidence towards national political institutions. Therefore, it could be assumed that both general and policy-specific Euroscepticism among the general public is likely to decline if confidence in the national political institutions can be restored.

Our analysis suggests that the blame for the Croatian citizen mistrust of the EU lies largely with the mainstream political parties that have avoided engaging in honest and transparent EU-related discussions with the public. Yet, such discussions are needed as they may

lead to a greater understanding of the EU among the population and speed up their socialisation within its political system. This means that the citizens must occasionally be trusted with complex issues and consulted according to the bottom-up principles of direct or participatory democracy. The fact that much of the Eurosceptic argument is grounded in populist misconceptions, which does not offer realistic alternatives in the modern globalised context, is not a valid reason for avoiding such debates or excluding critical perspectives.

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HOW CYPRUS' ECONOMY COPED WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: *This paper assesses how Cyprus' economy coped with the Covid-19 pandemic by generating two series of forecasts with wavelet analysis: forecasts using data including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) and not including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019). The difference of their averages is an indicator of the resilience of the economy during the pandemic, the greater the difference, the more resilient the economy. Eurozone and Germany are used as benchmarks: subtracting the Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 GDP growth rate (quarterly and annualized) average forecast of Cyprus obtained with the Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data, +1.62%, by the one obtained with the Q4 1997-Q3 2019 data, +1.47%, the difference is +0.15% whereas with Eurozone the difference is +0.11%, [+0.68% - (+0.57%)] and with Germany the difference is -0.12% [+0.89% - (+1.01%)]. Thus, Cyprus' economy shows a slightly higher resilience (+0.15%) than the Eurozone's (+0.11%) based on Q3 2022-Q4 2050 forecasts and a stronger resilience than Germany's (-0.12%). Moreover, the average of the Q3 2022-Q4 2050 quarterly (annualized) growth rate forecasts of Cyprus is expected to be +1.62% with the Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data whereas it is expected to be only +0.68% for the Eurozone and +0.89% for Germany. Cyprus' economy shows better prospects than the Eurozone's and Germany's economies.*

Keywords: GDP; Wavelet Analysis; Forecasting; Cyprus; Eurozone; Germany

1. Introduction

This paper assesses how Cyprus' economy coped with the Covid-19 pandemic. Cyprus is an island part of the European Union, officially named the Republic of Cyprus. The southern part covering 74% of the area of the island is administered by a Greek population speaking Greek and using the Euro as legal tender. The northern part representing 36% of the island area is administered by Turkish Cypriots. It is named the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, speaking Turkish, and using the Turkish lira as legal tender. Northern Cyprus is still counted by

the international community as part of the Republic of Cyprus. Northern Cyprus' survival depends on Turkish economic support following the implementation in 1994 of an international economic embargo against Northern Cyprus by the European Union and supported by the United Nations (The World Factbook, 2023). In 1974, Turkey invaded Northern Cyprus and has been a state recognized only by Turkey since 1983. In 2023, the Turkish president and the Greek prime minister decided to intensify negotiations aimed at resolving long-standing regional conflicts, including the future settlement of Cyprus which will be based on the creation of two distinct States, a motion currently rejected by the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, but which could be implemented in the medium term (Tugwell and Hacaoglu, 2023).

The economy of Cyprus is tiny, ranking 104th in the world in size of GDP equal to 28,408 million USD (2021 estimate, World Bank 2023). The GDP composition by sector of origin is represented by services (85.5% of GDP, 2017 est.), including tourism (source of about 8% to 13% of GDP), industry and agriculture being marginal (respectively 12.5% and 2% of GDP, 2017 estimates). The importance of tourism to the economy must be mentioned since tourism has been hit hard by closures and travel bans during the pandemic. Cyprus' economy is considered as high-income, with a Real GDP per capita equal to $41,700 (2021 est.) ranked 45th in the world.

The following section covers the literature about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Cypriot economy.

2. Literature Review

Before the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, Cyprus was already hit by a financial crisis in 2012-2013 with a failure of its banking system. At this time, banks in Cyprus, especially Laiki bank, second-largest banking group in Cyprus behind the Bank of Cyprus, 'were exposed to overleveraged local real estate companies, the Greek public debt crisis and a downgrade in the credit rating of Cypriot government bonds by international rating agencies' (Markidou, 2022). Laiki bank was nationalized in 2012. In 2021, the Central Bank of Cyprus filed an application for the liquidation of former Laiki bank (Stockwatch, 2021). In 2013, to avoid a collapse of its financial system, Cyprus was bailed-in by the ECB (European Central Bank), the European

Commission, the Eurogroup, and the International Monetary Fund, offering a financial bail-in of €10 billion. During this bail-in process, banks' shareholders and creditors paid their share of costs. 'No insured deposits of €100,000 or less were affected, although depositors lost 47.5% of all bank deposits above €100,000' (Ekathimerini.com, 2013).

The Covid-19 pandemic started at the end of 2019 and had spread to five continents, killing millions and inducing a global recession. The pandemic quickly caused widespread social and political upheaval, disrupting the lives of the entire society. To limit the spread of the virus, governments put in place unpopular confinements of populations. By February 26, 2023, the global number of Coronavirus Cases was 679,605,591 infected people, 6,797,685 dead among them (Worldometers, 2023). Lockdowns have paralyzed economies globally, resulting in a global recession in 2020. In Cyprus, out of a total population of 1.244 million in 2021, the number of cases and deaths from the Covid-19 pandemic have been 1,328,673 cases and 7,071 deaths by March 2, 2023 (Worldometers, 2023) which represent about 52.1% of the population in terms of cases and 0.10% in terms of deaths. Using the total of 48 European countries as benchmark, the number of cases and deaths from the Covid-19 pandemic have been 246,371,491 cases and 2,017,562 deaths by March 2, 2023, out of a population of 748,845,084 which represent about 32.9% of the population in terms of cases and 0.26% in terms of deaths. It shows that the Cypriot population was 58% more infected by the Covid-19 pandemic than the European population (52.1% versus 32.9%) but was 61% less impacted by death than the European population (0.10% versus 0.26%). The Cypriot population would have seemed less concerned about protecting themselves against the Covid-19 pandemic but more resistant to death than the European population. In fact, Covid-19 exacerbated inequalities, and led to broad social changes (Redbird et al., 2022). Although a small country, Cyprus has not been spared from this phenomenon. To address health inequalities, the Cypriot government implemented the largest health sector reform Cyprus has ever seen (Michail et al., 2021), which became fully operational in 2020. It provided free health care to all citizens, thereby minimizing health inequalities. This measure being inclusive, for the first time in Cyprus, migrants benefited from the same health coverage as all Cypriot citizens (Koutsampelas et al., 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic has intensified income inequality in Cyprus. The government took several measures in 2021,

including the implementation of wage and social protection policies and the application of the Equality Act. The government provided financial assistance in the form of salary compensation to affected employees and unemployed people, including self-employed people, working parents and employees of small businesses and businesses, who had to suspend their activities completely or partially (Republic of Cyprus, 2021). To boost the Cypriot economy during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government implemented a recovery and resilience plan, which amounted to €1.2 billion and 5.2 % of Cyprus' 2019 GDP (Delivorias, 2022). Cyprus has decided to use most of its allocation in grants equivalent to €1.005 billion, including €200.3 million in loans. In 2020, the Council of the European Union has recommended that Cyprus take measures to effectively combat the pandemic, support the economy and the subsequent recovery (EUR-Lex, 2020). The Council considered three factors essential to the recovery process of Cyprus: 1) the first factor was to improve the quality of education and training for the labor market, and to promote a rapid recovery of the labor market; 2) The second factor was to promote an efficient judicial system favorable to investment and business; 3) The third factor was improving the Cypriot health system. In conclusion, Cyprus' recovery and resilience plan was aimed to improve economic growth and create jobs, to boost Cyprus' GDP by 1.1% to 1.8% by 2026, to improve the economy by adding 3,000 citizens into the job market, to rely on spill-over effects accounting for 0.5 percentage points of gross domestic product in 2026 from other Member States, through exports (European Commission, 2020). Furthermore, the IMF (Tuladhar et al., 2021) indicated that the Cypriot economy's dependence on tourism and its high levels of public debt and private sector made it particularly vulnerable to the shock of the pandemic. The IMF suggested three key policies to strengthen the recovery of the Cypriot economy from the effects of the pandemic shock: 1) address lending problems to strengthen bank balance sheets and support credit growth; 2) focus on mitigating the impact of the crisis while maintaining debt sustainability and 3) support the reallocation of resources to strengthen future growth and make it more inclusive. It appears that the recovery plan and sound advice from the IMF have worked well with the Cypriot economy. According to the President of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde (Lagarde, 2022), Cyprus showed a strong recovery momentum with a GDP increasing by 5.6% in 2021, reaching its 2019 level. Unemployment was back to pre-pandemic levels of around 6%. Cyprus performed well thanks to the extraordinary policy response from the Eurozone, implementing

fiscal and monetary policies to protect incomes and demand. Nevertheless, following the pandemic, lockdowns were responsible for a lousy restart of supply responsible of 'a global mismatch between increasing demand and short supply, bringing shortages and disruptions of the supply chain' (Lagarde, 2022). Due to an interconnected global economy, this was transmitted to the markets, bringing high inflation reaching 5.6% year-to-year in February 2023 in the euro area (Trading Economics, 2023), with energy inflation above 30%. Cyprus was not spared, with inflation equal to 6.7% year-to-year in February 2023 (Trading Economics, 2023) – due to increasing food and energy prices. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has created a supply shock for economies around the world that simultaneously drove up inflation and reduced growth. Rising energy and food prices are the result of this supply shock, with Russia being the main energy supplier, and the two warring countries (Ukraine and Russia) accounting for around 30% of world wheat exports, Russia and its ally Belarus producing close to one third of potash in the world, a key component of fertilizer production. The tourism sector in Cyprus was also hit by a reducing number of Russian and Ukrainian tourists representing respectively 27% and 5% of the tourists in Cyprus in 2021.

Furthermore, Cyprus has historically been the focus of foreign direct investment from and to Russia. Professions related to foreign direct investment in Cyprus linked to Russia were also impacted including consultants, lawyers, and accountants. Nonetheless, the Cypriot economy has become stronger and more resilient nowadays following the 2013 banking crisis. Non-performing loans dropped to less than 10% by the end of 2021 from 50% of all loans in 2014. Overall, the Cypriot banking sector is substantially liquid and capitalized.

The final words of this section concern the modeling of wavelet analysis applied to forecasting. The flexibility of wavelet analysis was supported by forecasting in-sample stationary and nonstationary time series (Rostan and Rostan, 2018a). Further articles evaluated how sustainable were the pension system of Spain with wavelet analysis (Rostan et al., 2015) as well as the Saudi pension system (Rostan and Rostan, 2018 b). Forecasting European and Asian populations with wavelet analysis incorporating multiscale principal component analysis to model age groups co-dynamics was the topic of another paper (Rostan and Rostan, 2017); this was also the topic of the article "When will European Muslim population be majority and in which country?" (Rostan and Rostan, 2019). To demonstrate the versatility of wavelet analysis,

it was also applied to fossil fuels prices projections (Rostan and Rostan, 2021b). Finally, wavelet analysis was used to forecast various economies of Spain (Rostan and Rostan, 2018c), Greece (2018d), Austria (2020), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2021a), the Persian Gulf (2022a), Turkey (2022b), the United Kingdom (2022c) and Korea (2023a).

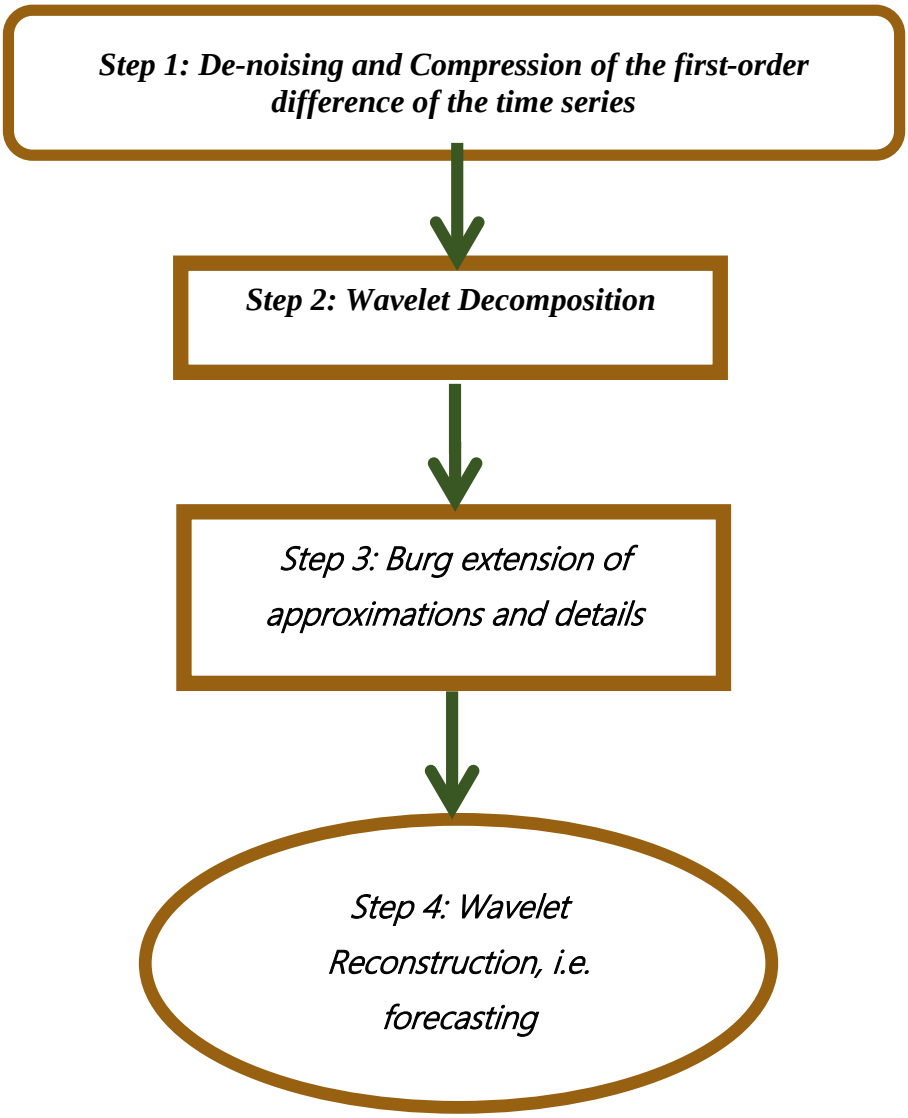
The methodology used in this article is presented in the next section.

3. Methodology

3.1. Overview of the methodology

The present paper assesses how Cyprus' economy coped with the Covid-19 pandemic using its 2050 projections. The idea is to compare Cyprus' Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 Real GDP growth rate forecasts excluding (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019) and including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) by using wavelet analysis. The difference of their averages measures the resilience of the economy during the pandemic, the larger the difference the stronger the resilience. The wavelet analysis forecasting model used in this research follows four steps illustrated in the flowchart below (Figure 1). Detailed methodology is found in Rostan and Rostan (2022c). Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 Real GDP growth rate forecasts of the Eurozone (19 countries including Cyprus) and Germany are used as benchmarks of Cyprus' forecasts.

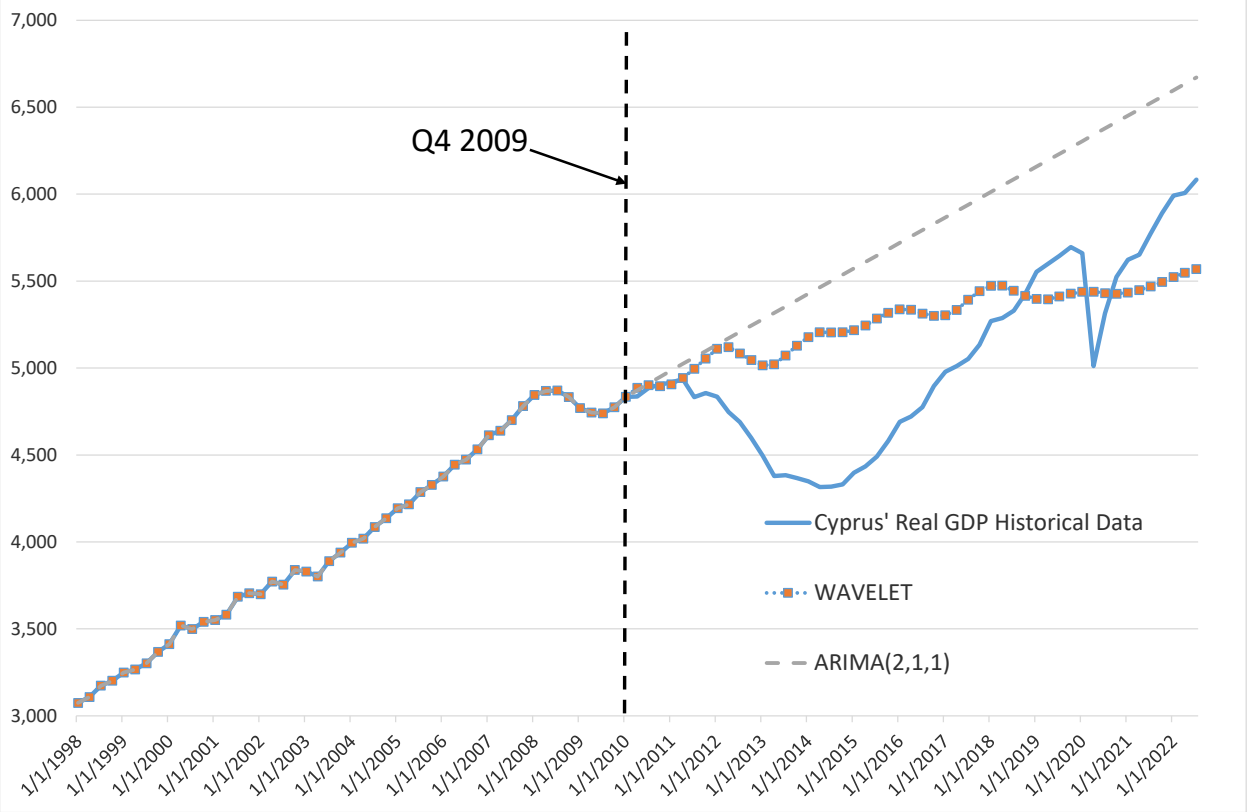
Figure 1: Flowchart of the methodology from steps 1 to 4.



3.2. Assessing the forecasting ability of wavelet analysis

The forecasting ability of wavelet analysis is assessed in this section. Wavelet analysis is benchmarked to ARIMA (2,1,1) forecasting model (Box and Jenkins, 1976; Baillie and Bollerslev, 1992; Box et al.; 1994), forecasting 50 in-sample quarters from Q1 2010 to Q2 2022 of the Real GDP of Cyprus obtained with Cyprus' Real GDP data from Q4 1997 to Q4 2009 (49 data), dividing the in-sample almost equally (49/50). To compare the forecasting ability of both models, the Root-Mean-Square Error (RMSE) criteria is applied (forecasts versus historical data), computing the error of forecasting. In this exercise, as illustrated in Figure 2, wavelet analysis forecasting model beats ARIMA (2,1,1) model over 50 quarters with a RMSE equal to 472 versus 819 with ARIMA (2,1,1), almost twice as high.

Figure 2: 50 forecasts from Q1 2010 to Q2 2022 of the Real GDP of Cyprus, Millions of Chained 2010 Euros, Quarterly, Seasonally Adjusted, obtained with Cyprus' Real GDP data from Q4 1997 to Q4 2009 (49 data)



Autoregressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) is a forecasting model extensively used in statistics and econometrics. ARIMA (2,1,1) model is used since it best fits Cyprus' Real GDP data from Q4 1997 to Q4 2009 (49 data). ARMA lags p = 2 and q = 1 are identified with the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) applied to the 49 data. For this purpose, several models are estimated with different p and q values. For each estimated model, the loglikelihood objective function value is computed. Then, the loglikelihood value is input to compute the BIC measure of fit which penalizes for complexity. The methodology involving ARIMA model is implemented in Matlab using the econometrics toolbox. To formally identify the ARMA lags, several models are fitted with different lag choices, making the degree of differencing (i.e. the "I" of ARIMA) varying from 0 to 3. All combinations of ARMA(p,q) are fit for p = 1,...,3 and q = 1,...,3 (a total of 9 models per degree of differencing). The loglikelihood objective function and number of coefficients for each fitted model are stored. The BIC is computed for each fitted model. In the BIC matrix, the rows correspond to the AR degree (p) and the columns correspond to the MA degree (q). The optimal value in the BIC matrix is the smallest BIC value (508.8909) obtained with the first order differencing, which explains the choice of the ARIMA(2,1,1) model:

		q	
	509.6706	512.3826	547.5427
p	508.8909	733.9306	715.2085
	734.6537	739.2543	743.7683

Selected model for this exercise: ARIMA(p,d,q) = ARIMA(2,1,1).

3.3. Dealing with structural breaks

This section focuses on structural breaks and how wavelet analysis can handle them. A structural break is an unexpected change over time in the parameters of regression models, which can lead to huge forecast errors and overall model unreliability. The lack of stability of coefficients frequently caused forecast failure, and therefore econometricians must routinely test for structural stability. There is extensive statistics and econometrics literature related to the detection of changes and structural breaks such as Antoch et al. (2019). Lo Cascio (2007) focused on structural breaks and how to handle them with wavelet analysis. During step 2, Wavelet Decomposition and more specifically denoising, the sparsity property of the wavelet transform,

which is its ability to encode a signal in few big coefficients, is the basis for noise reduction techniques by thresholding the wavelet coefficients. These techniques outperform classical linear filtering. The denoising involves a simple way to suppress the noisy part of the signal, called shrinkage in the wavelet domain, an overall reduction in the size of the wavelet coefficients which will reduce coefficients of negligible value to zero. Shrinking the coefficients towards zero has the effect of suppressing the noise while preserving the essential features of the signal. As an illustration of the shrinkage technique, Lo Cascio looked at identifying structural breaks of UK Real GDP from 1873 to 2001, period that has included many policy regime shifts, two world wars and two oil crises, and major legislative and technological changes. Lo Cascio used the denoised annual growth to recover the trend that has been plotted with the UK GDP in levels. Lo Cascio proved the superiority of the wavelet analysis over classical linear filtering to reveal the true structure of the data, including its local irregularities and abrupt changes.

To put these results in perspective of the present paper, wavelet analysis can reveal the true structure of the data in the two samples that were chosen, a sample including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) and one not including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019). It is obvious that the structural break resulting from the external shock of the Covid-19 pandemic has been incorporated in the forecasting of Cyprus' Real GDP generated from the historical data including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) but not in the forecasting of Cyprus' Real GDP generated from data not including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019). This structural break is of course a factor which explains the difference between the two sets of forecasts. But for the two sets of data, shrinkage in the wavelet domain had the effect of suppressing the noise while preserving the essential features of the two signals, meaning that the structural break had a marginal effect on the explanation of the difference between the two sets of forecasts, the main factor being the negative external shock of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.4.Is wavelet analysis a more suitable choice for the research question?

In the literature of parametric modeling -parametric models allow for a direct interpretation of the data, parameters being used to explain the movements within the different components and being used for forecasting- one school emerges, proponent of the Unobserved

Components Model (UCM, Harvey 1989). The UCM belongs to the class of structural time series models set up in a state space context that takes advantage of the extraordinary flexibility of the recursive algorithms known as the Kalman filter and Fixed Interval Smoother (Pedregal, 2001). UCM is defined in terms of unobserved components with certain behavior attached to each component which then has a direct interpretation (Norwood, 2020). UCM uses previous statistical knowledge of the components and separates components which allow for new elements to be added given knowledge of events. On the flip side, UCM requires low level of previous knowledge of the behavior of the series to begin and evolved UCMs can have issues with stability and convergence if models are incorrectly specified. In the literature of non-parametric modeling of economic time series - non-parametric models placing little to no assumptions on the underlying form of the data- one school among others emerge -others include neural networks, support vector regression, regression trees, Gaussian process, long short-term memory, Gautam and Singh, 2020- another school emerges proponent of wavelet analysis. Examples of the wavelet analysis' followers include Gallegati et al. (2017), who demonstrated that wavelets provide a reliable and straightforward technique for analyzing long waves dynamics in time series exhibiting quite complex patterns such as historical data, by allowing simultaneous estimation of different unobserved components and Rhif et al. (2019) who underlined the ability of wavelet analysis to capture non-stationarity, multiresolution and approximate decorrelation which emerge from wavelet filters. Which school to choose? Unlike UCM, wavelet analysis is a non-parametric model that offers flexibility because it is to place little to no assumptions on the underlying form of the data. Since this article focuses on Real GDP time series where a reduced amount of prior information is assumed, reducing data assumptions may lead to a more unbiased approach (Norwood, 2020). In addition, the trend, seasonality, and cycle are embedded in Real GDP time series which are not directly observable in the data (Harvey and Koopman, 2010) but may be captured with both wavelets and unobserved components model. Fluctuations in economic activity are specifically captured by the cycle. Both models can once more capture this cycle. When hidden periodicities in data are to be associated with cyclical behavior or recurring processes, wavelet analysis and unobserved components model may again reveal these periodicities. In addition, wavelet analysis and unobserved components model aim to portray the features of a time series by assuming that they follow

stochastic processes. In conclusion, there is no clear-cut study in the literature separating wavelet analysis and unobserved component model for forecasting economic time series, although unobserved component model is more fashionable. The authors believe that the wavelet analysis forecasting model is as suitable as its competitors.

3.5. A remark about the choice of level 2 decomposition / Threshold

At step 2 "Wavelet decomposition" and step 4 "Wavelet Reconstruction", the authors chose level 2 for wavelet decomposition and reconstruction of the signal *s*.

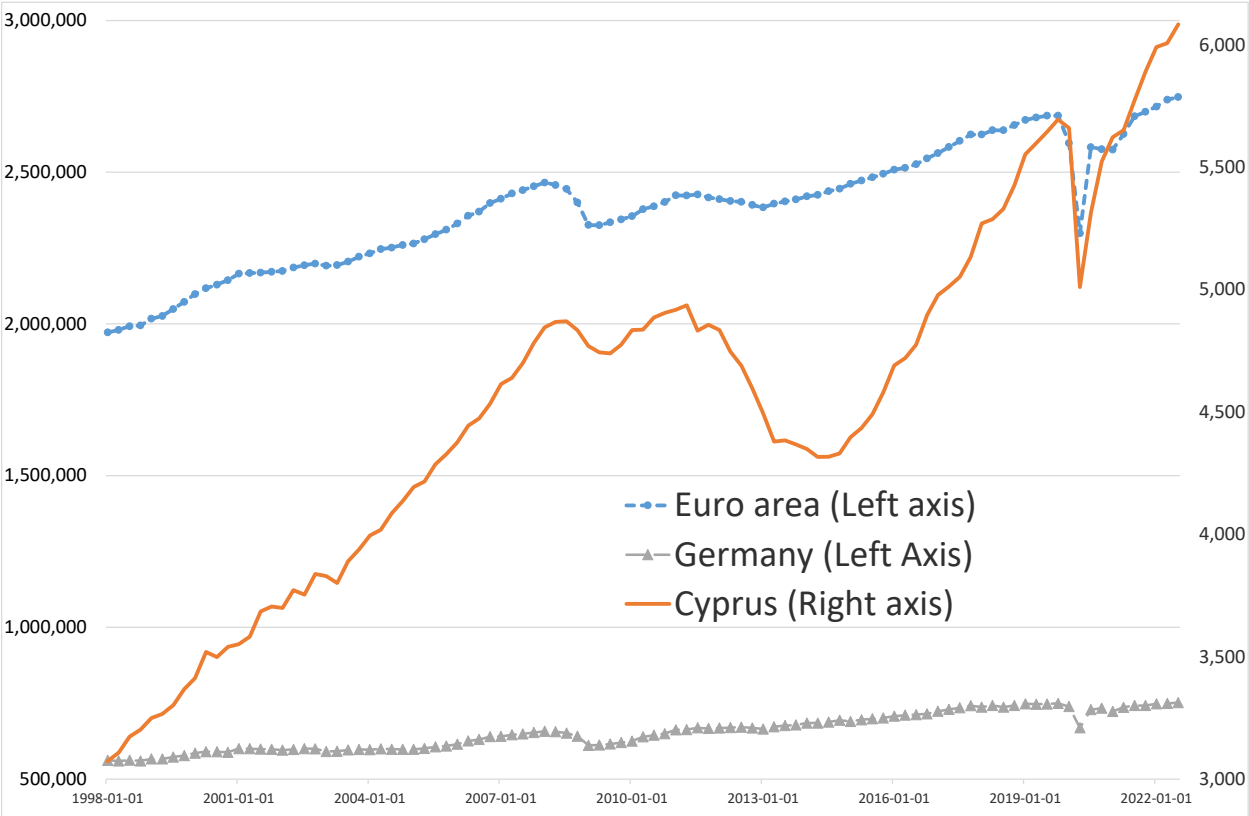
The selection of the optimal level of decomposition of the forecasting model using the Root-Mean-Square Error (RMSE) criteria comes from the same in-sample GDP dataset as the one used in section "3.2. Assessing the forecasting ability of wavelet analysis". The authors make the level of decomposition varying between 1 to 7, forecasting 50 in-sample quarters from Q1 2010 to Q2 2022 of the Real GDP of Cyprus obtained with Cyprus' Real GDP data from Q4 1997 to Q4 2009 (49 data), dividing the in-sample almost equally (49/50). Levels 1 and 3 return an error message: the model does not converge at these levels with Cyprus' Real GDPs data. With the 2nd level of decomposition obtained from 49 data from Q4 1997 to Q4 2009, the RMSE of the 50 Cyprus' forecasts is equal to 472.03, with the 4th level of decomposition the RMSE is equal to 405.68, with the 5th level of decomposition the RMSE is equal to 405.22 with the 6th level of decomposition the RMSE is equal to 405.1626 and with the 7th level of decomposition the RMSE is equal to 405.1630. It shows that the choice of the 6th level of decomposition for Cyprus should be optimal since the RMSE is minimized at this level. However, at the step of forecasting 115 out-sample quarters from Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 GDP of the quarterly Real GDP of Cyprus, the forecasting model does not converge and return an error message when using the 4, 5, 6 and 7th level of decomposition. The model only generates forecasts with the 2nd level of decomposition. This observation represents a limitation of the wavelet analysis model, which is sensitive to the length of the dataset. Therefore, the 2nd level of decomposition is used in the Results section that follows.

4. Results

This paper assesses how Cyprus' economy coped with the Covid-19 pandemic by generating two series of forecasts with wavelet analysis: forecasts using data not including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019) and including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) and. The difference of their averages measures how resilient is the economy during the pandemic, the greater the difference, the more resilient the economy. Cyprus is benchmarked to the Eurozone and Germany.

Observed quarterly GDP time series of Cyprus are illustrated in Figure 3 from 1/1/1998 to 7/1/2022, as well as the ones of the Eurozone economy (19 countries, not including Croatia which joined in 2023), and Germany. In Q1 2020, Cyprus and the Eurozone have entered recession following pandemic that hit their economies. Because of the choice of the scale, the down and up pattern is not clear for Germany in Figure 3. Since 1998, Cyprus' GDP has grown faster than the Eurozone's GDP showing a steeper slope. After the collapse of both economies in 2020, Cyprus seems to have experienced a faster recovery.

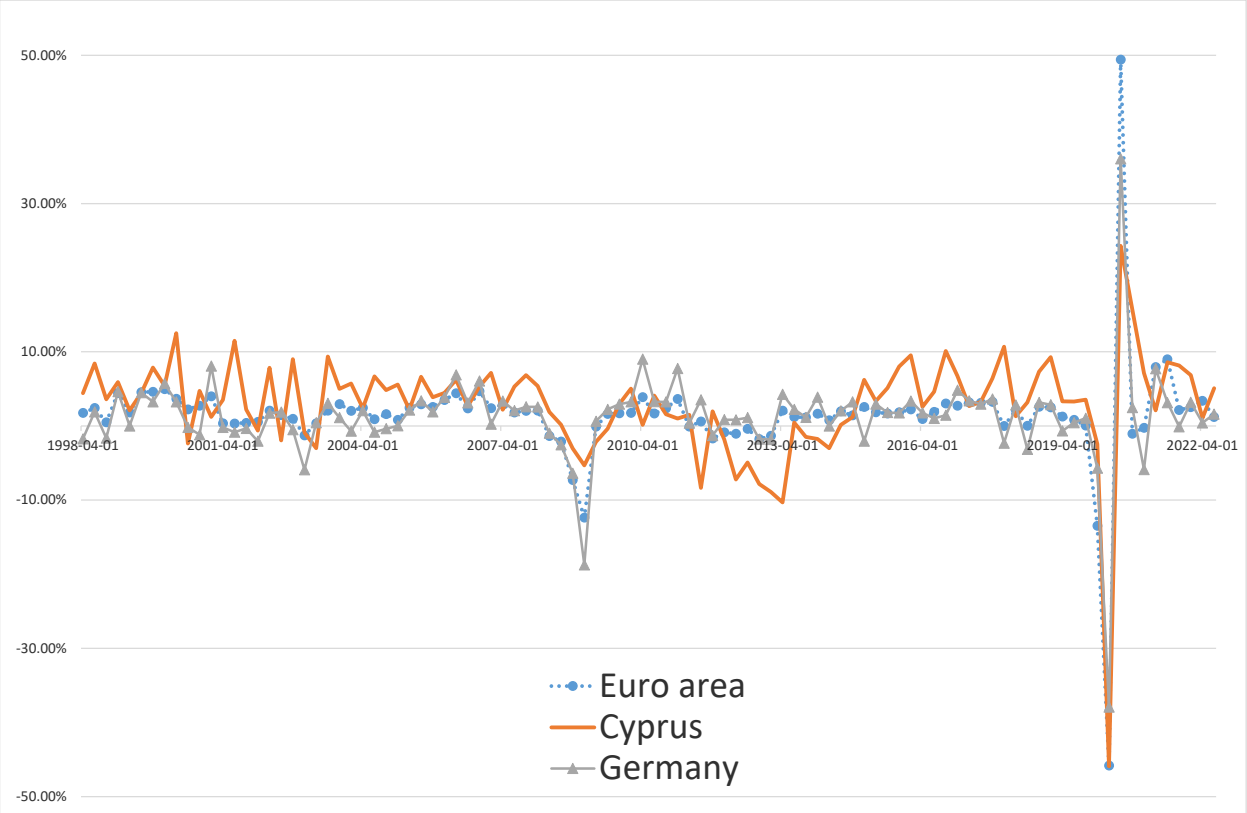
Figure 3: Real GDPs Quarterly time series, Millions of Chained 2010 Euros from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022, Seasonally Adjusted for Cyprus (right axis) versus Euro area (19 countries) and Germany, (left axis).



Sources: Own production by the authors. Gross Domestic Product for Eurozone (19 countries) [https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CLVMNACSCAB1GQEA19], Germany [https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CLVMNACSCAB1GQDE] and Cyprus [https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CLVMNACSCAB1GQCY], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Real GDP growth rate (quarterly and annualized) time series of Cyprus, the Eurozone economy (19 countries), and Germany are illustrated in Figure 4 from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022.

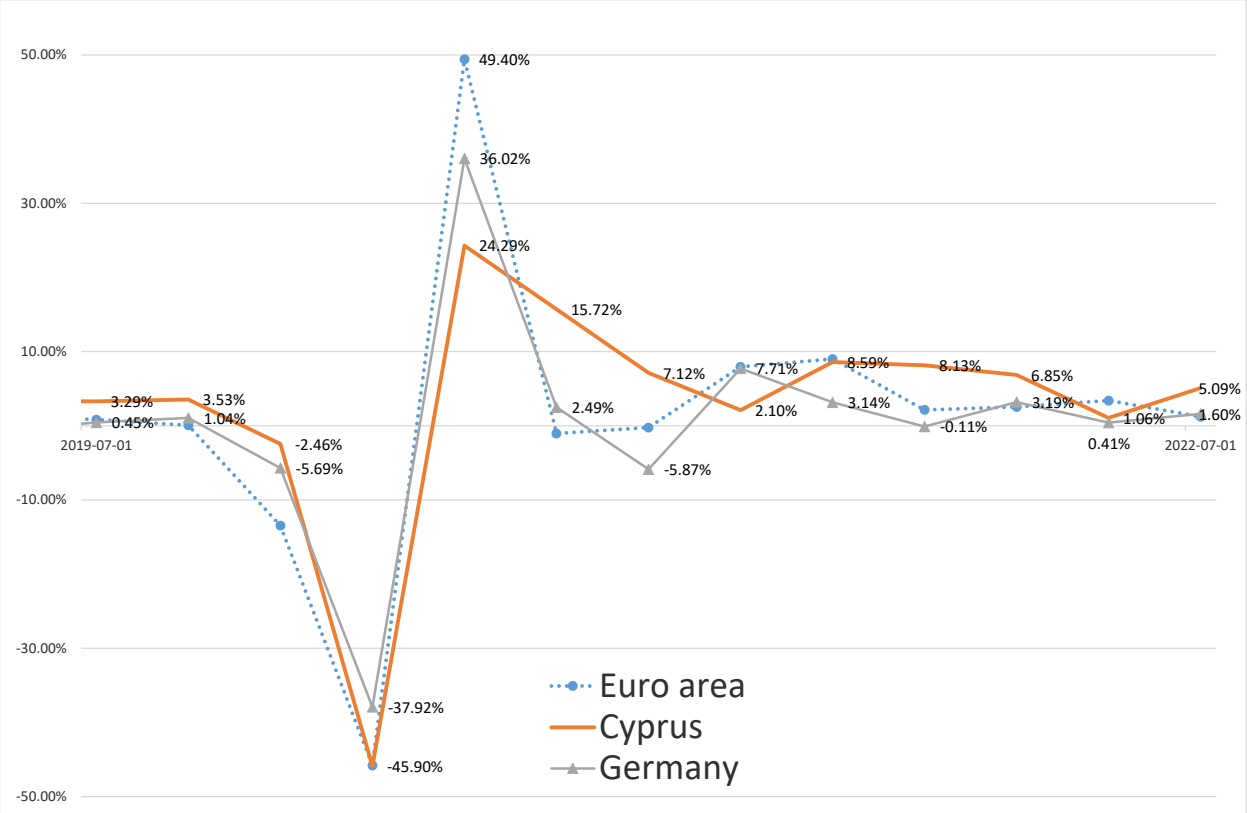
Figure 4: Quarterly Real GDP growth rate (annualized) time series from Q1 1998 to Q2 2022 of Cyprus, the Eurozone economy (19 countries), and Germany.



Sources: Own production by the authors and Real GDPs retrieved from FRED. Refer to sources of Figure 3.

Cyprus' growth rate in Figure 4 is most of the time above the ones of the Eurozone (19 countries) and Germany between Q1 1998 and Q3 2019. Between Q4 1997 and Q3 2019, Cyprus had an average quarterly growth rate (annualized) of +2.87% versus +1.43% for the Eurozone and +1.34% for Germany. Figure 5 zooms in on Figure 4 between the third quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2022.

Figure 5: Real GDP growth rate (quarterly and annualized) from Q2 2019 to Q2 2022 of Cyprus, the Euro area (19 countries), and Germany.

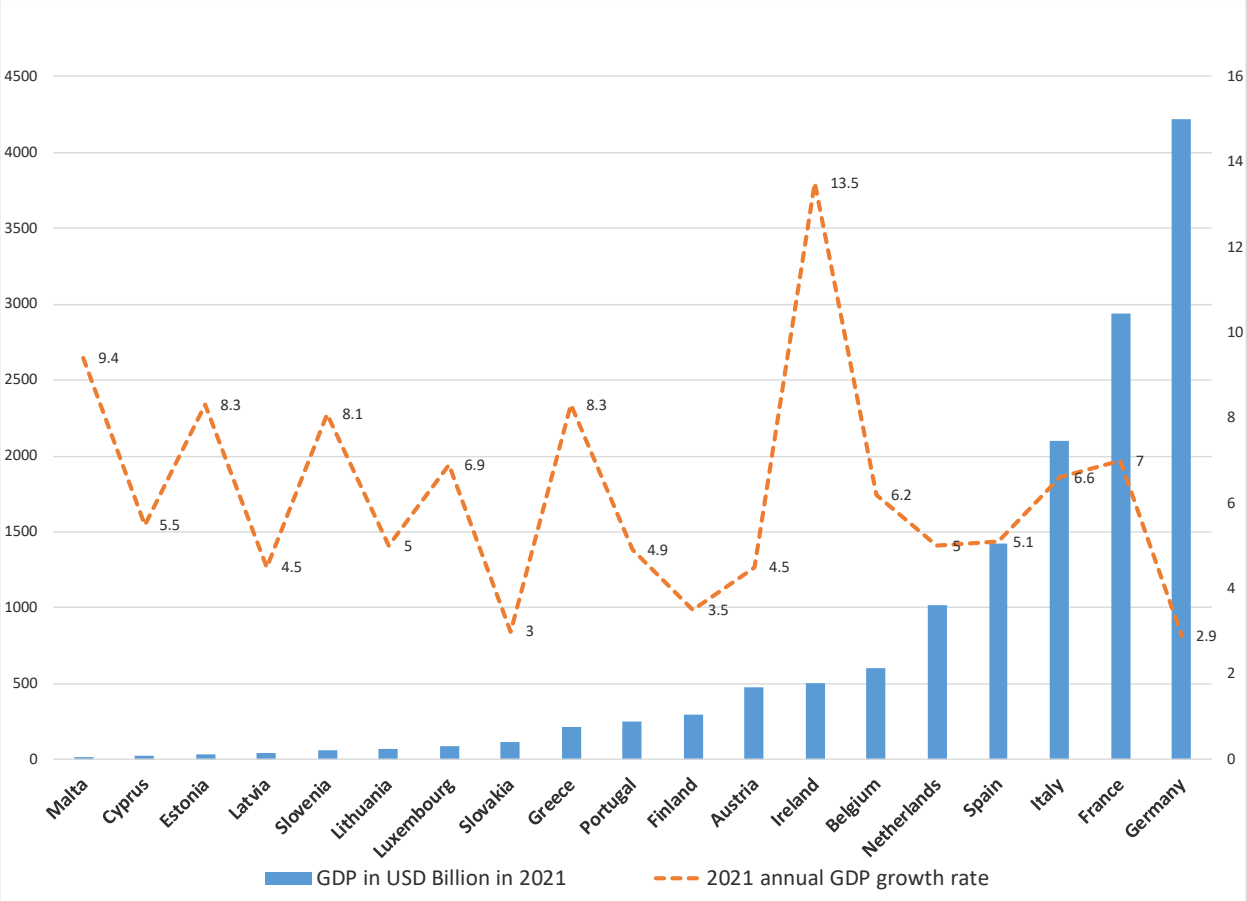


Sources: Own production by the authors and Real GDPs retrieved from FRED. Refer to sources of Figure 3.

Figure 5 shows that at the beginning of the pandemic in the fourth quarter of 2019, the 3 economies started a decline of their quarterly annualized growth rate (-5.69% for Germany, -13.46% for the Eurozone and -2.46% for Cyprus), which extended in Q1 2020 (-37.92% for Germany, -45.80% for the Eurozone and -45.90% for Cyprus), then the 3 economies rebounded in Q2 2020 (+36.02% for Germany, +49.40% for the Eurozone and +24.29% for Cyprus). During the Covid-19 pandemic, between the fourth quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2022, the growth rate of Cyprus was most of the time above the one of the Eurozone (19 countries) and Germany with an average of +2.78% in Cyprus versus +1.37% in the Eurozone and +0.45% in Germany. This situation reproduces the relationship of the 3 economies from Q1 1998 to Q3 2019. To bring some perspective to this observation, it is relevant to mention that, in 2021, Euro

area's GDP (including 19 countries) was roughly 523 times bigger than Cyprus', Cyprus' GDP representing about 0.19% of the Euro area's GDP and Germany's GDP was about 152 times the size of Cyprus' in 2021, Cyprus' GDP representing about 0.65% of Germany's GDP. Based on Figure 6, the growth of the Euro area's economies varied between members in 2021: Cyprus' GDP growth rate was +5.5% when the Eurozone's was +6.22% and Germany's (the Euro area leader in size of GDP) was +2.9% (Statista, 2022). In addition, Figure 6 shows that, in 2021, in times of pandemic, small economies had on average greater growth rates than large economies of the Euro area.

Figure 6: Annual GDP growth rate in % in 2021 (right axis) and Annual GDP in USD billion (left axis) of the 19 Eurozone's members including Cyprus' economy in 2021.

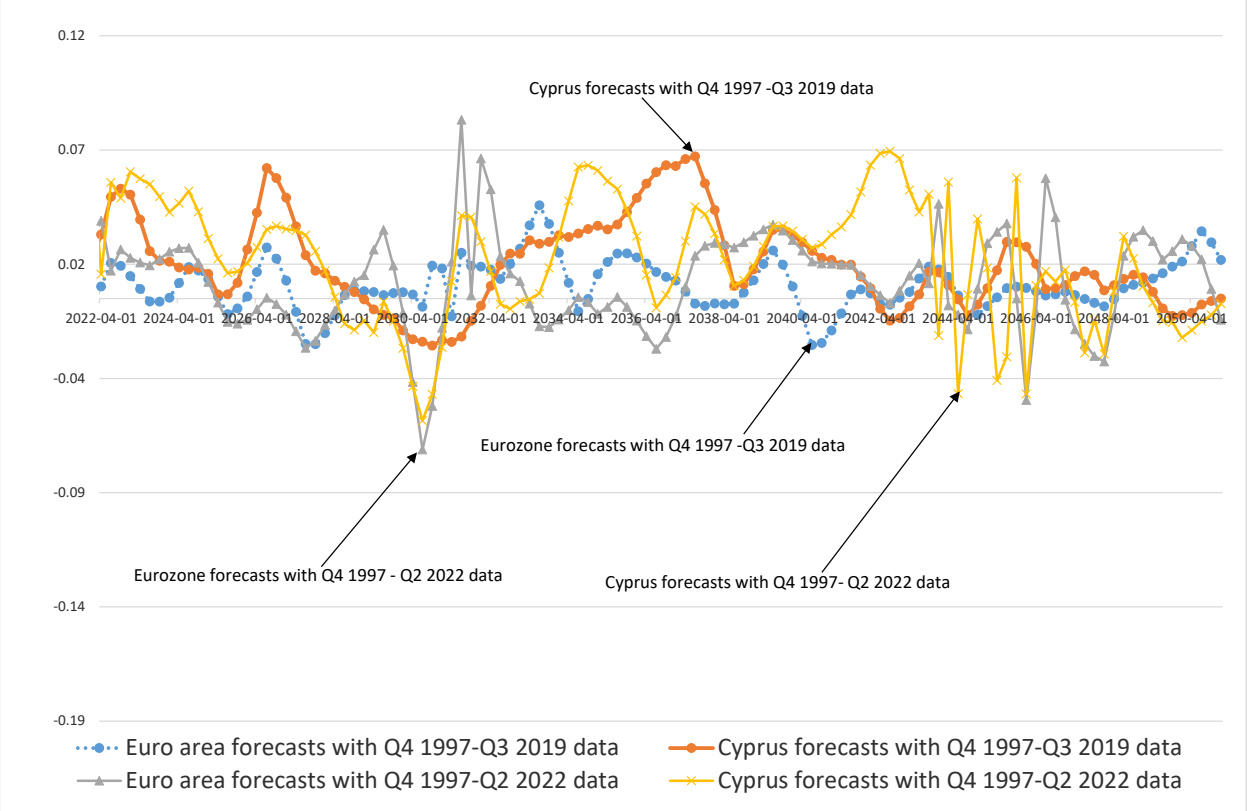


Sources: Own production by the authors. Annual GDP of European countries retrieved from https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/gdp?continent=europe 2021 and annual GDP growth rates retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/686147/gdp- growth-europe/

4.1. Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 forecasts of Cyprus and the Eurozone Real GDP growth rates (quarterly and annualized).

Figure 7 shows 114 quarterly forecasts from Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 obtained with wavelet analysis of Cyprus and the Eurozone Real GDP growth rates (quarterly and annualized).

Figure 7: 114 forecasts from Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 obtained with wavelet analysis of Cyprus and the Eurozone GDP growth rates (quarterly and annualized)



Source: Authors' own production with the software Matlab.

From Q3 2022-Q4 2050 114 forecasts, forecasts of Cyprus are more optimistic than the Eurozone, with an average growth rate (quarterly and annualized) of +1.47% for Cyprus, forecasts generated with the Q4 1997-Q3 2019 data versus +1.62% for Cyprus with the forecasts

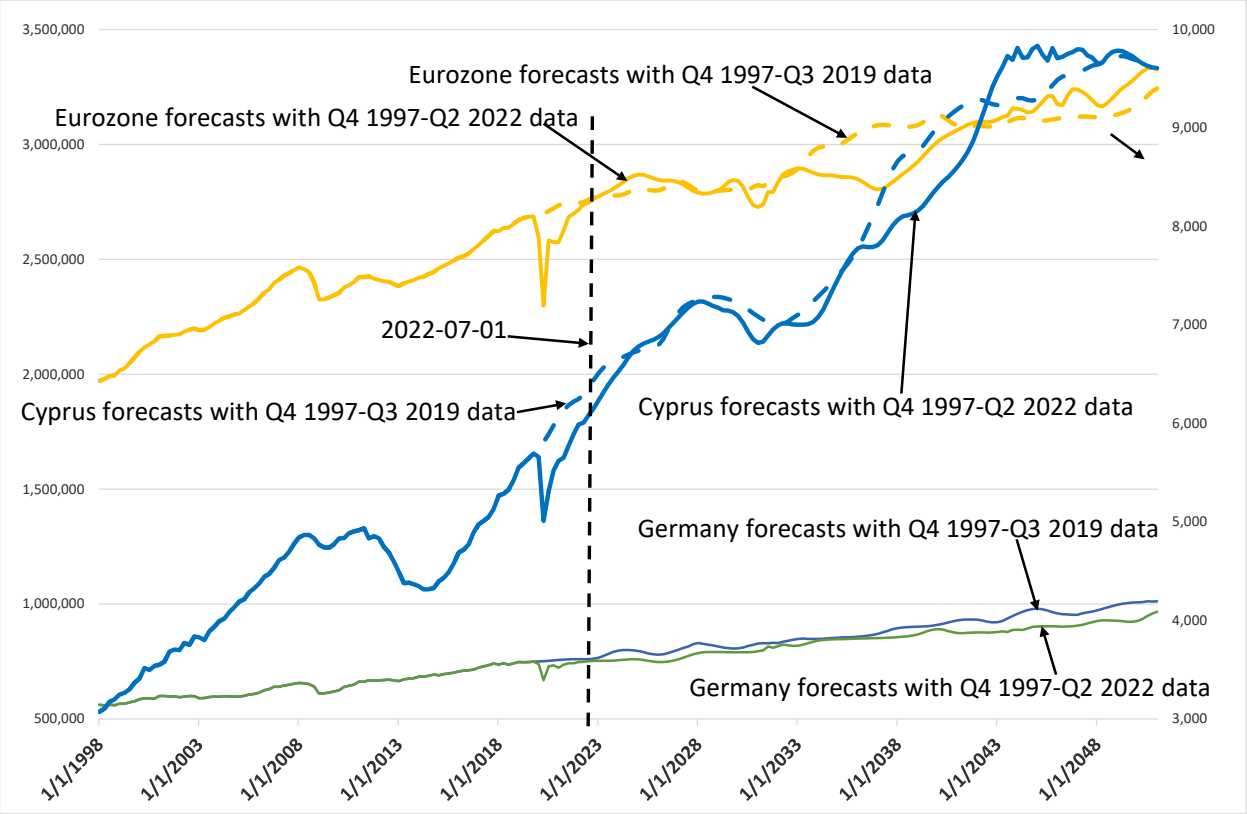
generated with Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data. Eurozone's forecasts have an average growth rate of +0.57% with Q4 1997-Q3 2019 data versus +0.68% with Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data.

In addition, Germany being the largest economy of the Eurozone, has an average quarterly growth rate forecast of +1.01% with Q4 1997-Q3 2019 data versus +0.89% with Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data. It shows that, Cyprus (+1.62% with the pandemic data versus +1.47% without the pandemic data) and the Eurozone (+0.68% versus +0.57%) benefited from the pandemic when Germany's economy was hurt by the pandemic (+0.89% versus +1.01%). As represented in Figure 6, small economies of the Euro area had in 2021, on average, a higher GDP growth rate than the larger economies of the Euro area. The forecasts of the 2050 growth rates in this paper confirm that a small economy like Cyprus has been more resilient toward the pandemic and has a better outlook than the largest economy of the Eurozone, Germany.

4.2. Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 quarterly Real GDPs Forecasts of Cyprus, Germany and the Eurozone

Figure 8 illustrates 114 quarterly Real GDP forecasts with wavelet analysis of Cyprus, Germany, and the Euro area from Q3 2022 to Q4 2050. Figure 3 shows a rebound of the 3 economies in Q2 2020, +24.29% in Cyprus, +49.40% in the Eurozone and +36.02% in Germany, following a cataclysmic fall in Q1 2020, -45.90% in Cyprus, -45.80% in the Eurozone and -37.92% in Germany. This observation may explain the fact that the 2050 projections of the 3 economies show a positive trend, wavelet analysis forecasting model being more sensitive to latest data. In addition, as explained in section 4.1., the pandemic benefited to Cyprus' and the Eurozone's economies, but Germany's economy has been hurt, its Q32022-Q4 2050 projections obtained with data including the pandemic being consistently below the ones obtained with data not including the pandemic. In section 4.3., the resilience of the 3 economies towards the pandemic is formally assessed.

Figure 8: Historical data and quarterly forecasts with wavelet analysis from Q3 2022 to Q4 2050 of Cyprus, Germany, and Eurozone GDPs (annualized), Millions of Chained 2010 Euros, Quarterly, Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Authors' own elaboration using Matlab.

4.3. Assessing the resilience of Cyprus' Economy after the Covid-19 Pandemic

This research assesses how Cyprus' economy coped with the Covid-19 pandemic by generating two series of forecasts with wavelet analysis: forecasts using data including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) and not including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019). The computation of the difference of their averages is an indicator of the resilience of the economy during the pandemic, the greater the difference, the more resilient the economy. Eurozone and Germany are used as benchmarks: subtracting the Q3 2022-Q4 2050 GDP growth rate (quarterly and annualized) average forecast of Cyprus obtained with the Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data, +1.62%, by the one obtained with the Q4 1997-Q3 2019 data, +1.47%, the difference is +0.15% whereas with Eurozone the difference is +0.11%, [+0.68% - (+0.57%)] and with

Germany the difference is -0.12% [+0.89% - (+1.01%)]. Thus, Cyprus' economy shows a slightly higher resilience (+0.15%) than the Eurozone's (+0.11%) based on Q3 2022-Q4 2050 forecasts and a stronger resilience than Germany's (-0.12%). Moreover, the average of the Q3 2022-Q4 2050 quarterly (annualized) growth rate forecasts of Cyprus is expected to be +1.62% with the Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data whereas it is expected to be only +0.68% for the Eurozone and +0.89% for Germany. Cyprus' economy shows better prospects than the Eurozone's and Germany's economies.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This paper assesses how Cyprus' economy coped with the Covid-19 pandemic by generating two series of forecasts with wavelet analysis: one using data including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) and another one not including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019). The difference of their averages is an indicator of the resilience of the economy during the pandemic, the greater the difference, the more resilient the economy. Benchmarks of Cyprus are the Eurozone and Germany. During the Covid-19 pandemic, between Q4 2019 and Q2 2022, the Real GDP growth rate (quarterly and annualized) of Cyprus was most of the time above the one of the Eurozone (19 countries) and Germany with an average growth rate of +2.78% for Cyprus versus +1.37% for the Eurozone and +0.45% for Germany (refer to Figure 5). This observation respects the hierarchy of average growth rates of the 3 economies from Q1 1998 to Q3 2019 (+2.87% for Cyprus versus +1.43% for the Eurozone and +1.34% for Germany). To formally evaluate how Cyprus' economy coped with the Covid-19 pandemic, two series of forecasts were obtained: forecasts using data including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q2 2022) and not including the pandemic (from Q4 1997 to Q3 2019). The difference of their averages is an indicator of the resilience of the economy during the pandemic, the bigger the difference the better the resilience. Eurozone and Germany are used as benchmarks: subtracting the average forecasted Q3 2022-Q4 2050 GDP growth rate (quarterly and annualized) of Cyprus generated from the Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data, +1.62%, by the one generated from the Q4 1997-Q3 2019 data, +1.47%, the difference is +0.15% whereas with Eurozone the difference is +0.11%, [+0.68% - (+0.57%)] and with Germany the difference is -0.12% [+0.89% - (+1.01%)]. Thus, Cyprus' economy shows a slightly higher resilience (+0.15%) than the Eurozone's (+0.11%) based on

Q3 2022-Q4 2050 forecasts and a stronger resilience than Germany's (-0.12%). Moreover, the average of the Q3 2022-Q4 2050 quarterly (annualized) growth rate forecasts of Cyprus is +1.62% with the Q4 1997-Q2 2022 data whereas it is only +0.68% for the Eurozone and +0.89% for Germany. Cyprus' economy shows better prospects than the Eurozone's and Germany's economies.

The last words of this paper are taken from Mrs. Christine Lagarde, during a conference organized in Nicosia (Lagarde, 2022). "When you set out on your journey to Ithaca, pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge" (from a famous poem "Ithaca" of Cavafy, 1911). Cavafy's poetry illustrates the tale of Cyprus nowadays, a tale filled with adventure, much hardship, that means to say the 1974 Turkish invasion and the shameful resulting divide of Cyprus, the accession of Cyprus to the European Union in 2004, the adoption of Euro currency in 2008, the banking crisis in 2013 and the steady annual growth of Cyprus' economy by about 6% between 2015 and 2019. The Cypriot population has managed to face all the difficulties, gain knowledge and come out stronger and more resilient each time. This observation applies to the pandemic crisis which was another example of such obstacles endured and overcome by Cypriot people.

Additional research may deal with other economic indicators of Cyprus to identify weaknesses and strengths of the Cyprus economy and how to enhance them.

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THE SCHENGEN PROJECT IN THE LIGHT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION THEORIES

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Abstract: *The article proposes possible ways of conceptualizing the Schengen project, one of European integration's most essential and less-defined achievements. Although Schengen Agreement is nearly forty years old and profoundly influences the fundamental features of modern states, their authority, territoriality and identity, it still needs to be better understood as a phenomenon of integration. Considering both the definitional indeterminacy of the Schengen project and a deficit of in-depth analysis of this part of European integration, described mainly as an area, system or regime, the article proposes a reference to European integration theories. Based on these theories, three primary levels of theorizing at which Schengen can be conceptualized are presented: a particular example of European integration, a model of European territoriality and a project of border management in Europe. Each approach has its theoretical framework and assumptions, uses a different conceptual apparatus and formulates additional research questions.*

Keywords: Schengen, borders, European Union, theories of European integration

Introduction

Integration based on the Schengen Agreement is nearly forty years old and remains an exceptionally vivid and dynamically developing project. This integration has its origins in an international agreement between Germany, France, and the Benelux countries signed in the mid-1980s, outside the European Economic Community. Its implementation, however, began only in 1995, when the convention implementing this agreement entered into force. It contained a number of compensatory measures needed to counterbalance the unhindered freedom of movement (e.g. a common system for information sharing, the Schengen Information System or uniform Schengen transit and short-stay visas). It guaranteed that the abolition of controls at the internal borders would not increase threats to security and public order. In the following years,

new countries joined this area and the repertoire of common legal provisions in border control, migration, asylum and cooperation between law enforcement and judicial authorities was expanded. Finally, the Amsterdam Treaty incorporated the Schengen Acquis into the main body of the European Union law. Its further development took place within European Union as part of the implementation of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice in the EU, which has been accelerated since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. In addition, the non-EU members of the European Free Trade Association – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland joined the area as association countries, but with the complete application of the Schengen Acquis. Another important event was the zone's expansion to the east and the admission of nine new countries in 2007.

However, its history has seen numerous crises, especially in the past decade (Börzel and Risse 2018; Colombeau 2020). Their best examples are reintroduced controls on many internal borders, named temporary but stretching over time since 2015 (Pettersson 2023). This crisis caused by the massive influx of migrants to the EU in 2015 was described not only as a crisis of the management of migration but also as a crisis of values or, more precisely, a solidarity crisis (Grimmel and My Giang 2017) means that the rhetoric of 'fear' adopted by some governments prevailed while European solidarity failed (Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2018: 1). Despite these restrictions introduced by individual states to limit the influx of irregular immigration, the conviction in need to maintain the Schengen Area is indisputable. Public support for free movement in the Schengen Area has remained strong for years (Lutz and Karstens 2021). The positive attitude towards the Schengen project is also reflected in facts that Croatia joined the Schengen zone in 2023 and Bulgaria and Romania's continuous efforts for a decade to become full Schengen members.

The issue of the Schengen project has rich literature on the subject, but it focuses predominantly on the analysis of its practical aspects: legal, economic, social, political and, more recently, ethical and biopolitical. Scholars also underline the gap between Schengen legislation and practice (Votoupalová 2020). The historical development of the Schengen Area, with all its milestones, and the regulations of the Schengen Acquis, with its enormous evolution over the last forty years, has extensive scholarly literature. It explains the procedures on which Schengen is based and the obligations it imposes on the national border control systems, mobility and

internal security policy and the judiciary of member and candidate countries. Scholars explain the institutional aspects of the Schengen project and the new solutions and systems to make border control and law enforcement as effective as possible across the area. Moreover, considerations of the economic and social effects of the Schengen project (Felbermayr, Gröschl and Steinwachs 2018), especially in internal border regions, are increasingly accompanied by questions of the political, cultural and ethical nature of its external ones (Jeandesboz 2020).

What is much less in the literature on the subject is the analysis of the theoretical dimension of the Schengen project, thanks to which it would be possible to deepen the understanding of its sense and significance. Although a lot of questions concerning the past, present and future operation of Schengen integration have already been posed, the answers they have been given, as observed by Ruben Zaiotti (2011), can rarely be considered fully satisfying. And still, even after a few recent years of vivid scholarly discussion about the Schengen project (after the refugee crisis in 2015), the explanatory aspect of these explanations is only partially successful due to their insufficient theoretical foundations.

The aim of the article is to draw attention to the still-needed theoretical reflection on this important area of integration, mostly called the Schengen area, order, regime or system. This article postulates that exhaustive answers to questions concerning the essence of the Schengen project, which have both elucidatory and forecasting value, and give further explication of this project, should be based on the European integration theories. These theoretical achievements of the European studies offer alternative levels of theoretical and conceptual considerations, constituting a valuable sphere in which Schengen integration can be analyzed (its manifestations, internal dynamics, autogenic and exogenous processes of change, or its consequences for the essence of statehood and territoriality in contemporary international relations). This means that the article aims not to show the most appropriate or only adequate theory of European integration, which can be used to understand and explain the Schengen project and predict its future. It is very likely that such an ideal theory does not exist. It is essential, however, to consider available options for theoretical analysis of the Schengen project and what each option entails. To do this, the article proposes three fundamentally different theoretical frameworks to analyse the Schengen project. These are 1) a specific process of European integration, 2) a model of territoriality, or 3) a project of border management.

The proposition in the article demonstrates various variants of defining problems and developing concepts of this issue in each of the above-indicated levels of analysis. Such considerations belong to political science and international relations science, which concentrate on the analysis of European integration and the European Union as political phenomena. The article assumes that considerations over the Schengen order imply references to key categories of political analysis, such as authority, governance, territory or sovereignty. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that this article belongs to the area of meta-theoretical analyses, mostly based on theories used in European studies, known as European integration theories, which is to highlight their relatively autonomous nature in relation to other fields of science.

Research on the Schengen project: describing, but not fully explaining

The Schengen project is something unobvious from the perspective of a modern national state, which decides not to control its borders (or some of them) and limits its autonomy in migration and asylum policies, entrusting *de facto* its own internal security and public order to those states whose borders (or their parts) have become external borders of the whole zone. It is no use limiting it to a technocratic invention, based on the economic calculation of profits and losses for the European business (though, admittedly, such aspects are common) or implemented as a result of strong pressure from security specialists, whose “politics-free” opinions convince the Member States that it is necessary to coordinate or cooperate in the area of mobility and internal security, also by establishing specialized agencies and creating integrated database systems. The Schengen Area, however, seems to be more exactly because it is a political project affecting fundamental issues such as sovereignty (Deleixhe and Duez 2019), exercising power, and ensuring security and feeling of collective and individual identity. The integration process, whose specific expression can be seen in Schengen integration, is packed with a whole series of issues belonging to national sensitivities and supranational symbolism (Zaiotti 2010).

It must be admitted that in spite of impressive literature on integration processes in Europe, theoretical considerations of Schengen integration, allowing for systematization of this

sphere of integration, show its specificity and its inherent regularities, are still rare[1]. It is surprising to see how Schengen integration is universally neglected in the theoretical European literature focused on clarifying, explaining and predicting even the most complex aspects of the European reality, especially related to the European Union.

For example, in the past decades, due to the dynamic development of European studies and attempts at granting this field of science autonomy, especially in relation to political science and international relations, a number of works have been published in Poland, presenting achievements of such studies: theoretical and methodological (e.g. (Borkowski 2007; Ruszkowski and Wojnicz 2012; Czaputowicz 2014). The presentation of particular approaches and concepts, grand, medium and specialist theories, was often accompanied by examples of their application to research on integration and disintegration processes in Europe, the EU as such or selected areas (mostly policies) of its activities. Schengen was usually absent in these analyses (more on this topic: Trojanowska-Strzęboszewska 2018). It must be admitted that the Polish subject literature was by no means different from the worldwide literature, in which theoretical presentation of these issues, making use of the achievements of European integration theories, was in short supply, as Ruben Zaiotti pointed out (Zaiotti 2011).

The situation has started to change in recent years when authors more often began to look for theoretical explanations of the integration dynamics in the Schengen Area. First, the Schengen project started to be analysed in terms of the theory of differentiated integration (Klose 2022; Comte and Lavenex 2022). Other examples of attempts at a theoretical explanation of Schengen will be indicated in the next chapter of the article.

However, insufficient theoretical explanations do not mean that the Schengen project has not been discussed in the literature for 30 years. On the contrary, it has generated significant output, developed since the beginning of European studies as a research area in political science and international relations. Nevertheless, lots of analyses concerning Schengen integration were descriptive (and factual), presenting the origin, development intricacies, challenges, and consequences of the Schengen Area for the international system. These works were often a-

[1]The deliberations included in this part of the article are not based on the results of fully systematized and operationalized research on the subject literature, defined precisely by source and time limitations. Instead, they constitute an attempt at indicating – based on the review of literature on European integration and the European Union, published since 1990s – dominant vectors of scientific analyses concerning Schengen integration.

theoretical, not using directly or indirectly particular theoretical approaches or concepts related to a specific theoretical approach, which usually results in a partly elucidatory effect of such studies, stopping at the diagnosing stage and never performing forecasting functions.

Moreover, we should emphasize the huge dispersion of analyses dealing with the way in which the Schengen Area operates, based on various scientific considerations, dispersed among research on: the EU policies, mainly in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (e.g. Stadtmüller and Bachmann 2012) but also concerning the EU enlargement (e.g. Grabbe 2000; Bachmann 2012;), the migration to the EU (migration studies, e.g. Brumat, Hadaj-Abdou, and Geddes 2020), internal security policy in Europe (security studies, e.g. Prokkola 2012; Ceccorulli 2019), trans-border cooperation (regional studies, e.g. Havliček, Jeřábek and Dokoupil 2018), the role and importance of state borders (border studies, e.g. Schimmelfenning 2021). The dispersion of these studies comes along with the definition ambiguity of Schengen integration (for example, its scope), which appears in the above analyses not as a separate area of research but as a specific legal or territorial context or an independent variable by means of which researchers explain changes occurring in the proper subject of analysis. All of this accounts for the fragmentation of analyses concerning the Schengen Area, usually focused on selected aspects of its operation, deprived, perforce, and more complex thoughts on the nature of this integration phenomenon. This is partly related to the evolution of the Schengen project over the last 30 years, originally formulated in the Schengen Convention as a combined set of compensatory measures under which states cooperate. Currently, these cooperation sectors are developed and managed as separate policies (Huybreghts 2015).

It is worth observing that the way in which the nature of the Schengen project is understood is rarely expressed directly and often only assumed and implied in works on European integration. The usual and common perception of Schengen is “a border-free area”, namely an area without controls on internal borders, a synonym for full execution of the right to move freely. This presentation, in fact, combines two dimensions of the Schengen Area: territorial and legal. In such presentations, authors usually rely on descriptive definitions, whose designatum does not raise any doubts, emphasizing the territorial dimension: “Schengen Area”, Schengen Member States”, or its legal dimension: “Schengen *Acquis*”, “Schengen Treaty”, “Schengen legislature attainment”, “Schengen Agreement”, “Schengen arrangement”. The equivalence of these

presentations refers thus to the spatial definition of the Schengen Area, pointing at countries which adopted the legal attainment of Schengen, but also to the legal definition of the area, whose scope was determined by including Schengen *acquis* to the EU law by virtue of Protocol attached to the Treaty of Amsterdam (Thym 2002). It should be noticed, however, that a decade after the Treaty of Amsterdam came into force, the issue of the Schengen *acquis* scope has become problematic. This is related to the adoption of legal means referring to this area of integration, whose status as "expanding the legal attainment of Schengen" is often determined in the rulings of the European Court of Justice (Cornelisse 2014).

Other terms describing this area of integration in European studies include "Schengen system" and "Schengen regime", frequently used by political scientists. The "Schengen system" term combines the sphere of law valid in a given area with the sphere of politics and ruling, thus introducing the issues related to particular stages of the political process, including decision-making processes, into analyses on the Schengen integration (Peers 2013). Our considerations incorporate issues related to the motivations and goals of the countries participating in the Schengen order, the powers of entities involved in this sphere of integration, legitimization of actions taken in this area, types of relations between actors of this policy (for example state and European ones) or the problem of stability and changeability of this integration formula. Defining the Schengen project in system categories, we focus on the internal elements and functions performed by the Schengen system and its relations with the environment; we seek an internal, self-steering mechanism which plays a key role in maintaining stability and permanence of the system, but we also discern that it may be susceptible to various unexpected turns, tensions and disputes, resulting in taking actions which turn out to be contradictory in the practical dimension (Cornelisse 2014). Moreover, the presentation of the Schengen issue in system categories encourages its holistic perception and emphasizes the importance of this function to the system (not only its structure). It also allows us to see the dynamics of changes experienced by the system and to determine the influence of the environment on its operation and the other way around – the influence of the system on the surrounding reality. The analysis of the system-environment relations in the context of the Schengen system, therefore, may mean that we take into account its influence on the "environment" of the state in which this system operates and with support of institutions of this state, and thus, such analysis may refer to the influence of the Schengen system

on the scope of prerogatives and autonomy of the state, its attributes and institutions. Obviously, the system-environment relations are mutual, and the environment affects the system in which it operates. In these presentations, the Schengen system may also be analyzed as a phenomenon consisting of several subsystems (inter alia border-crossing, immigration policy, asylum policy, police cooperation, fighting terrorism), which are connected with each other (though not necessarily complementary) and influence each other (the best example of which can be seen in consecutive amendments to the Schengen legislature in reaction to political crises caused by the increased inflow of immigrants to member states), but the system itself may constitute a subsystem dependent of the EU system. To summarize, this interpretation of the Schengen project exhibits both the functional dimension of the Schengen Area and its symbolic dimension (identity dimension, referring to national as well as European – supranational level), concerning its role in a broadly understood phenomenon of mobility rather than its limited perception of an area of border protection and/or control (Peers 2013; Trojanowska-Strzęboszewska 2014).

On the other hand, we often encounter such terms as “Schengen border regime”, “Schengen regime” or “Schengen visa regime”. In spite of the neutral connotation of the term “regime” in political science, we can observe that such concepts are frequently used in areas of descriptive and normative analyses that are critical of the Schengen regulations that govern crossing, controlling and protecting external borders of the EU. In many papers which use the “regime” term, their authors listed contradictions between exclusive Schengen *acquis* to citizens of some third countries and the openness policy towards these countries within the process of the EU enlargement and the neighborhood Policy (for example Grabbe 2000; Lavenex 2001; Berg and Piret 2006). Also, following the liberalization of visa policy to citizens of most countries covered by the EU enlargement process and Eastern Partnership policy, the Schengen regime term appears in analyses of migration and asylum policies, adopting liberal or humanitarian positions (e.g. Carrera, Guild, Merlino and Parkin 2011), and is associated with closed external borders of the EU, hostile to strangers (Schimmelfennig 2018).

Three levels of conceptualization of the Schengen project

Over the past decade, we have seen a number of crisis situations concerning mobility control and the role of state borders in Europe caused by the inflow of mass immigration to the

EU (especially in 2015-2016), which accounts for the growing need to explain the specificity of Schengen integration. European integration theories seem to constitute an obvious area in which to seek adequate theoretical approaches enabling us to explain the essence of integration in the Schengen Area, its *ratio*, *modus operandi* and consequences for contemporary national states or concepts of authority, territoriality and identity in modern Europe. This area is vast and diverse, managed and utilized differently by scientists representing various fields (and areas) of science. And what is most important, this area not only undergoes permanent modifications (by introducing new variables or perspectives), but also expands, enriched by further solutions, approaches, concepts or their novel operationalizations. Leaving aside the possibility of classifying integration theories according to their goal and the function they perform[2], in this rich collection we will find both the so-called grand theories, which tried to capture holistically the unprecedented nature of economic and political transformations in Europe after the Second World War, thus revolutionizing the theoretical dimension of international relations[3], as well as more modest (though by no means less valuable) theories explaining the specificity of the European Union as a key element of European integration, or finally, only segments or aspects of the EU integration activities.

In other words, scientists examining various manifestations of European integration (and disintegration) not only have a wide range of theoretical approaches but may also operate on various levels of theorizing, reflecting different scopes of the analyzed integration area and various degrees of generality of these analyses. Adopting the approach developed by Neil Nugent (2010), systematizing various categories of conceptual and theoretical analyses in European studies, we can propose three levels of analysis with some necessary simplification, on which we may attempt to conceptualize the Schengen project. These levels differ in the scope of the research area and, consequently, the degree of detail of the conducted analyses. These are levels

[2] The subject offers a number of classifications of integration theories. They are divided, inter alia, according to the time of their origin, the goals and functions such theories have, the degree of generality and the scope of the research area (Wiener, Diez 2009b:243-247).

[3]Although we notice more frequently the contribution of various areas of science to the development of European studies, especially in the theoretical aspect, we must bear in mind a different vector of these relations, referring to the contribution of theoretical consideration over European integration to the development of, for example, the theory of international relations. Thanks to integration theories, which try to explain the processes taking place in post-war Europe within the EEC, the approaches analyzing the international reality include those emphasizing the role and significance of non-state (for example transnational) actors) (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006).

of theorizing about 1/ integration, 2/ the EU, and 3/ ways in which the EU works and the policies it uses. Scientists have a wide range of research theories and approaches on each of these levels. What is more, some theories may be located on more than one level (for example, constructivism (Risse 2009:144)). It should be remembered that the proposed level of analysis may be empirically difficult to distinguish. The analysis of the integration phenomenon is usually referred to processes taking place within the institutional and legal framework of the European Union. On the other hand, research on specific aspects of the EU activity may lead to conclusions referring to the essence of the EU and the specificity of integration actions in general. In this sense, findings from one research level, based on a particular theory, maybe subsidiary in another area of analyses.

Using the above methodological differentiation of research areas, we can indicate three meta-theoretical levels on which we can theorize Schengen integration in its territorial and functional dimensions.

1. The Schengen project as a specific integration process

The first level comprises theories concentrating on explaining the general character of integration (the integration process as a whole), usually inscribed in a broader context of international relations. These approaches are defined as grand theories (Nugent 2010), explanatory integration theories (Elistrup-Sangiovanni 2006), or classical theories (Rosamond 2000), since they initiated the process of explaining and interpreting phenomena occurring in this area. On this level, researchers may conduct analyses to explain the essence and properties of the integration mechanism in the Schengen Area. What does it consist of, and what kind of internal dynamics can we see in the process of interactions between states, taking place in areas so sensitive to national states as protecting borders and controlling the flow of people across borders, fighting transnational and trans-border crime? How does it differ from economic integration and actions taken within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)? What roles do states play in these processes? What encourages them to integrate in this area, and how is it connected with the issues of state sovereignty, territoriality and territorial control?

On this level of theoretical deliberations, two empirical theories are commonly acknowledged as the key ones: neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism[4], along with their later reinterpretations, mostly neo-neo-functionalism and liberal intergovernmental approach, but also new intergovernmentalism and post-functionalism theories developed recently (Hudson and Puetter 2019). Some scientists also classify federalism as a general theory that is not an empirical theory but has a normative nature. It is then acknowledged as a classical or traditional approach, also called a *pre*-integration theory, to emphasize that its main goal was to indicate how countries can integrate. However, federalism is also treated as an approach in research on the nature of the European Union when the EU is perceived as a separate political entity and is compared with federation states (federations) or associations of states (confederations) (McCormick 2005; Czaputowicz 2018). In this latter meaning, Schengen borders are indicated as a new type of borders of quasi-state type, which may be seen as an argument for the EU "approaching" the model of a federal super-state. The increasingly influential theory of constructivism may be considered a general theory[5]. This so-called new theory of integration appeared in European studies as late as the 1980s. Adopting different ontological and epistemological positions than neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism, constructivism poses different research questions; therefore, a look at Schengen integration taken from the perspective of this theory offers totally new elucidatory possibilities (Walters and Haahr 2011). Nevertheless, regardless of the period in which the above theoretical positions were formed and putting aside their ontological and epistemological differences, they all share the intention to provide a holistic explanation of changes taking place in the European international environment, usually defined as integration (and more and more frequently supplemented with disintegration aspects).

Although neo-functionalism and intergovernmental approach (in its classic form connected with the works of Stanley Hoffman) appeared many decades ago, most analyses of Schengen integration use terms and concepts of these two classical theories of European

[4]In this place I pass over the discussion about the extent to which intergovernmentalism is a theory rather than a certain research approach (*intergovernmental approach*).

[5] Constructivism, also called social constructivism, may be positioned practically on each of the three proposed levels of analysis (Wiener, Diez 2009a: 12).

integration. At the same time, however, there are hardly any papers that would try to verify particular research hypotheses on the basis of the above approaches (a few exceptions here include, for example Kostadinova 2012; Bachmann 2012). This is due to two reasons. Firstly, the subject literature – as observed by Zaiotti (2011) – is dominated by the conviction that Schengen integration is, in fact, a variation of a traditional game played by governments, typical of global politics. In this logic, the Schengen Area was established as "a result of a compromise negotiated between a group of European governments, who wanted to pursue their state interests, increase their political influence and find a solution to their common problems of border control" (2011:7), and therefore they initiated this particular form of cooperation. Similarly, scientists pointed at other "rational" motivations and actions of the states comprising the Schengen Area in the name of their particular interests (for example, an argument that France and Germany decided to establish the Schengen Area to protect their economies against the growing trade protectionism and used this integration formula to "threaten" the United Kingdom with a vision of *two-tier Europe* (Moravcsik 1998: 359-360). Regardless of the differences concerning particular arguments, this approach is universally adopted *a priori* and accounts for the fact that reflection on the essence of the Schengen integration process is futile; therefore such reflection is usually passed over. Secondly, authors of various analyses of Schengen integration use the concepts of neo-functional or neo-neo-functional origin. This is mostly connected with the fact that these theories offer a number of explanations related to the nature of supra-nationality (for example the role of supranational institutions and the role of non-state entities in integration processes), which were acknowledged as certain regularities and added to the concept network of integration theories, but also became part of the common understanding of this phenomenon. The best example here is the common conviction that the spill-over effect "worked" also with reference to Schengen integration, which is supposed to consist of an inevitable and somehow "automatic" reaction of the states, which introduced common legal regulations in the sphere of internal security (on the basis of the Executive Convention), being a logical consequence of the decision to abolish controls on internal borders (made in the Schengen Agreement).

To describe Schengen integration, authors often use a hybrid concept, combining elements of intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism, showing this integration as a formula combining supra-nationality and the primacy of statehood. This approach became popular when

the Schengen *acquis* was incorporated into the EU legislation, and this area of integration was communitized and strengthened by the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon (Gruszczak 2012).

On the other hand, the constructivist research perspective, increasingly influential in European studies, being part of political science and international relations science, allows us to perceive the Schengen Area as a historical (and thus changeable, characteristic of particular time and space) manifestation of a new social being – Europe. Ideas, norms and identities in this approach constitute a factor which, compared with research on interests and institutions, facilitates explanations of causes of particular processes and decisions. One should mention here an inspiring work of William Walters and Jens Henrik Haahr, who coined the term "Schengenland" to define this area of European integration as a "specific regime of (in)securities and power relations" (2011:145). Combining the constructivist approach and the achievements of critical studies on security, the authors show the specificity of distribution, creation of network and circulation of power in the Schengenland system and prove that thanks to the Schengen Area, within which security is conceptualized with reference to precisely defined geographical space and there is a direct attitude to borders: "*The EU is becoming territorial*" (2011:168). In this approach, the specificity of Schengen integration as a new field of European governance consists of providing a new relation between security and territory (Walters, Haahr, 2011:216), and thus becomes one of the determinants of the identity of contemporary Europe.

2. The Schengen project as a model of territoriality

The second level of scientific investigations comprises theories which analyze the European Union as the most mature integration system. Key analyses in this research area concern attempt to explain the nature and character of the European Union (What kind of political system is the European Union?) (Neyer and Wiener 2011). Researchers try to find a proper concept model which would help them describe and explain this "unidentified political object". This is inevitably connected with the analysis of such concepts as models of governance, authority, the nature of dominance and subordination relations (or symmetry and asymmetry of relations between elements), as well as the model of territoriality of this specific entity – the European Union.

In this theoretical perspective, the Schengen project constitutes an area where the new model of European territoriality is analyzed. What really matters in these analyses is not the nature of the integration of the Schengen Area, its course, or the motivations of the countries participating in it but its effects. Schengen here is the "provider" of a new type of border which, from the formal and legal point of view, are borders of a specific country but which perform functions related to the area exceeding the territory of the state due to the country's participation in the Schengen Area.

In this sense, being a specific border regime "producing" a certain type of border, the Schengen project may be theorized in two ways. The first one emphasizes a certain difference between the Schengen project (and its borders) and the European Union (and its external borders) and the scope of its activities. The second one refers to analyses of the Schengen project within the discussion on the nature of the European Union (understood as *sui generis* community).

In the first of the above approaches, it is assumed that "the Schengen system does not determine the EU external borders since it also covers countries which do not belong to the EU" (Stadtmüller, Bachmann 2012:2), and at the same time, it is not used by all Member States. This leads to a claim that EU membership is not automatically associated with formal "hard" borders. The character and functions performed by particular state borders which are the EU external borders constitute a much more complex issue. This is due to their differentiation and the fact that, in practice, the ultimate formula (determined by the scope of valid border checks, trans-border cooperation, etc.) is open to negotiation and cannot be predicted only by analyzing legal regulations valid in the Schengen Area.

In the second approach, the Schengen Area and its external borders, since they were incorporated into the institutional and legal framework of the EU, have become a certain aspect of the EU operation, vital in defining the proper model of territoriality in the EU. As observed by Anderson (2007), the type of territoriality and the character of borders of each political community is one of its key indicators; therefore analyses of the Schengen control system, determining (or co-determining, along with, for example, trans-border cooperation and economic and political relations with third countries) the nature and the way in which the EU borders function, constitute an element of considerations over the essence of the EU. Seeking an answer to this question, scientists consider the EU and its borders in various ways – in categories of:

quasi-statehood of territoriality defined in a Westphalian way and territorially exercised authority (Morgan 2005), a specific type of international organization, various versions of empires invoking borders in the version of Roman *limes*, *colonial frontiers* (borders of colonial empires) or borders of the European cosmopolitan empire, spatially variable and blurring divisions (Shaw 2002; Beck and Grande 2011; Zielonka 2013) or finally, a (neo)medieval structure, characterized by dispersed and overlapping territorially dependencies and authority, porous borders deprived of any systematized system of control and protection (Christiansen, Jörgensen 2000). Yet another variant aiming to explain changes occurring in the international environment, whose manifestation can be found in Schengen borders, is the reference to the concept of the late Westphalian order as a hybrid combining new elements of post-Westpahlian order with those characteristics of the Westphalian system of international relations (Falk 2002; Piteraś2007). Supporters of this approach point out that this order is characterized by changeability, uncertainty, pluralism of possibilities, multitude of options, often contradicting each other, which leads to changing the essence of borders through redefinition of division between the interior and external environments of the state, replacing a perception of the borders in terms of barriers to the bridge and extending border control practices with the concept of border management" (Moraczewska 2018:46). And thus the subject of the analysis is whether the EU borders are closer to traditional, Westphalian types of borders – permanent, tight and separating a European territory (and thus clearly marked and controlled) from what is outside, or through establishing multistage controls of Schengen borders, multi-layers of their management and extra-territorializing some control tasks and liberalizing flow on selected sections of these borders (for example with countries aspiring to the EU membership) they resemble vague and liquid border spheres of old empires or they constitute a post-modernistic "mix" of various spaces and divisions (political, legal, cultural, economic, social), in which borders have symbolic rather than practical (territorial) meaning, and where controls are not physical but virtual.

The above presentations are not theoretical approaches but concepts of the political and territorial space of the EU. The first two are usually presented as opposite poles, between which there is a whole spectre of possibilities offered by a combination of supra-nationality and intergovernmentalism. It must be added here that supra-nationality is understood here in the federalist spirit, being immanently connected with "the logic of building a political federal

structure" (Ruszkowski 2010:53). This, in fact, means, in spite of differently postulated goals of integration – a federal state, a federation or a confederation community of states – maintaining the primacy of statehood, not only as a key concept resource but also as desired or imminent model of governance and authority organization. The next two concepts may constitute – as Beck and Grande wrote (2011:22) – an attempt at overcoming European studies' theoretical and conceptual concentration on various, but still certain forms of statehood. For all these concepts, the operation of the Schengen Area, if only in its final product – Schengen borders – cannot be omitted.

3. The Schengen project as a mechanism of border management

On the third theoretical level, we can locate theories on the way in which the EU functions and its "active" presence in political, economic and social life. Many authors point out that the complexity and heterogeneity of the EU stem from the fact that it operates differently in various areas. Therefore, it is pointless to seek one universal way in which it functions. Instead, we should concentrate on analyses with a narrow scope of research area, as they will enable us to explain more precisely selected aspects of what the EU is and how it works. These theories, called partial, specialist or segment ones (Ruszkowski 2014: 45) may refer both to analyses of forming and conducting policies in the EU (for example theories of policy networks, and the theory of multi-level governance) or only selected elements of these processes (for instance, the theory of delegating or the principal-agent theory), or ways in which the EU policies exert their influence in various areas (e.g. the theory of Europeanization). Regarding the Schengen system, the specialist theories are useful in explaining how the system works, who participates in determining the Schengen policy and how, what institutions take part in passing and implementing legislation in this area and how relations between them are shaped, and finally, what role a member state and its institutions (and services) play in this system.

The Schengen system is most frequently perceived in the light of the multi-level governance theory, whose authors try to reflect specific features of the system governing the European Union's external borders (e.g. Hanke, Wieruszewski, Panizzon 2018). The way in which the Schengen system works has become an exemplification of the belief or even the proof that the decision-making process in the EU differs from the traditional, hierarchic model of

governance, typical of independent states, adopting the formula of a non-hierarchic system of political negotiations, regulations and administration, called governance (Jachtenfuchs 2001). According to this approach, authority is considered to be dispersed; shared not only by entities located at various territorial levels (supranational, national and regional or local) but – which is of particular significance for state borders – it is also shared by non-state entities (which is manifested in gradually expanded powers of the EU specialized agency – Frontex). The concept of integrated management of external borders, proposed by the European Commission, adopted by the Council in 2002 and developed in the next years, as observed by Anna Moraczewska, "seems to be fitting in with the "matrix" of the concept of multi-level governance" (2013:245). In other words, multi-dimensional management of the EU's borders as a formula of conducting the EU policy towards its external borders constitutes an element of a general feature of the EU political system, namely European governance. It should be noted that in this concept borders, commonly acknowledged as an attribute of statehood in conditions of the EU membership become an object of management, which, by definition, is based on a high degree of institutionalization, formalization and bureaucracy and is considered to be less politicized than any state policy (Telò 2006).

Moreover, in the classic presentation of the multi-level governance theory (Marks, Hooghe, Blank 1998; Hooghe, Marks 2001), the political system of the EU was perceived as a combination of supranational and intergovernmental institutions, with a certain degree of centralization and decentralization, where the lowest level is composed of regions and cities, the next level is occupied by states, and the last level belongs to supranational institutions. However, the changes that the EU political system has seen since the 1990s verified these classical assumptions, emphasizing both that there is greater pluralism of levels on which the EU authority is dispersed than originally assumed and that the competencies of particular entities operating in specific areas are non-exclusive. Currently, the concept of multi-level governance also demonstrates fluidity between various rungs, accounting for the fact that policy-shaping entities can move between them and dispersion of authority varies in different areas (Rosamond 2007: 178). This poses questions on the cohesion of decisions and actions taken by various entities in the same areas, scopes of responsibility that entities take for particular issues, and types of interactions between entities whose scopes of activities cross or partially overlap. Due to its

connection with security issues, but also equally important symbolic meaning of borders, the question about the way in which the Schengen border governance regime operates within the multi-level governance concept seems to be gaining particular significance.

Conclusions

Analysing the origin, development, changes and transformation of the Schengen project, its ways and mechanisms of operation, as well as its influence on basic categories of contemporary politics, such as authority, sovereignty, governance, and territoriality, need to be situated within the theoretical framework of the European integration. The need for an in-depth analysis of the Schengen area has been revealed by the recent crises, both related to mass migration to the EU and the Covid pandemic, resulting in restrictions on the free movement of people at internal borders.

The impressive literature on the various aspects of Schengen produced over the 30 years of this project has been either descriptive with limited forecasting capabilities or fragmented and dispersed across research fields based on different research paradigms (such as migration studies, security studies, and borders). However, the conceptual ambiguity of Schengen, generally referring to what this type of integration is, may constitute an interesting research laboratory on the European integration process within the European Union.

The article organizes possibilities for explaining the Schengen project based on the European integration theory. It points out that depending on the adopted scope of the field of analyses, and their degree of generality-specificity, Schengen can be conceptualized in three different ways as 1) an integration process, 2) a model of territoriality, and 3) a mechanism of border management. On each level of these meta-approaches, researchers are provided with various theories and research concepts characterized by different ontological and epistemological assumptions. This offers a wide range of analytical and interpretational options for the processes in the Schengen Area, both in its functional and territorial dimensions.

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DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY OR DELIBERATIVE SUPRANATIONALISM? PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS FROM THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

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Abstract: *The goal of this article is to assess the effectiveness of deliberative democratic mechanisms in the practice of international organization, with the Conference on the Future of Europe serving as the main object of the study. The analysis is focused on a comparison of the usefulness of two concepts (deliberative democracy and deliberative supranationalism) to the analysis of the EU political decision–making. On the basis of both approaches four hypotheses are formulated and initially verified. The dependent variables of the hypotheses are confronted with the essential features of the course and follow–up of the Conference in the first year after its conclusion. The most important results of the study include four findings. Firstly, the structure of the Conference did not fully correspond to the assumptions of the concept of deliberative democracy, while – secondly – the substantial quality of the Conference's proposals was low. Thirdly, one year after the conclusion of the Conference, no interinstitutional debate on the implementation of its proposals has started. Fourthly, there is no inter-state discussion on the results of the Conference, no Convention is planned, and support for introducing treaty changes is low. So far, the only measurable results of the Conference are minor non–treaty reforms proposed by the Commission. Therefore, the introduction of the principles of deliberative democracy at the EU level proved to be an ineffective step. If the activity of the Union is considered in deliberative terms, then the concept of deliberative supranationalism is more useful here. After the Conference, the EU turned out still to be an international organization in which major decisions on reforms are taken by the governments of the member states.*

Keywords: deliberative democracy, deliberative supranationalism, EU future, EU institutions, EU member states

1. Introduction

The Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) was the first attempt to apply the mechanisms of deliberative democracy within an international organization bringing together states with a population of almost half a billion. It is difficult to consider as similar the earlier activities related to Conventions practiced in connection with the Charter of Fundamental Rights or the Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe. This is important, however, that the convention method is currently foreseen in the treaty (Art. 48 TEU), while the Conference was convened without any treaty basis. As one of former politicians stated: „it is possible that the Conference (…) may create the illusion that a quasi–constitutional procedure is taking place, while this is not the case" (Venizelos, 2021, p. 2).

The main goal of this article is to assess the effectiveness of deliberative democratic mechanisms on CoFoE's example. The time range of the study covers the course of the Conference and the first year after its completion. Effectiveness in this case is to mean both maintaining high quality of the deliberation process, as well as the impact of opinions adopted during this process on the solutions adopted by final decision–makers. Therefore, the considerations are not focused mainly on the democratic deficit. The main subject is a comparison of the usefulness of two (pre–)theories to the analysis of the EU political decision–making: while the concept of deliberative democracy is of normative nature (Dryzek, 2017, p. 611), the deliberative supranationalism tends to have explanatory aspirations (Tosiek, 2018, p. 104).

In the first part of the article the basic theoretical and methodological elements of the study are outlined. Then, the conceptual assumptions of deliberative democracy and deliberative supranationalism are elaborated. On this basis, four hypotheses are presented and initially verified. Finally, the Authors try to briefly characterize the essence of the European Union, as it is today – being both the political and the international system.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The argumentation here is based on theoretical views related to deliberative democracy and deliberative supranationalism. Although the ideals of deliberation have been discussed since ancient times (Chambers, 2018, pp. 55–57), the very term "deliberative democracy" was highly popularized in the scientific discourse only in the end of twentieth century by, *inter alia*, Joseph M. Besette who presented the postulate of improving the quality of the political system by increasing the participation of citizens in decision–making processes and improving the participation process itself (Krzynówek, 2010, p. 18; Jasiński, 2017, p. 44). A deeper basis for considerations on deliberative democracy should be sought in the works of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, who created relatively independent concepts. Still, the key question here is to link political decisions with the discussions of members of the society (Cohen, 1996, p. 95). The deliberative supranationalism, in turn, is a concept proposed by Christian Joerges and supported by Jürgen Neyer. This is based on the general premise of Habermas' thought resulting from the discursive theory of law and democracy: citizens must perceive themselves as the authors of the laws that they are then supposed to obey. EU law has two functions related to the implementation of the obligations of the member states towards each other: the first of them is the requirement to take into account the interests of the others when developing national policies, and the second one is the obligation to cooperate (Joerges, 2019, p. 166).

Both theoretical approaches are treated here as rooted in a similar way of thought assuming that deliberative mechanisms are the appropriate response to the current needs of the EU or at least they offer an analytical language that properly explains EU functioning normatively or descriptively. At the same time, these approaches are set against each other due to the different perception of the quality of the Union's democracy. On this basis four hypotheses are formulated to be then subjected to preliminary verification. The dependent variables of those hypotheses are confronted with the essential features of the course and follow–up of the Conference.

Methodologically, the European Union can be perceived as a political system or as an international system. Research on it requires a dynamic combination of methods used in

comparative politics and in international relations theory. The main task of the EU is to make decisions in the area of public policies, while international factors have a major impact on this process. This is not a new conclusion that the distinction between intra–state and inter–state politics is becoming more and more problematic (Hurrell and Menon, 1996, pp. 394–400).

The basic research method in this article is the decision–making analysis in its systemic variant, which is based on five categories (Pietraś, 1998, pp. 18–77). The first of them is a decision–making situation defined as a state of reality that makes it necessary to solve a certain problem. In the case under examination, it is the conviction about the necessity of EU reforming. The second category is the decision–making centre constituting the subject of political action making decisions on behalf of the political system. Such a centre is not only the Conference on the Future of Europe, but also other institutional entities that must be – if only because of treaty provisions – involved in the process of reforming the Union. The third category is the decision–making process, which is a combination of cause–and–effect relationships within the decision–making centre in relation to the input, the structure of the centre and the goals of decision–makers. Also in this case, the processes occurring within the Conference, as well as in other decision–making bodies, require special consideration. The fourth category is a political decision, defined as an act of non–random selection of political action or inaction. Here, given the redundancy of an in–depth analysis of the results of the Conference, the most important step is to define the main conclusions related to these results. The fifth category is implementation, that is, the process of entering into force of decisions by using methods and means appropriately selected. Here, the analysis should be focused on the activities undertaken by EU institutions as part of the follow–up of the Conference. It should be emphasized that the goal is not to reproduce the facts, but to capture some fundamental trends. Technically, the study is based on non–participant observation, as well as on analysis of documents and opinions.

3. Towards EU's Deliberative Democracy…

Rawls starts from a normative definition of deliberative politics and formulates the theories of "public reason" and "impartial justice" which are to reconcile the principle of freedom with the principle of equality. This thought is supported by the concept of a social contract based on

two principles of the constitution of a just society. The first principle describes a situation of fundamental equality: each person has an equal right to a system of equal fundamental freedoms. The second principle indicates the conditions that allow inequality to occur: the introduction of benefits for underprivileged citizens and the availability of positions for all under conditions of equal opportunity (Rawls, 1997, pp. 96–99; Rawls, 2013, p.107; Perlikowski, 2020, pp. 65–68; Sroka, 2009, pp. 19–20).

Habermas, departing from normativism, proposes a procedural approach to deliberative politics. Drawing from a liberal approach to the democratic process and assuming compromises between interests and republicanism, he integrates them, creating an intermediate model of the debate. Thanks to the influx of information within it, pragmatic considerations take place, and the rules of discourse and forms of argumentation assume actions aimed at reaching agreements. In result, the relatively reasonable results are produced: the success of deliberative politics depends on institutionalization of appropriate procedures and communicative assumptions, as well as on the interplay of institutionalized debates with informally produced public opinions (Habermas, 2005, pp. 316–321).

Despite their fundamental differences, both Rawls and Habermas agree on four points (Cooke, 2000, p. 957). Firstly, both recognize the lack of authoritative standards for legal norm–making and emphasize the need for alternative epistemic standards. Secondly, both emphasize the principle of equal respect for citizens as moral agents with separate points of view. Thirdly, they both recognize the ideal of personal autonomy, according to which rational responsibility is a part of human agency. Fourthly, both emphasize the importance of transparency in the area of law and uphold the ideal of political autonomy. They also generally agree that the public will and opinion are shaped through dialogue and discussion. In their view, individuals are members of a political community, and therefore their well–being harmonizes with the collective good. People should see themselves as free and equal subjects while accepting the existence of reasonable pluralism (Dyszy–Graniszewska, 2016, p. 42).

Selen A. Ercan and John S. Dryzek (2015, pp. 243–244) list four assumptions that are to place deliberative trends in the theory of democracy. Firstly, the concept of deliberative democracy is a normative one: that is, it does not explain the current policy, but rather shows how it should be conducted. Secondly, deliberative democracy should not be classified as

another model of democracy and verified by empirical research. This approach offers assumptions that can be contextualized, interpreted and evaluated in practice. Thirdly, deliberative democracy should be treated as a transformative project. It should not assume a thorough conversion of the social order, but be a way to gradually change the functioning of politics. Fourthly, deliberative democracy is not only an offer to use new tools in the institutional sphere. In order to avoid superficiality, it must have an axiological basis, and the rulers cannot perceive it as a sole mechanism for designing social consultations.

The most common objects of deliberative democracy are small social groups, that is, the residents belonging to a specific local unit – they are often called "mini–publics" (Goodin and Dryzek, 2006, pp. 221–224). However, there is a view, advocated by Habermas himself (cited in Bucholski, 2015, pp. 10–11), that the deliberative model is also appropriate for post–national political systems such as the EU, because a more heterogeneous view of society can be used here. A diverse society is capable of making fair and reasonable agreements, and the role of the state is to provide a set of procedures on the basis of which deliberations leading to the emergence of a new public sphere can be conducted. The application of the deliberative model would therefore reduce the Union's democratic deficit and serve to support solidarity.

Based on the above review, two hypotheses regarding the Conference on the Future of Europe can be put forward. Firstly, in structural terms, it should be assumed that if the personal composition of the Conference were to fully correspond to the basic assumptions of deliberative democracy, then the individual social actors should have been the leading participants of the CoFoE's discourse (H1). Secondly, in the functional scope, it should be suggested that the relative disregard for the substantive context, that is characteristic of deliberative democracy, lowered the practical quality of the final effects of the Conference (H2).

Rawls' theory of impartial justice has not been faithfully reflected in the work of CoFoE. The limited freedom in participation opportunities did not contribute to increasing equal access to freedom, understood as equality in processes and results. It is not clear who concluded this social contract (EU institutions, member states giving the mandate to the Conference, or citizens). Which is certain, is that the CoFoE did not take place in the original situation, but was a top–down process simply involving the bottom level, allowing for limited input from societies and also making a distinction between components. This was evident, for example, in the

primacy of European Citizens' Panels (ECPs) over their national counterparts – it was the first of them that debated the solutions submitted by the organizers of national events, and it is not clear how diligently this was done (cf. Moscrop and Warren, 2016, p. 2).

Allowing inequalities to increase benefits for the least–advantaged citizens has been met in fragments through repeated concern for the elderly, disabled or young people in the recommendations of most thematic areas of the Conference's final report. Equality between ECPs' participants, experts and observers, or between the commentators of the Multilingual Digital Platform and those who sat at the Plenary Session assemblies, did not formally distinguish the social relations, but the duties and obligations that individuals had towards each other were rather interdependent within the collective. Unfortunately, the opportunity to participate in CoFoE assemblies was mainly based on randomness, which was far from genuine equality of rights. It can be argued that the ability of individuals to present their own opinions strengthened the comprehensive system of freedom, which had only taken its first steps at the EU level so far. The priority of differentiation giving the privilege of justice over efficiency has been fulfilled, because although the actions aimed at implementing the proposals have not yet brought any tangible effects for citizens, the manifestations of impartial and democratic activities could have been seen during the Conference (cf. ibid., pp. 2–10).

The political autonomy, understood as the lack of external coercions, was also preserved because the participants were obliged to be apolitical, and they themselves avoided attempts to contact influential people. However, it is not obvious whether authoritative standards in contacts, for example between Members of the European Parliament and the citizens in the ECPs, did not take place or were implemented in an unverifiable way. Nevertheless, a discussion containing elements of exerting influence between an experienced politician and an "ordinary citizen" culminating in a vote could have had only one winner and it was not the European public (cf. Cooke, 2000, p. 967).

Therefore, this is the procedural Habermas' approach that seems to be more in line with the progress of the Conference on the Future of Europe, as this concept is fundamentally broader while emphasizing formalism and leaving decision–makers the possibility to choose to what extent a given procedure is being implemented. It allows for the cognitive dimension of the discussion in order to find the "best way" to regulate public affairs. This method corresponds to

the standards of rationality, which are characterized by a kind of objectivity. Today's technological advancement undoubtedly guarantees access to information, but it is not certain whether citizens are aware of the credibility of their sources and whether they have sufficient openness of mind to assimilate content that has so far been foreign to them. Although CoFoE used the Internet to conduct debates, it was no longer applicable to broadening the knowledge of participants, and it could bring measurable effects if, for example, the Conference platform became not only a repository of documented activities, but also of theories in the thematic areas within which the debates were held. The only manifestation of activities in this area was the inclusion of experts in the ECPs, but the time allocated for their activity seemed insufficient for the participants' process of thinking to prove successful in each individual case and in each topic. It seems reasonable to ask why the permanent inclusion of specialists in other CoFoE components, for instance, in national events and panels, or even during the Plenary Session, was not adopted as an absolute rule, because also then some issues could require specialized clarification. The answer that comes to mind is as follows: it was not the deepening of knowledge, but – according to Habermas' assumptions – finding the pragmatic solutions approved by all parties, which played a more important role here (cf. ibid., pp. 948–949).

In substantial terms, more things did not work properly in the unprecedented CoFoE phenomenon. The multiplicity and complexity of topics made it difficult for citizens to delve into the many different elements of their panel, which affected the quality of the deliberations. In a large number of cases, the participants also lacked basic information about the EU institutions, their functions and competences, as well as the decision–making processes in the Union (Emmanouilidis et al., 2022, pp. 5–6). This resulted in a tendency of the participants to exchange random remarks instead of conscious and thoughtful opinions. Despite the efforts of the organizers to provide information and access to the database of experts, their knowledge "was not sufficient or sufficiently objective". Some ECPs' experts did not focus on providing a balanced overview of their topics, and sometimes used jargon that laymen could not understand. Moreover, the main controversies, challenges, opportunities, ongoing initiatives or existing policies in each area have been covered little or superficially (ibid.), which is reflected in the CoFoE's final report (*Conference*, 2022).

The debates taking place in the member states, if any, were not linked in a way that improved the quality of deliberation throughout the process. In the debates within the ECPs there was no discussion of proposals resulting from events in the member states, and many ECPs' participants were unaware of the national CoFoE dimension. Some experts considered the lack of a systematic relationship between the different levels of deliberations to be a key structural deficit of the Conference, as without a common methodological framework, national debates did not have to mirror the framework of discussions in ECPs. Moreover, since each national debate was free in the way the events were conducted, also their comparison seems not to add much, and the only thing they had in common was the coincidence (Emmanouilidis et al., 2022, p. 6).

Participatory democracy, emphasizing direct participation in the decision–making process also thanks to the development of information technology, contributes – according to its promoters – to overcoming obstacles in this art of governance. In fact, however, the involvement of citizens is treated as a remedy for the crisis of modern democracy manifested in a non–functional institutional apparatus and lowering social trust towards the authorities. Increasing the activity of citizens as a result of informing, communicating and voting with the use of new technologies is to enable a faster and more convenient way to participate in political life in the face of changes taking place in the modern world (Musiał–Karg, 2013, pp. 89–93). Some elements taken from this approach should have been used also in CoFoE, namely, the Multilingual Digital Platform. It meant a departure from the current digitalized EU consultation practice, which is by definition top–down, non–deliberative, monolingual, questionnaire–based and has a static format, and taking on a new dimension that is open, interactive and moderated. Ultimately, however, it was still characterized by a vertical structure. Due to its limited functionality, it has mainly become a mechanism for collecting evidence of activity, "contribution from many events held under the umbrella of the Conference", and not necessarily a meeting place. It provided the technocratic input of citizen–experts over the advice of laymen and did not allow for the desired discussion between citizens and other stakeholders present on the platform. This tool did not seem to be able to overcome the main structural limitations within the EU participatory channels (Alemanno, 2022, p. 495).

Deliberative democracy emphasizes rational responsibility, not at all because it offers a vision of perfect ethical harmony while operating within the framework and limits of the law.

The participation of civil society in the CoFoE has been terminated for the moment, and the created mandate must wait for legal implementation. When establishing the Conference, the EU institutions did not commit themselves to implement all the proposed suggestions. Sceptics of this solution could say that it was a departure from responsibility for something they endorse, and the work of citizens during the debates would have been in vain if its effects had not been literally implemented. However, the intentions of EU institutions were different, because it was not known in advance what the feasibility of CoFoE recommendations would be. The goal was not the dispassionate submission to the opinions of citizens, which might even be mutually exclusive or counter–effective, but only to determine the directions of the authorities' actions, which was not in contradiction with the principle of sovereignty. Some of the proposals will be ignored by EU institutions, and there may even be selectivity among the solutions recommended. It is worth remembering, however, that EU institutions are only a part of the whole EU system, and some of their moves may be blocked by member states. Eventually, the CoFoE has been considered a success, because it is not up to the Conference itself to decide what, when and where the proposed measures will be implemented. Deliberative communication, which is the result of political culture, political socialization and initiatives that shaped the opinions produced, remained high, which did not determine the follow–up of the process (cf. Habermas, 1997, pp. 56–58).

Therefore, it should be stated that the first hypothesis (H1) was not strengthened because both social and institutional actors played key roles in the Conference on the Future of Europe. The hybrid structure of the Conference did not correspond to core assumptions of the concept of deliberative democracy, since the impact of those two types of entities on the final report was not mutually balanced. Moreover, the participation of experts (selected by institutions in a non-transparent way) made the social individuals subjected to manipulation in terms of access to knowledge and information, which contributed to lowering the practical quality of the Conference results reflected in the final report. The reform proposals presented in this document are ideologically biased, expressing mainly pro-federalist connotations. Some of them are practically impossible to implement, which strengthens the second hypothesis (H2). In general, in most cases, the deliberative process during the Conference was characterized by all kinds of in-built limitations, which resulted in CoFoE not fulfilling its declared tasks.

4. …or Back to EU's Deliberative Supranationalism

Deliberative supranationalism – in more recent works Joerges (2021, p. 5) proposes to call it the "conflicts law constitutionalism" – refers primarily to defining EU law but in a broader sense it should be seen as a pre–theory of EU political decision–making (cf. Tosiek, 2018, pp. 67–106). It is based on the adoption of three theses. Firstly, the European Union has not become a "market without a state" and the member states have not turned into "states without a market". Binding decisions of the Union act as guardians of compliance with the principle of freedom of competition and become an instrument of deregulation. Secondly, the European Union has not been transformed into a "regulatory state" in which the internal market based on "re–regulation" is driven by the decisions of non–majoritarian institutions. Rather, the resulting system offers a perspective of more far–reaching consequences for the relationship between decisions of the state and those of the EU (Joerges, 2002, pp. 139–142).

The proponents of deliberative supranationalism assume that the EU member states are not autonomous entities, being instead dependent on cooperation. However, the EU does not transform into a federation and will not be able to transform into one until its component parts in the form of states express such a will. The EU manages matters of "knowledge", leaving political issues to democratic bodies. It is organized around functional goals, without being a structure striving for federalization (Joerges, 2010, p. 1–8).

Deliberation can be perceived here in three ways: normatively, rationalistically or functionally (Neyer, 2006, pp. 781–788). The normative approach is based on the statement that political power ultimately results from the will of the nation understood as free and equal citizens acting as a collective body. The concept of the "public sphere" is of greatest importance, in which individual preferences are transformed into collective will. In the case of the European Union, the focus is on disagreement, which contributes to a permanent process of political constitutionalization aimed at recognizing, respecting and representing the values, opinions and vital interests of the participants. The rationalist approach is based on treating the self–interest of political actors as the main source of their motivation. Politics is perceived as a sphere of

interests and asymmetric distribution of power. Conflicts of interest are resolved through bargains and voting, while deliberation is only in the background. In the case of the European Union, political solutions are not the result of the interaction of individuals, but of collective actors representing a "combined" interest. The legitimacy of the views presented by the participants of the deliberation is not the subject of the discussion itself, and the main task is to determine the conditions of the deliberation. It is also important to distinguish administrative actors from political ones: technocrats definitely prefer to look for solutions corresponding to their expertise, not being dependent on political choices. The functional approach to deliberation is based on perceiving it as a means to achieve the goal of effective and legitimized governance of the European Union. Any political system should be based on communicative interaction and joint efforts to solve problems. The decision resulting from the deliberation process is based on the application of convergence–oriented procedures. The deliberation procedures also support the subsequent decentralized implementation of the adopted decisions (ibid.).

The authors of deliberative supranationalism emphasize the importance of democracy within a member state, but they deliberately do not use the term "deliberative democracy" at the EU level. Firstly, the decisions taken in the Union are fundamentally influenced by the limitations imposed on the domestic decision–making processes of states through guarantees of compliance with the EU law, commitments not to ignore the positions of other states, and the binding of nation states to transnational rules and obligations. Therefore, the supranational nature of the political system of the European Union is of fundamental importance. Secondly, governing the European Union cannot be based on a democratic mandate identical to the one of the state. In the context of a supranational system, a different quality of opinion–forming and decision–making must be taken into account (Joerges, 2002, p. 151; Joerges and Rödl, 2008, pp. 2–7; Joerges and Rödl, 2009, pp. 2–7).

The goal of deliberation is not to democratize the EU. It is impossible also because the Union is based on the principle of inequality linked to the principle of state sovereignty. The historical development of integration processes shows no tendency to strengthen the democratic principle of political equality. Most member states are satisfied with the situation in which the EU is not a stand–alone carrier, but an additional and supporting "layer" of democratic governance. At the same time, the EU is a relatively transparent organization and offers great opportunities in terms

of participation, accountability and transnational discourse (Neyer, 2012, pp. 526–527). It is therefore proposed to look for sources of legitimacy for EU decisions outside the sphere of democracy, offering a two–stage approach. The first level is based on emphasizing the supranationality: EU law is defined as an order oriented to resolving conflicts by referring to principles accepted by all stakeholders. The democratic basis of this law are the defects of the member states, which are manifested in the form of extra–territorial effects. The second level is based on emphasizing the deliberation, where the EU becomes an alternative to hierarchical legal structures, and its main feature is the orientation towards mutual control of the interests of individual states. In this situation, the structures of transnational decision–making contribute to deepening of the democratic deficit defined in terms typical for the state (Joerges, 2001, pp. 4–5; Joerges, 2007, pp. 5–9).

However, in his recent works, Joerges clearly begins to see the need to supplement his pre-theory with a democratic context, referring, for example, to the concept of “democracy–enhancing conflicts law" created by Dani Rodrik (cited in Joerges, 2022, p. 817). At the same time, he seems to reject the possibility of the EU building its own model of democracy, recalling the concept of “inter–democracy” created by Daniel Innerarity. An important consequence of this thinking is the recognition of the heterogeneity of Europe, which excludes the creation of absolutely universal regulations, proposing instead a democratization of the EU “on the model of complex democracies”. This complexity is related not only to the diversity of its citizens, but to the diversity of issues on which they have to decide. In essence, it is a “democratization of interdependencies” that must replace hierarchical models typical for states. The idea of “United in Diversity through conflicts–law constitutionalism” indicated by Joerges is an anti–centralist and confederal vision, not a federalist one (Joerges, 2019, pp. 167–168). It is also recognized that the survival of the European Union depends on the establishment of a specific solidarity between the divided but interdependent societies of Europe. This vision means abandoning the idea of increasing uniformity in favour of seeking constructive cooperation between unequal polities (Hien and Joerges, 2020, p. 9).

Based on the above review, two hypotheses can be put forward regarding the implementation of the results of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Firstly, in terms of substance, it should be suggested that due to the limited epistemic quality of deliberative processes, the EU

institutions would not follow up the results of the Conference in the form of significant reforms (H3). Secondly, in view of the characteristics of the EU decision-making system, it must be assumed that due to the restricted position of member states' representatives in the structure of the Conference, the governments would ignore CoFoE's results (H4).

From the start, the joint declaration signed on 10 March 2021 by the presidents of the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council was a compromise text with many ambiguities. The Conference was conceived as a combination of bottom–up participatory democracy and top–down elite decision–making, while its mandate remained open. The ultimate success or failure of the Conference depended on the quality of political leadership and legal ingenuity (Fabbrini, 2020, p. 413). At the same time, the Conference was strongly influenced by agreements between the three largest political groups in the European Parliament. In this sense, the agenda of the Conference was marked by topics that include strengthening both the Parliament and the Commission as supranational institutions (Johansson and Raunio, 2022, pp. 188–189).

As expected, the reactions of EU supranational institutions to the results of the Conference were positive. The European Parliament adopted its resolution even before the closing event (European Parliament, 2022a). Appreciating its contribution to the Conference, it saw the need for treaty changes, and in its subsequent resolution (European Parliament, 2022b) presented an informal proposal to amend the treaties on the basis of Art. 48 TEU, which provides, among others, moving from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council, adjusting the EU's powers in certain areas, and strengthening Parliament's powers in EU budgetary procedures. Finally, the Parliament called on the European Council to prepare a Convention.

The European Commission has also committed itself to making efforts as part of its response to CoFoE's demands. It declared a reflection on the Conference in order to make participatory democracy a permanent element of the policy–making process in the EU (Commission, 2022a). To this end, it presented four categories of action, announcing both the legislative and non–legislative activities. The Commission has advocated reforms to make the EU more effective, including through treaty changes if needed (Commission, 2022b).

A preliminary technical assessment of the CoFoE's proposals was also made by the Council's General Secretariat. It declared that treaty changes were not necessary to implement

the vast majority of measures (Council, 2022a; 2022b). The European Council, on the other hand, was very modest about the results of the Conference. While taking note of the proposals in the final report, it stipulated that the EU institutions, within the limits of their competences and in accordance with the provisions of the treaties, should take effective follow–up measures that had already started and of which citizens should have been informed (European Council, 2022). This laconic statement showed the lack of consensus among the heads of states and governments on whether to consider the CoFoE objectives of direct dialogue with citizens as met and how to behave towards the results of the Conference.

The Conference's originator, French President Emmanuel Macron, spoke positively about its results. At the closing ceremony, he hailed CoFoE as an unprecedented democratic exercise that involved citizens in designing solutions for themselves and Europe. He was of the opinion that most of the measures envisaged did not require institutional reforms, but that in some cases swift and joint decisions needed to be taken, which could be achieved through a revision of the treaties by Convention (Macron, 2022). Also, the speech of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the University of Prague was rather favourable to the outcome of the Conference. He tackled there, *inter alia*, the topic of possible EU enlargement, which must have been combined with institutional deepening in terms of the transition from unanimous to majority decision–making, limiting the number of commissioners and more faithfully reflecting the structure of societies in elections to the European Parliament. In this respect, he considered possible treaty reforms to be acceptable and desirable (Scholz, 2022).

On the other hand, thirteen member states from Eastern and Northern Europe presented a non–paper dated 9 May 2022. Their leaders adopted a different perception of the whole process and what should follow it, being of the opinion that citizens' ideas "should speak for themselves" and should not be instrumental in the interests of EU institutions. Each of them should act in accordance with its own regulations, within the framework of the treaty–based division of competences, while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The signatories also stipulated that the change of the treaties had never been CoFoE's aim, and although they did not rule it out in advance, they did not support ill–considered and premature attempts to revise them. They were of the opinion that this would risk diverting political energy away from issues of concern to Europe's citizens and geopolitical challenges. Moreover, they stressed that

the current treaty framework has shown that the EU is able to cope with crises like Covid–19 pandemic and Russia's aggression on Ukraine (*Non–paper*, 2022; cf. Zheltovskyy, 2022, pp. 674–675). Although the most important one, this document was not the only negative written reaction of groups of member states to the CoFoE during its progress and follow–up (cf. Drachenberg, 2022, pp. 6–7). As a result, one year after the conclusion of the CoFoE, member states have not even initiated any real discussion on implementation of the Conference's results.

In some views (Alemanno, 2022) the Conference proves that the EU has become – albeit temporarily – an extraordinary "laboratory" for empirically testing the legitimacy of deliberative democracy not only in the real world, but also on a supranational scale in a way that has never been done before. From this perspective, the Conference could be seen as the ultimate testing ground for Habermas' concept in transnational conditions. However, even before and also during the Conference, two fundamental views regarding its conclusion emerged (Ondarza and Ålander, 2021, pp. 6–8). The first of them was called a "counterproductive show" scenario, according to which the effect of CoFoE would be a solemn presentation of a report to the European Council without specific recommendations. The European Council would then duly take note of the report and make a non–binding promise to meet citizens' demands as part of its strategic agenda. The second scenario was called a "European impulse", in which the success of the Conference depended on the political quality and the active participation of national capitals in the Conference. In fact, a third scenario, unforeseen before, is most likely to happen, namely that the CoFoE's results contain quite a lot of specific recommendations, but they will not be taken into account as a starting point for reforms, because no reforms will be undertaken.

The Conference could have provided an innovative model for the debate on EU reform, but it was not clear from the outset whether the ultimate mission of the Conference was to bring about a major federal restructuring of the Union or rather a more discreet functional readjustment. Therefore, it was necessary to generally answer the question whether the very convening of the Conference was not intended to circumvent the treaties (Fabbrini, 2019, p. 17). In this line of thought, Evangelos Venizelos (2021, p. 4), a former politician, believed that problems related to the crisis of the implementation of European constitutional law, liberal democracy and the rule of law, or challenges to the autonomy and supremacy of the EU legal order could not be solved by means of hybrid forms of inter–institutional dialogue and

consultations with randomly selected citizens. On the contrary, better solutions can be achieved by openly addressing the issues of sovereignty, identity and political equality. In other words, it would be detrimental to the Conference on the Future of Europe to create the false impression that the state and prospects of European integration are a soft matter of a consultative democracy offering only deliberative solutions. Moreover, it could be a dangerous "institutional illusion".

Also from the point of view of strengthening the federal features of the EU, the Conference has been criticized. For example, there were accusations that the Conference ignored the legal context, which is supposedly reflected in the fact that judges had not been invited to the deliberation process. Their disregarding created an imbalance in access to information resulting from the adoption of the view of elitist isolation of judges from the general population. Such exclusion artificially reduced the importance of judges in shaping the future of the EU and the potential for interactions between them and the participants in the Conference (Steuer, 2021).

Therefore, it seems that hypotheses arising from deliberative supranationalism have been strengthened. In line with the third hypothesis (H3), within a year after the end of the Conference, there was not even a political discussion on the implementation of important postulates resulting from the final report. Only minor suggestions concerning the use of deliberative procedures as elements of social consultations were announced for implementation (cf. Commission, 2023). Despite the initial efforts of the European Parliament and the Commission, there is no debate on changes in primary law – this has been blocked by the member states. The hypothesis of a negative reaction of the member states (H4) – although not confirmed for all of them – has also gained importance, proving that the EU decision–making system is still of an intergovernmental nature. The positive, though to a large extent propagandist reaction of the two largest national players did not meet a positive response from the others.

5. Conclusions

Despite the fact that the Conference on the Future of Europe enabled historical participation of citizens in shaping EU development, the level of democratization of this organization did not increase, and it is possible that due to the nature of the discussions, the low inclusivity of the process, intransparency and the lack of participation of representatives of the governments, it decreased. After the Conference, the EU turned out to be first and foremost an international organization in which major decisions on reforms are taken consensually or unanimously by the governments of the member states, and then – if they take the form of treaty changes – approved in national processes in accordance with constitutional requirements and political practice.

Therefore, the congruence with reality of the hypotheses referring to the concept of deliberative democracy has been only partially confirmed, since the structure of the Conference did not fully correspond to its assumptions, while the substantial quality of the Conference's proposals seemed to be low. In turn, both hypotheses relating to deliberative supranationalism have been strengthened. One year after the conclusion of the Conference, no significant interinstitutional or inter-state discussion on the implementation of its proposals started, no Convention is planned, and there is no support for introducing treaty changes. So far, the only measurable results of the Conference are minor non–treaty reforms proposed and partially implemented by the Commission, consisting in the establishment of new informal deliberative bodies of a consultative nature.

It would be wrong to see the European Union as just a political system, forgetting that it is also an international (sub)system. It can be confirmed that the EU is not a developed political community as that of a state. It is the interdependence of national (democratic) political communities that plays a fundamental role in EU decision–making. It seems, therefore, that the introduction of principles of deliberative democracy at the EU level was an ineffective step. If the activity of the Union is considered in deliberative terms, then the concept of deliberative supranationalism is more useful here, because it takes into account the crucial decision-making role of the governments or, at least, national institutions. As it was stated, the idea of deliberative democracy is of normative nature, while the deliberative supranationalism is an explanatory

concept. These initial findings require, however, further in–depth research, including not only qualitative but also quantitative studies.

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