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The neoliberal hybrid in East-Central Europe. The 'treason of intellectuals' and its current re-assessment

ATTILA ÁGH

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'*The founding fathers of the European project were convinced that social convergence would arise spontaneously through economic convergence.*'

(Eurofound 2018: 6).

Abstract: *The Europeanised, progressive intelligentsia in East-Central Europe (ECE) made a fundamental mistake in the nineties that amounts in some ways to the 'treason of intellectuals' and the basic re-assessment of these naïve illusions has only begun nowadays. Motivated by the radical change in the 'miraculous year' (1989) the progressive intellectuals uncritically accepted and supported the Europeanisation in that particular form as it entered into the chaotic days of the early nineties, since they naively thought that its negative features would automatically disappear. In good faith, they created an apology for the established neoliberal hybrid and they sincerely defended this perverse Europeanisation against the increasing attacks of the traditionalist-nativist narrative. With this action they have been unwillingly drifting close to the other side by offering some ideological protection for the 'really existing' neoliberal hybrid instead of criticising this deviation from genuine democratisation in order to facilitate its historical correction. However, due to the emergence of the neoliberal hybrid, the 'external' integration by the EU has resulted in the 'internal' disintegration inside the ECE member states. There has been a deep polarisation in the domestic societies and after thirty years the majority of populations in the ECE countries feel like losers, and they have indeed become losers. This controversial situation needs an urgent recon-*

sideration, which is underway both in the EU and in the ECE as a self-criticism of the progressive intelligentsia. Thus, this paper concentrates on the reconsideration of the main conceptual issues of Europeanisation and Democratisation in ECE.[1]

Keywords: ***neoliberal hybrid, external integration and internal disintegration, shared sovereignty with multinationals, upward convergence and empowerment of ECE.***

Introduction: The Economic Europe had defeated the Political Europe

The EU membership and the Euro-Atlantic integration of East-Central Europe has been a very controversial process with many successes and failures. Basically, and predominantly, Europeanisation and Democratisation (combined with the security integration by entry into NATO) has been a progressive process. The membership has meant a promising *shared sovereignty* with the EU through an increasing EU integration, as well as offering good opportunities for socio--economic and political development. At the same time, it has generated the inherent weakness of NMS as the original sin because it has been accompanied by the compromise of the foreign multinationals and the domestic political class that has created another kind of 'shared sovereignty' between them. This neoliberal hybrid has distorted and paralysed progressive development because the Western economic penetration has been producing and re-producing some kind of dependent semi-periphery. This process is often termed these days with the strong terms 'semi-colonization' or 'self-colonization'. So, as it will be explained below, Economic Europe has defeated Political Europe in the ECE region. Thus, after thirty years of systemic change and fifteen years of EU membership it is high time for the re-evaluation and reconceptualisation of this controversial process in order to understand the reasons for the divergence in the ECE region from the mainstream EU developments in the late 2010s.

This paper discusses conceptually the main lines of the ECE divergence within the EU from the point of view of the present self-criticism of the progressive intellectuals. The story of neoliberal hybrid started with its 'childhood disease' in the overheated period of original accumulation of capital, continued

1 In 1927 Julien Benda published his famous essay *La Trahison des clercs* describing 'the treason of the intelligentsia'. Since then the role of intellectuals in the political order has been discussed from different angles and periods, and right now it is very timely in the new member states (NMS). This analysis is about the NMS developments in general, but focuses on the ECE region in particular. It tries to encourage the self-criticism of the ECE progressive intelligentsia by indicating its current efforts for the self-correction.

with an uneven and combined development for two decades, and it resulted in the enduring alliance of the multinationals and the rising authoritarian political elite in the 2010s. There has been a recent eruption of the criticism about this kind of perverse Europeanisation in the international scientific as well as public debates with several ramifications. It is no longer an enigma as concerns the ECE public discourse how the EU has tolerated for so long the serious violations of the EU rules and values by the ECE authoritarian governments, since behind these authoritarian systems one can detect the protecting arm of their multinational strategic partners, and, in the last analysis, that of the Western governments concerned. This external protection comes in handy for the ECE governments, which have been facing EU criticism for their illiberal political course.

The ECE case has been Europeanisation through a neoliberal hybrid. Therefore the main interest of this paper is to explore the big historical trajectory of the Europeanisation and Democratisation processes in ECE by pointing out the intrinsic failures and inherent limitations of this process in order to prepare the way for the historical correction that can be termed as 're-entry' to the EU or to reach a real, effective membership instead of a formal-legal membership. It is an issue of high sensitivity for the pro-European intelligentsia, since it presupposes a deep self-criticism to a great extent. After the collapse of the bipolar world order the Eastern enlargement, as a substantial part of the EU deepening and widening policy, was an economic and political necessity on both sides. The EU needed the extension of its economic space and political system that had also been pre-programmed in the mission of the Rome Treaty, and the new member states needed the 'Return to Europe' for their reintegration to the developed world. Basically, the sufficient capacity for this extension was actually missing on both sides, and it has remained so in the last thirty or fifteen years. This controversial situation has produced a colourful picture of successes and failures in all new member states, albeit in large variety. It has to be mentioned that the Eastern enlargement has been a three-stage process, starting in the first stage with the 'internal' Europeanisation of new member states (NMS), followed by the 'external' Europeanisation in the Western Balkan and the Eastern European regions that have produced their own kinds of neoliberal hybrids.[2]

This time not only does the Eurosceptic, or nativist camp criticise the EU role, but also the pro-European, progressive camp, mainly the young generation. The issue of the neoliberal hybrid has been a taboo in ECE progressive circles by neglecting its importance and endurance in order to defend Europeanisation against nativist-traditionalist views, even when a large part of the population

2 Emphasising the common historical background, I have analysed the ECE development through the triple crisis in three periods in my papers (Ágh 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019c, 2019d) and in my book (Ágh 2019a, 2019b) in great detail. For this book I have collected many tables as the basic information about ECE and put this collection on the Research Gate website, see Ágh 2019b).

has been frustrated by the deep polarisation/disintegration in the country: 'This attitude was also adopted by the liberal, affluent and educated elite of Eastern Europe, who detached themselves from the perceptions and lived experience of broad sections of their own population' (Kováts and Smejkalova 2019: 2). This new critical voice wants 'more Europe' in ECE by joining the EU mainstream, but it sees also the structural failures of the EU strategy and policy in ECE, and demands their correction. Actually, this EU strategic failure has also penetrated into the international literature on the EU crisis that can be demonstrated by the sharp turn in European Studies and its huge documentation about the defeat of Political Europe by Economic Europe, which created the neoliberal hybrid in ECE.

As usual, this new critical approach in ECE about the unholy alliance has some exaggerations but the shift of the emphasis has been remarkable from the 'neutral' EU concept to the analyses of power relations within the EU, when discussing the reasons for the benign neglect in the EU decision-making bodies for the rule of law violations in ECE. The 'freedom fight' from the side of Political Europe as the new EU strategy can offer a remedy for the serious 'childhood disease' of the neoliberal hybrid in the incoming new institutional cycle of the EU with its general reform course prepared by the end of the Juncker Commission. The missing point in both the East and the West is that while a huge literature has been discussing the refugee crisis as an *immigration* issue the mass exodus of the talented young people and the more dangerous process of *emigration* has only barely been analysed as the major bleeding out of NMS societies (see e.g. Waterbury 2018). In fact, this mass exodus of the citizens' millions has been the worst problem for NMS with its fatal socio-economic, political and cultural--psychological consequences for the further developments and it is the symbol of the historical failure of the Europeanisation and Democratisation of the first thirty years, endangering also the opportunities for the next thirty years.[3]

Upward convergence: the false start of ECE within the EU

In the 2010s there have been serious efforts for the reconsideration of the false start in ECE within the EU, as to the emergence of the neoliberal hybrid in the accession process. Better late than never. These processes were crystallised into two clear theoretical positions by the late 2010s. *First*, the EU reform efforts have resulted in a new socio-economic map of the Union, which can be summarised in the conceptual shift from the *cohesion* to the *convergence* paradigm. This new

3 On the positive side see EC, 2013, and afterwards the 'positive legacy' or 'added value' of Juncker Commission e.g. in Bloj and Schweitzer (2019) and Maurice and Menneteau (2019). Its new Strategic Agenda see EESC, 2019 and European Council, 2019. On the negative side, the EU has never dealt with this mass exodus and the Core countries have just enjoyed the advantages not only of the 'free' markets, but also the millions of 'free' imported skilled manpower.

research wave, based on the concept of upward convergence, has discovered that (contrary to the former domestic self-ideology of the EU about the tendency of 'cohesive Europe') instead of convergence there has been a divergence in Europe producing an increasing gap between the Core and Periphery. This discovery has been the consequence of the global crisis and its long-lasting effects, and it has led to the conclusion that this divergence has belonged to the inherent nature of the dominance of Economic Europe versus Political Europe. Namely, in European Studies there has also been a negative tradition of the 'splendid isolation' between the economic and the social analyses on one side, as well as between the socio-economic and the political analyses on the other. Therefore, the decline of ECE democracy has been a big surprise for the conventional wisdom, although not directly criticising the abstract and naively optimistic--simplistic initial approach. Nonetheless, they have been drawing the lessons from the ECE accession, and also more and more from the pre-accession in the Western Balkan region and the external Europeanisation in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) process. Actually, the separation and isolation of the socio-economic and political analyses has served as some kind of apology for the EU by arguing that supposedly the economic development in ECE has been rapid due to the membership, but the political issues have been out of EU competence, and the EU has no responsibility for the political divergences, including the extreme violations of rule of law.[4]

Second, the Copenhagen criteria have been the cornerstone of the Eastern enlargement for three decades, but they have proved to be improper, since 'the model works with highly abstract…underspecified background conditions' (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2019: 1). Thus, there has been a Copenhagen learning process in the EU, rethinking step by step the original Copenhagen criteria of accession. This learning process can also be felt in the official documents, but the real regional studies are still missing in the European Studies owing to the spirit of an over-generalised 'cohesion' drive, and the fact that the Copenhagen learning process has also not been region-specific (Carrera et al. 2013). The EU official documents have never systematically made any 'inter--regional' comparison, not even between the 'East' and the 'South', forget about the Core-Periphery Divide. The main deficit of the EU officialdom (and the European Studies) has been the lack of the region-specific, close organic link between the socio-economic and political 'divergence'. This lack may be considered the second 'splendid isolation' in the EU conceptual framework caused by the neglect of the regional specificities. Due to this double splendid isolation, the EU has not connected the rule of law violations of the authoritarian

4 Although the EU authorities and experts have not criticised the general ECE political and legal developments directly, they have done it indirectly by drawing its lessons in the documents prepared for the adjustment of the further Eastern enlargement see EC 2013 and recently EC 2019.

ECE regimes with the increasing socio-economic divergence in ECE, although they have been organically interwoven and the socio-economic disintegration is the final reason for the ECE divergence from the EU mainstream. The real conclusion about the present situation is that the Copenhagen criteria have not contained any features of ECE regional specificity for the catching-up strategy in terms of the ECE countries' structural incapacity and lacking competitiveness as compared to the developed member states. This original sin has gone through the entire history of the Eastern enlargement, i.e. also in the case of the Western Balkan (WB) and East European (EE) regions.

Actually, radical political changes had already commenced in ECE in the late 2000s with the transition from soft to hard authoritarian populism even at the government level. This transition was noticed and theorised in ECE by the many publications of regional studies, but it remained 'home affairs' of the region for a long time. It was summarised and supported later by some serious efforts in the European Studies, paying attention to the deepening Core-Periphery Divide. Two edited volumes of this joint effort have paved the way for the reconsideration of the new members' story within the EU. The first one, edited by Magone, Laffan and Schweiger (2016), explored the growing gap and widening divergence between the Core and the Periphery in the aftermath of global crisis. In this volume Ágh (2016) has already focused on the fatal divergence of the 'East' from the EU mainstream and Galgóczi (2016) has put the question 'is convergence a lost cause?' The second volume, edited by Schweiger and Visvizi (2018), has only dealt with the 'East' and demonstrated its drift from the rest of the EU in the entire process of eastern enlargement. This volume has offered a comprehensive analysis about the tendency of divergence in a much larger view and from various sides, including the regionalisation through the Visegrád Four (V4) organisation (see on V4 also Cabada and Waisova 2018).[5]

The *Conclusion* of Schweiger and Visvizi has summarised 'the mixed success' of the EU integration 'overshadowed by a lack of socially balanced growth' which has been 'enhancing dependent development' and producing 'persistent gap between the wage levels'. Conversely, 'The region is consequently considered to be an economically dependent periphery, which is very volatile to external shocks…At the same dependent growth as an externally financed low-wage economic periphery…in the EU has also resulted in the persistent peripheral position of the region in social terms, with high levels of inequality, abject poverty and young worker emigration prominent features across the region' (Schweiger and Visvizi, 2018: 208–209). This political economy of transition (as the editors argue) has remained a neglected field for a long time, since European Studies

5 In ECE there have been many efforts to overview to region-specific crisis, covering all five countries, see e.g. the special issue of *Problems of Post-Communism*, (Vol. 63, Nos 5–6). Especially, there has been a wide literature on the V4 as a regionalisation process.

have developed 'little concern for the CEE interests and perspectives', although a more profound research is needed to explore the reasons behind the recent political developments. Therefore, the 'voices from the East need to be listened to when Berlin and Paris try to rebuild the EU'. Namely, 'This also requires that, both in political discourse and in future academic research, more attention is given to the full complexity of the political, economic and social reasons behind the trend towards authoritarian backsliding in the region.' It is a strong message, indeed, since 'A viable future of the EU cannot be built without the Central Eastern Europeans' (Schweiger and Visvizi 2018: 211).

In fact, in the institutional cycles of Barroso I. and II. Commission the EU was deeply involved in the direct crisis management, and the entering Juncker Commission as well only focused on the reform of the EU in general and its Core in particular. The strategic horizon of the EU has widened since the mid-2010s, and the new strategic area has been entitled *Monitoring convergence in the European Union*. By 2018 it became evident that such marked differences of the socio-economic developments within the EU were unlikely to be sustainable. Along this line, in December 2018 the *Eurofound* published an icebreaking document entitled *Upward convergence in the EU*. It elaborated the paradigmatic shift from cohesion to convergence, and it largely documented the converging and diverging tendencies on the socio-economic map of the EU. This research document has consciously turned against the dominant tendency of the EU scholarship with the above mentioned 'splendid isolation' between the economic and social analyses in the spirit of Economic Europe, since its main conclusions formulated the social and political consequences of the economic developments. This picture has been completed by another Eurofound document *Living and working in Europe, 2015–2018* (2019) that has provided a large overview of the socio-economic situation in the EU, not only supporting the former document with a more detailed social map, but also indicating the opportunities for a breakthrough towards the genuine upward convergence. Again, it is better late than never.

In these EU research documents the focus has moved from the 'nominal' basic economic convergence to the comprehensive 'real' social convergence. This paradigm shift from cohesion to convergence is so important that it needs a closer presentation from this icebreaking document, first of all emphasising its 'revolutionary' character in EU thinking: 'while the concept of economic convergence is embedded in the European treaties and has been at the forefront of European policy discussion for some time, the importance of upward social convergence has only recently gained traction. Central to the current debate is the need to foster socioeconomic convergence at all levels; there exists a shared conviction that the future of the EU lies in preserving diversity but correcting possible asymmetries while moving closer together. In this regard, supporting upward convergence among Member States in socioeconomic outcomes is the

ultimate goal of the European Pillar of Social Rights and is central to the discussion on reforming the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)' (Eurofound 2018: 1).[6]

Thus, the whole problem lies in the deep contradiction between the EU mission of convergence on one side, and its abstract functionalism with the magic of the positive spill-overs on the other. Namely, 'the full history of the concept of convergence in the EU can be found in the origins of the European project' that has been confronted in practice with the over-generalised trickling down effect of the economic growth on the other. Actually, instead of empowerment of the new member states (according to the logic of automatic upward convergence represented by the officialdom), the accession process has resulted in their disempowerment and in an extremely uneven development. It has been according to the logic of the negative externalities of the EU and to the huge competitiveness advantage of the core states: 'While market integration tends to bind Member States together and can potentially increase living standards in all participating countries, it by no means guarantees convergence in their performance. Some wealthier Member States or regions may benefit more than others from the process of integration – in part due to the effects of specialisation and of centre–periphery dichotomies' (Eurofound 2018: 5). In fact, abstract, general rules of competition have been working in favour of the more developed states and creating ever deeper division between the member states.

This Eurofound research document has pointed out that the global crisis has brought a turning point in this process, and it has concluded that 'the 2008 financial crisis halted or even reversed some of these converging trends, leading to dramatic social and economic divergence between countries'. Hence, the 'consequences of divergence between Member States are potentially grave. Economic divergence undermines the promise of shared economic prosperity, which was central to the creation of the EU in the first place… Such marked differences are unlikely to be sustainable' (Eurofound 2018: 5, 7). The evident conclusion of this EU document is that (for overcoming the uneven and divergent development) the EU needs a strategy to implement upward convergence, and not only in words but also in deeds: 'It is a legitimate expectation of Member States and their citizens that the EU supports them to reach various economic and social objectives. If only a few countries benefit from the single market and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the EU ceases to be a union and risks fragmentation. If there is a feeling that the single market impedes the growth of Member States and prevents low-income countries from developing,

6 The idea of upward convergence formed part of Juncker's agenda (EEAS 2014), accompanied later by the series of 'reflection papers', but the concept of economic and social convergence was only elaborated on in the late 2010s.

efforts will be made to undermine its functioning (Andor 2017)' (Eurofound 2018: 5).[7]

In the spirit of the Eurofound 'convergence' documents, the European Policy Centre (EPC) has presented the description of *Fragmented* Europe: 'there are structural differences among the EU27 – divergences between North-South, East-West, older-younger member states, euro and non-euro countries (...) These divisions do not only affect political elites in national capitals, but also societies as a whole'. Further elaborating this criticism, it has pointed out that Fragmented Europe has produced deep social polarisation with a 'high degree of economic divergence and rising inequalities' and a 'widening economic gap between and within EU countries', to the extent that *horribile dictu* 'it seems as if Europeans are almost living on different planets'. The global crisis management of the EU has deepened the Core-Periphery Divide by the prioritising the Core and the 'market', representing Economic Europe in general. Therefore, in this Core-oriented Fragmented Europe the populists 'are successful when they can tap into people's grievances and fears about the future, when the citizens are deeply frustrated with those who have been in power, and when they are dissatisfied with the existing state of representative democracy'. Consequently, it is not enough to have a theoretical discussion with the neopopulism in the EU, but it is necessary to solve the basic problems leading to the increasing fragmentation. The EPC document, summarising the EU experiences at the end of the Juncker Commission, has suggested further federalisation without a preference for 'core Europe' in order to 'counter the sources of fragmentation and polarisation' (Emmanouilidis 2018: 17, 20).[8]

No wonder the recent systematic overview of Europeanisation and Democratisation (*Europeanization Revisited* (Matlak et al. 2018)) has concluded in the *Introduction* that 'the earlier literature studied Europeanization as a process with a uniquely positive direction and outcome. (...) Negative Europeanization or "de-Europeanization" appeared irrelevant', although 'the adjustment to the EU economic model required many invisible changes that were suboptimal for transition countries'. This impressive volume calls the alternative term for the critical analysis of the negative side-effects 'invisible Europeanization'. It notes that the new member states right after accession 'were willing to adopt EU policies indiscriminately – and remained relatively insensitive to the potential costs' (Wozniakowski et al. 2018: 10, 15). Hence, in first fifteen years of the EU membership the EU negative externalities (caused by the unfair competition between

7 This document refers to the concept of László Andor (2017), the former Commissioner of Social Affairs, who elaborated and urged the implementation of the upward convergence strategy in 2013, see recently Andor (2019) and Intereconomics (2019).

8 In European Studies there have been some other similar efforts, first of all in the big policy institutes, also beyond EPC, e.g. in CEPS and Bruegel, that I have presented in my 'parallel' paper about the Rocky Road of ECE (Ágh 2019d).

stronger and weaker member states) were not compensated or balanced by the cohesion policy. Just to the contrary, this huge distance among the member states has increased socially, resulting in the deep polarisation between winners and losers, the educated and low skilled strata in the new member states. The rules of competition have been 'misleadingly' equal, therefore the 'contradiction of economic Europeanization (...) namely that EU policies and regulatory models have been mostly created by and for advanced capitalist economies and thus might lead to suboptimal (or at least unanticipated) outcomes for transition countries'. Therefore, as another chapter of the *Europeanization Revisited* volume points out, the negative externalities have been strongly hitting the ECE economies because the EU 'has exercised remarkable control over the economic transformation in ECE' (Bohle and Jacoby 2018: 92, 95) that can be seen most directly and radically at the emerging neoliberal hybrid in the nineties.[9]

The emerging neoliberal hybrid as the childhood disease of ECE

The neoliberal hybrid, emerging in the nineties, has basically developed the same features in all ECE countries, and these common features have been strengthened and ossified by EU membership. Its specific socio-economic structure has had some important changes in this turbulent period, but its essence has been kept despite these changes and the countries' varieties. The antidemocratic and 'anti-European' merger of economic and political interests leading step by step to oligarchisation has gone through the entire historical trajectory of ECE in the last thirty years, and especially in the last fifteen years. The conditionalities of EU accession have been set by the Copenhagen criteria (1993) in which democracy and market economy are the main principles, and supposedly they support each other automatically. However, the opposite case has happened from the very beginning, since due to the merger of the economic and political elites and following the logic of the negative spill-over, the perverse market economy has also distorted the democracy. Actually, the Copenhagen criteria are too general and too abstract for any real development program. This short document has been based on the Western fallacy that the virtual new member states are substantially (West) European who can reach the Western situation rapidly. It does not contain any specific regional program for catching up with the old member states as the long and painful Copenhagen learning process of the EU clearly demonstrates. The basic mistake is that, while the former enlargements in the South embraced a relatively Europeanised society, the new Eastern member states were historically on the periphery of European

9 This issue has also been described in the wider international democratisation literature, see e.g. Krastev and Holmes (2018) criticising the forced 'imitation' of the West in the 'East' that later provoked a political backlash, and in the last years not only damaging but ruining democracy.

development and, moreover, were isolated from Western development after WWII for a half century.[10]

Thus, for the discovery of the intrinsic structural problems in ECE, it is necessary to return to the 'original sin' in the early nineties. The entry to the process of the Euro-Atlantic integration was a big achievement, a real historical turning point, but the new 'Europeanised' system was borne with a serious childhood disease. It has accompanied the entire ECE historical trajectory in different ways and through several stages of neoliberal transformations. There has been a massive literature describing the sunny side of the Europeanisation process that is shockingly misleading because without presenting and analysing the shadowy side of this process the present dire crisis cannot be understood. In the EU leadership, Western public opinion and European Studies there has been a contrast of basically positive official reports and the indignation or outcry of the ECE populations about the present ECE situation. Even looking later at the contradictions between the previous dominant optimistic views and the naked recent political reality, the first EU reactions, rather strangely, have considered the present ECE political regimes as temporary aberrations masterminded by some 'bad guys' and not as the product of three decades of controversial development. This superficial approach would and could also prevent any solution of this divergence by re-democratisation, since what was considered a transitory phenomenon has proven to be a standard basic feature of the new social and political systems. So, without the exploratory analysis of the original neoliberal hybrid, the present situation (and the divergence of ECE from the EU mainstream) cannot be understood.

Still, thirty years after systemic change and fifteen years after accession, the re-assessment process has begun. The negative externalities of EU membership have sparked intensive debate in ECE, mostly by the incoming young generation, which is not Eurosceptic but wants to paint a more realistic picture about Europeanisation and Democratisation. The European Studies still carry an overload of taboos from the previous generation, inherited from the early systemic change about the necessity of the radical transformations (taking shape in the form of the emerging neoliberal hybrid) as a necessary price for a bright future. Therefore, the brief presentation of the transformation crisis of the nineties is needed to explain the built-in contradiction of EU membership, since during this big social turmoil the progressive thinkers and politicians were convinced that the deep contradictions of the new society were transitory and would soon disappear automatically. The early recession ended and turned to economic

10 As Tomáš Valášek (2019), the Director of the Carnegie Europe think tank notes, 'both parties underestimated just how different the 2004 enlargement process would be from the previous rounds. In the past, enlargement was mainly about bringing in countries from the same Western political bloc'.

growth in the late nineties, indeed, but these contradictions stayed and deepened and which became evident in the 2000s, in the pre-accession process.

This rather sketchy description of the 'self-colonizing' process in the economic and political systems in NMS, however, can rely on the detailed research on the topic. It has to start with the profound analysis of David Stark (1992, 1996), who was a close observer and expert of the emerging neoliberal hybrid, and follow with the books and papers that describe the entire history of the neoliberal hybrid. In the early nineties Stark was already pointing out that the recombination of the old and new segments took place in the systemic change as the alliance of traditional nativist strata with the incoming multinationals. Decades later Fabry (2019) developed the idea that state capitalism has gone through contemporary ECE history, and it has only changed its forms from the 'state socialist' stage through the neoliberal transformations before finally reaching the current 'authoritarian neoliberalism'. This type of new critical approach succeeds at describing how people for a long time believed in the Western recipes as the shortest pathway to prosperity and freedom before realising their inherent contradictions and intrinsic failure in the long term. Thus, the paradoxes between the bright and dark sides of Europeanisation needs a very sophisticated analysis with recalibration/rebalancing at every stage.

The original problem is that the starting situation of the nineties was meant transitory, since it would supposedly disappear automatically, but the neoliberal hybrid has become the basic feature of the new system. The general picture viewed in retrospect is that there was an idea of 'instant Westernization' to overcome 'the essential divide between the two halves of the continent'. Namely, the key term is the return to 'normality', since 'A liberal revolution of normality was thought to be a leap in time from the dark past to the bright future' (Krastev and Holmes 2018: 122, 126). This controversial period until the late 2000s may be characterised by the lack of innovative ideas, since the systemic change was treated like a 'rectifying revolution' as Habermas (1990a, 1990b) termed it, indicating the return to (Western) normality by the 'historical correction' in East-Central Europe. Therefore, this distorted form of Europeanisation has also been accepted and protected by the progressive forces. Moreover, it has become a taboo in scientific debates and popular discourse, and even questioning the improper Europeanisation has long been considered a major sin for progressists, although this tabooisation has prevented its correction for a long time.

In ECE the West has always been the reference point, but that abstract Western model (as the new critical approach asserts) just needs to be reproduced in different geopolitical contexts. Nevertheless, the repetition of the Western model promised an immediate and radical improvement in the early nineties: 'There was a desire to become "part of Europe" again, but it was only possible to join following the rules set by the West. Democracy came as part of a package that also included precarisation'. The reference to the German case has come up

out of necessity in this new approach, since 'the introduction of a militant neoliberal capitalism that would have been politically unthinkable in west Germany at that time; the alteration of entire living and working environments from one day to the next… all of this has left its mark. All the more so since it radically dampened the optimistic spirit of change, the hopes and the dynamism of the peaceful revolution of 1989' (Kováts and Smejkalova 2019: 1).[11]

The crux of the issue is that EU integration presupposes also domestic integration, but in ECE it generated disintegration between winners and losers on one side, and between the regions of 'West of East' and 'East of East' on the other. The economic price of this social transformation and the integration into free markets, however, were downplayed in the conventional theory and public discourse as a necessary evil of civilisation: 'it just happens to be part of that picture to acknowledge that the West profited from the way in which reunification took place…Both in East-Central Europe and east Germany, the question of who profited from the transition is very similar… Among the political class in Western Europe, there's a prevailing feeling that the East has been nursed for long enough and now just shows a "lack of gratitude". But the profits derived by Western economies from this region of low wages and low taxes often exceed the structural aid paid out by taxpayers several times over, as Thomas Piketty clearly and convincingly demonstrated with regard to the Visegrád Four. This imbalance has certainly been noticed in East-Central Europe. Of course, there are investments of foreign capital in East-Central Europe, but most of the profits are being taken out again' (Kováts and Smejkalova 2019: 2).[12]

The rise of the neoliberal hybrid has been termed a 'self-colonizing' process in the new literature that has also contributed to the better understanding of this controversial Europeanisation, although this concept taken from the developing countries cannot be applied directly to the NMS case. This approach has markedly pointed out that the sweeping modernisation gestures arriving from the West have been mismanaged by the ECE institutions that have been accommodated locally by the similar bricolage: 'All this fostered a controversial nation-building process: one that borrowed models' hand in hand with resistance against the models. Such borrowings were meant to "Europeanise" yet at the same time they stood in the way of actual cultural emancipation as they never failed to recycle the secondary, submissive, and opaque role of small peripheral nations on the world scene, thus failing to acknowledge their sovereignty,

11 It leads to the German case, discussed later: 'The so-called "Treuhand" policy, which entailed an enormous transfer of wealth from east to west through the privatisation of most state enterprises and real estate to west Germans…what happened within Germany applies to East-Central Europe in relation to the European Union.' (Kováts and Smejkalova 2019: 1).

12 In his recent publications for the larger public, Piketty (2018) argues that the increasing East-West Divide is a big challenge for the EU. Piketty's many other shorter-popular publications on the controversial economic role of the EU in the new member states have evoked great resonance in ECE.

authenticity, and autonomy' (Kiossev 2011: 4). At the same time this approach warns about the tension or gap between the formal and informal institutions that may be indicating some important similarities between ECE and developing countries: 'Networks of the premodern, postmodern, and even global kind were functioning underneath, alongside, within, and through them, based on kinship, clanship or friendship solidarity, which sometimes branched out into the diaspora. Behind the official publicity, these networks as quasi-modern communities established another realm – of what anthropologists call "cultural intimacy" – the hidden solidarity of those who systematically exploited both national values and European civilization standards to their own ends. And they did it selfishly, in an opportunistic and hybrid way, thus shaping a resilient image of 'our own', which was both self-ironic and hostile toward others' (Kiossev 2011: 5).

All in all, as these characteristic standpoints formulate with their strong statements: in the EU accession there was no real recognition or actual empowerment of the ECE or NMS countries as genuine actors within the EU. These countries were extremely weak and vulnerable in the power vacuum of the nineties to control the changes in their own homeland, therefore they became dependent on the multinationals based on their marriage with the emerging local 'comprador' political class. Hence the participation of these countries in the EU decision making and its transnational bodies was (and still is) limited as formal-legal, but not yet effective-active members of the EU. Europeanisation through the adaptation to the neoliberal hybrid imposed upon them not only disadvantageous economic models but also perverse social structures, resulting in the increasing social disintegration and the rise of authoritarian populist politics. The drift to authoritarianism was already pre-programed in the initial neoliberal model because it involved a deep socio-economic and political polarisation process that generated a widespread social frustration. Therefore, a large part of the population lost faith step by step in this naively optimistic and misleadingly simplistic Europeanisation scenario and developed a desire for a genuine Europeanisation with redemocratisation.

The neoliberal hybrid in the recent authoritarian period

The NMS-type of neoliberal hybrid has reached its climax in the recent authoritarian period in which we have been witnessing 'The Third Wave of Autocratization' as a reverse wave after the often mentioned Third Wave of Democratization (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019 and Youngs et al. 2019). The 2010s may be characterised in NMS by the crony capitalism and systemic corruption combined with authoritarian rule. The multinationals representing the 'liberal' economic world order have made a mixed marriage, as their 'shared sovereignty' with the nativist political class and/or local oligarchs representing the 'illiberal'

democracy in the domestic political order. This will be presented mostly in the ECE case, in which there has been a strong merger of multinationals with the domestic political elite producing the overheated nativism or identity politics that has become the self-styled ideology of the illiberal counterrevolution with extreme right colours. The seminal research paper in this field (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019) has mentioned Poland and Hungary as eminent cases in this authoritarian trend. All in all, due to the global authoritarian turn, and especially in NMS, the 'autocratization' has become an 'emerging research field' in political science (Tóth 2019 and Daly 2019, see also the summary of the recent debate in Youngs et al. 2019).[13]

It is too well-known that Western investments have supported the economic growth and triggered a modernisation effect. No doubt that despite the repatriation of the large part of the profit, the increasing activity of these foreign multinationals in this controversial situation has still kept some positive features. Thus, in an abstract, over-generalised approach, the growing participation of Western multinationals is advantageous in many ways. The multinationals integrate the domestic economy into the most developed part of the world economy since they also introduce modern production processes. Nonetheless, at the current level of socio-economic development the negative effects of neoliberal hybrid have prevailed over its positive effects. Above all, this construct of the shared sovereignty has promoted the *quantitative* catching up to some extent, although without a robust economic growth, but it has turned out to be a hindrance to the *qualitative* catching up because it has basically created a low skill / low wage economy that has lowered the level of education system accordingly and prevented the transition to the 'innovation driven' economy. The neoliberal hybrid has been an important factor in distorting the entire social structure for decades because it has polarised society and disintegrated the territory of the country by building the bigger and smaller islands of the 'West of the East' versus the 'East of the East'. In general, the Europeanisation through the neoliberal hybrid has recreated the long term historical external dependence with this low wage / low skill type of semi-peripheral development, at a higher level and in a 'modern' form. While in the West the social investment has figured more and more as the main driver of the economic development (see recently Hemerijck and Santini, 2019), in the 'East' the critical revision of cohesion policy has been high on the agenda (Gorzelak 2019) and the question mark has also been put on that controversial issue in the West, too (Bachtler and Ferry 2019).[14]

13 This autocratisation has been deeply embedded not only in NMS (see Cianetti et al. 2018), but also in the global trend of declining democracies (see e.g. Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018) that has been described in the European Studies (see e.g. Michelot 2018, Scharpf 2015, Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2017 and Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2019).

14 The set of Tables in Ágh, 2019b includes also the data about the missing qualitative catching up, see e.g. the R & D figures in ECE (Table 2/III.), which are regularly well below the EU average.

In the last years the controversial effects of Europeanisation, including the 'red carpet' treatment of huge foreign investors by the ECE governments, has become a frequent topic in the international press and the public discourse. Parallel with the 'heavy artillery' of the international scientific literature about ECE, the 'light cavalry' of the wide blog literature has also appeared as the popular resistance among the young intellectuals. The young generation has initiated a debate about the role of the EU in general and its economic policy in particular, discussing this ECE divergence from mainstream developments. Moreover, the transition between the two EU institutional cycles has provoked a large debate in ECE about the reasons for the EU's long-lasting tolerance versus the brutal violation of rule of law in some new member states. Basically, it has been a regional issue in ECE, not exclusively but prominently in Poland and Hungary. In the 2010s Hungary has turned out to be the worst case scenario of the neoliberal hybrid in ECE, where the foreign economic participation is heavily associated with the authoritarian populism and representing a special quality within the ECE neoliberal hybrid (see recently Antal 2019). Namely, this neoliberal hybrid has been organised in all ECE countries as more or less a partial and spontaneous process, but in Hungary in the period of authoritarian populism it has been a conscious, well-planned and holistic process systematically embracing the whole society. No wonder the Hungarian case has lately been high on the agenda of both the European studies and in the EU public discourse as 'the unholy alliance' between the multinationals and the incumbent Hungarian government: 'Viktor Orbán, who always claims to be defending Hungarian sovereignty against one enemy or another, exercises "shared sovereignty" with Audi, BMW and Mercedes' (Kováts and Smejkalova 2019: 3).[15]

Focusing on the ECE regional features, Zoltán Pogátsa and Adam Fabry (2019) have argued that the Visegrád countries constitute Germany's economic hinterland: 'Since its Eastern enlargement beginning in 2004, the European Union has integrated countries with almost no welfare states, weak trade unions, and labour market conditions heavily tilted in favour of capital…Since 1989, German capital has invested heavily in these countries because of their geographical proximity to core European states, extremely weak trade unions, and relatively low labour costs (currently, wages in the Visegrád countries are one-quarter of German levels).' In this new critical approach Hungary has also been presented as the worst case where the common regional features have appeared in the sharpest form: 'One extreme example of this phenomenon is Hungary, today ruled by authoritarian, ethnic-chauvinist premier Viktor Orbán. His government combines paleo-conservative nationalism with neo-

15 Hungary in the latest Rule of Law Index (WJP, 2019) is by far the worst case in ECE, beyond WJP see also Fund for Piece (2019). Yet, the violations of rule of law cannot be reduced to the Hungarian story, for the advanced study of rule of law violations in NMS see Bogdandy and Sonnevend (2015) and Jakab and Lőrincz (2017), Buras (2019), Carrera et al. (2013) and recently e.g. Michelot (2019).

liberal economic policies undermining workers' conditions.' It is at the same time the discovery of the false argument behind the nativist ideology of all authoritarian regimes in ECE, since 'In addition, Prime Minister Orbán, who frequently publicly rails against German "economic colonization," has given German corporations (from Audi to Mercedes and BMW and beyond) more direct government subsidies than any other previous Hungarian government. He has also signed 'strategic partnerships' with multinational corporations, such as Coca-Cola, General Electric, and Microsoft, the contents of which have been declared a state secret' (Pogátsa and Fabry 2019: 2).

Of course, there has been a wide range of multinationals well beyond Germany, yet the predominance of the German multinationals is clear in ECE. They have been by far the most active partners in this 'shared sovereignty', therefore the presentation of this complicated dependence network in the new critical literature focuses on the ECE relationship with Germany. This merger of German economic giants and the ECE political class has been confirmed for instance by the special correspondents of *Deutsche Welle* in impressive detail through several articles and reports both about the common ECE case and the versions that come from each country within the region. The key issue is that ECE has become an attractive location for German carmakers which have pumped huge investments into the East-Central European countries over the past decades. For the investors, it is important that they get tax incentives and a pool of well--trained workers; in addition, the German carmakers enjoy special protection in ECE, as Stephan Ozsvath (2019) argues. This 'shared sovereignty' means that the external economic dependence is the interest of the domestic political class not just by the foreign investments, but first of all getting the political protection through the multinationals from their governments concerned as a shield against the disciplining effects of the EU.[16]

However, Daniel Hegedűs (2019) has argued that this process has been counterproductive for Germany and it cannot be kept any longer, since (although it may be suitable for the German multinationals in the short term) it does harm to the German 'Eastern policy'. He departs from the statement that this region is part of the wider German *geoeconomic* space, the German-ECE manufacturing core, thus the ECE countries are the direct *geopolitical* neighbourhood of Germany. Obviously, the pre-eminence of the geoeconomic approach is the central characteristic of German foreign policy overall, since Germany has invested enormous resources to protect Germany's core geopolitical interests in the region. Despite the dominance of the particular geoeconomic interests,

16 As Ozsvath (2019) points out about the relationship of foreign multinationals and the ECE governments that 'They're exempt from the government's propaganda campaigns against major foreign investors. The most important condition: they must not get in the way of the Hungarian government and the interests of its oligarchs.' About the long series in Deutsche Welle see the references in this Ozsvath article.

Germany was able to pursue its general geopolitical interest for the first decades, but this changed in the crisis period after 2008. As Hegedűs points out, the global crisis further increased the 'economization' of German foreign policy, which took centre stage and had clear primacy in the decision-making over the compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria of democracy, rule of law and human rights. This shift opened the way for conscious autocratisation strategies by ECE elites that wanted to get rid of any checks and balances that could constrain their power and benefit from corruption. Thus, the deepening geo-economisation has turned away from enforcing democratic rules and values in the ECE region, therefore Germany has failed to deal adequately with long--term non-compliance with democratic values in ECE.[17]

In short, the geopolitical dimension of German engagement has faded away and a geoeconomic approach has become dominant. However, the challenge of 'illiberal democracy' in ECE has posed a threat to German geopolitical interests because Germany has not been ready to counter the erosion of European values in neighbouring countries as Russia and China start to gain greater influence in the region. Following the argumentation of Hegedűs: the internal developments and external actors are undermining the democratic stability in the ECE countries and their cohesion with the EU, although both are the key to German geopolitical interests in ECE. In such a way, the geoeconomic approach has been the source of a major rupture, since it has contributed to the overall crisis of Germany's role as 'normative power' in the political sense. The re-politicisation of Germany's strategic approach toward the ECE countries appears to be inevitable, as a self-critical reflection on past failures. Hegedűs concludes that the German policy stakeholders should draw two important lessons. *First*, the existence of stable, liberal democratic regimes and pro-European governments in the ECE countries best serves Germany's strategic interests because it is an important issue of regional stability and security. *Second*, Germany's political and business spheres need to understand that their interests in the medium and long term are not guaranteed but threatened by these illiberal regimes. If Germany acts strategically, it could use the geoeconomic ties to the ECE countries to ensure their compliance with its geopolitical interest, instead of abandoning geopolitics in favour of short-term (and short-sighted) 'geoeconomics'.[18]

This argumentation is a good illustration of the process I have introduced above: Economic Europe has defeated Political Europe. It has been described

17 The concept of Kundnani (2011, 2019) on the contrast between geo-economic and geo-political interests plays a big role in the argumentation of Hegedűs.

18 On 19 August 2019 Angela Merkel and Viktor Orbán had an official meeting in Sopron (Hungary). After the stormy period between the EPP and Fidesz Merkel had actually no critical remark on the violations of the EU rules and values by the Hungarian government. Instead, her statement was filled with empty rhetoric: 'Let us continue on the path of freedom, democracy and unity' (see Kovács 2019), which caused deep disappointment in Hungarian democratic public opinion. Economic Europe has defeated Political Europe, again.

in Hegedűs' paper as some kind of German paradox between the short term geoeconomic and long term geopolitical interests. In my view, the recent stage of the complicated relationships between the EU Core and the ECE region can be characterised by the Juncker Paradox (Ágh 2019a: 217–219). At the EU level, the Juncker Commission had to cope with the 'polycrisis', with the multitude of problems threatening the global competitiveness of the Core. The Juncker Commission prepared a reform program, which focused upon these 'core issues' by marginalising all other issues, including the crisis management of the 'East'. My thesis is that paradoxically this benign neglect by the EU has caused more problems than it has solved, since the neglect has deepened the Core-Periphery Divide to a great extent. The ECE development has derailed from the main road, since the selfish and short term-type Economic Europe (represented in this case by the above discussed multinationals) has very soundly defeated the normative and long term-type Political Europe in ECE, and downgraded Cohesive--Converging Europe to a rhetorical device. Yet, it is still crucial to distinguish between the need for recognition of the specificity of the ECE region in order to elaborate a proper strategy for its 'upward convergence' and the present permissive tolerance of the EU authorities towards the autocratic regimes in ECE. The correction of the EU's long term neglect of ECE's specific problems should not mean that the EU has to accept and tolerate these autocratic regimes, for which the mantra about the regional specificity is just an occasion to concoct an ideology for their own self-legitimacy.

The key issue is that there has been an unsuccessful 'cultural war' in the EU against the neopopulist movements, rhetorically confronting the authoritarian governments within the EU. Nevertheless, despite the repeated political declarations, neopopulism is thriving in ECE because the abstract verbal arguments against the neopopulism will not convince the ECE population suffering from deep social frustrations. The increasing socio-economic disintegration in ECE has been generating the decline of democratic political order and the fatal weakening of democratic pro-EU actors. So the authoritarian neopopulism will not disappear due to the theoretical arguments and diplomatic rhetoric, or at most by the half-made measures of the EU authorities. Concrete actions are needed for the 'upward convergence' to overcoming the ECE socio-economic crisis that has raised this nativist movement and triggered political backlash putting these 'illiberal' regimes in power. This is why the young generation views the EU cohesion policy with its empty rhetoric about populism with dissatisfaction and, for some, even boredom. The experts point out that abstract arguments against the emerging neopopulism often do more harm than good (see Andor 2019). Indeed, these arguments have only been producing an abstract dichotomy between federalists and sovereigntists, or between liberals and populists. Instead, one has to grasp the underlying socio-economic causes of populism resulting in the self-colonisation of the ECE elites.

The democratic actors in ECE emphasise the need for the radical change in the EU strategy, not in words but by deeds: 'So in the struggle against the populists, we need a discussion about power – instead of morality and abstract values: the power of the market over politics, the West over the East, the centres over the peripheries. This conflict also takes place within the states of East-Central Europe, and it's tearing them apart: they have their own wealthier, liberal centres that caught up to the West and feel they're equals'. Furthermore, there has been some condescending talk about the peripheral regions that have been left behind and where (given the huge gap between the 'institutionalization' and 'socialization') 'European values' have not yet been internalised. Therefore, the democratic actors consider the EU mantra about the dichotomy between 'pro--Europeans' and 'Eurosceptics' to also be counterproductive. The main fault-line runs between the winners and losers in ECE, and between their prosperous centres and peripheral regions, since large parts of ECE have been left behind both materially and symbolically, and this leads to social disintegration and identity politics. Some concerned authors end up with an angry conclusion that 'We were, are and remain on the periphery, and cannot really catch up with the West materially, and are not treated as equals by the West. East-Central Europeans remain "second-class citizens"' (Kováts and Smejkalova 2019: 4).

Conclusion: the opportunity for the recognition of the ECE region

The change of the EU institutional cycles in 2019 have activated the debate about the EU role in the ECE development in general and about the ECE neoliberal hybrid in particular. In this conceptual framework 'the betrayal of the intelligentsia' has also been discussed from different angles, by different generations and with different intensity. It has become clear that the initial conventional wisdom on the good start and the linear development of Europeanisation and Democratisation has been false and self-cheating since the ECE development has derailed and deviated from the Western Road from the very beginning. Although the evaporation of the conventional wisdom as the Western fallacy may be described from several sides, it leads to the same basic conclusions about the following shortcomings:

(1) The lack of recognition of the ECE specificity (the long term deficiency of the Eastern enlargement in general) has led to the Juncker Paradox with its counterproductive effects. Both the virtuous and vicious circles have worked in ECE, but the disintegrative factors have got the upper hand more and more, thus the magic of trickling down with its over-generalised convergence effect has only been an ideological device of neoliberalism. The strategic priorities focusing on the idea of GDP-based economic growth have been a fake program, serving only to reach the 'past' of developed countries instead of turning to the

innovation driven economy as the 'future' of the EU with social investment and well-being as a contrast between quantitative and qualitative catching-up.

(2) With the recent authoritarian brand of neoliberal hybrid, after the era of the external Easternisation under Soviet rule that of 'the internal Easternisation' has come. The authoritarian systems usually rely on the three pillars of legitimacy, repression and co-optation, and the ECE version has become very sophisticated to hide the authoritarian content behind democratic scenery. *First*, the particular ECE version has a democratic façade for legitimacy combined with a soft dictatorship through the media. *Second*, they have elaborated a complex system of the indirect form of repression by paralyzing the institutions of 'checks and balances'. *Third*, there has been a partial co-optation of society through the political integration, supported by the combined devices of the state-controlled redistribution of income, privileged public services and special socio-political career opportunities. Thus, on one side, for both international and domestic reasons (due to the legitimacy given by the EU membership and the widespread control of the popular mind by the media's soft power) the repression is highly sophisticated. It is almost invisible and usually hardly perceived by the population, since it has been practiced by seemingly democratic institutions with democratic slogans and demagoguery. Nevertheless, on the other side, the co-optation by the radical socio-political polarisation of the society from above is very much visible and felt by the population as the widening gap between the winners and losers, and also through the increasingly luxurious consumption habits of the politico-business oligarchs and moguls.

(3) At the beginning of the new EU cycle the ECE region is nowadays in the waiting room, at the same time the region is under the pressure of the domestic social and political upheaval due to the widespread frustration of the populations. The robustness of crisis is already very big, if no radical steps will be taken, then it will trigger a process of dramatic changes and the deep-seated fault-line between the winners and losers will be widened. The new political class has been favoured and protected by the authoritarian regime as its social support and is directed strictly from above by the authoritarian elite. The activity of this new political class has been closely coordinated within the system of the shared sovereignty with the Western multinationals and it has turned gradually into the 'normal' workings of society. This unholy alliance keeps and ossifies the peripheral situation and will rise inimical feelings in ECE against the Economic Europe, particularly against Germany. Paradoxically, the authoritarian political elite makes deals with the Western multinationals for business and protection, at the same time it needs and creates Western enemies (Brussels and the 'liberals') to maintain its rule by the soft power of hatred against aliens. The vicious circle will only be broken if the large majority realises that this split in society between the common people and the political class has been based on the neoliberal hybrid with the combined power of the authoritarian elite

politically and the multinationals economically that has to be defeated for the recognition and empowerment of the ECE countries in the EU.

(4) In this historical moment the main task of the ECE progressive intellectuals is the serious self-criticism for looking back, and the wise EU criticism for looking forward. Above all, it has to be pointed out that nowadays the biggest threat is the depopulation of ECE, since the mass exodus of the energetic and talented young people diminishes the chances of the ECE countries for the above mentioned 'future' scenario of knowledge economy in order to make the historical correction of the fake catching-up process by re-democratisation and re-Europeanisation. The emigration of this significant part of the ECE population threatens not only the qualitative catching-up, but even quantitative by the loss of large mass of educated/skilled manpower. Mass exodus is terrible, it ruins the prospects of the ECE region for a better future, since it means the loss of the most precious achievement in the last decades: the Europeanised youth.

(5) On the EU side, a vigorous revitalisation of the strategic planning has taken place in the period of the Juncker Commission. It has been indicated first by its declared priorities and followed by the reform efforts that have been elaborated upon extensively in theory and in great detail. This new conceptual framework has only been the preparation for the future EU, but without commencing its implementation by the Juncker Commission. Moreover, it has been watered down from time to time in the official documents and in the rhetoric of EU leaders. Still, the new strategy offers a big historical opportunity for the next institutional cycle of the Leyden Commission. This big opportunity can also open the recognition and empowerment for the ECE region as the first step that has to be followed by the second step as the implementation of region-specific reforms in ECE.

(6) The final point in the Conclusion is that at the start of the new institutional cycle the EU has two options: delaying or doing. It can opt for the *neutralisation* of the ECE crisis by pseudo-activity or for the *activation* of its particular reform program by concrete steps on both socio-economic and legal-political fields in the spirit of Cohesive-Converging Europe. It can build new formal institutions as special committees dealing with the ECE decline in long discussions and by killing all propositions in the phase of the Council bodies, or doing real crisis management in the spirit of the dominance of Political Europe over the Economic Europe that has to be the main road for the EU further developments anyway.

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The New Foreign-Policy Pendulum: Geopolitical Codes of German Foreign Policy in the Post-bipolar World Order

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"Geopolitics is a problematic term, especially when it is used with respect to Germany"

(Lacoste 1990).

Abstract: *This article deals with the question of how German foreign policy can be characterized from a geopolitical perspective in an era in which the constellation of world politics is undergoing change, as evidenced by the conflict in Ukraine, shift in US foreign policy under President Trump and the on-going Brexit negotiations. In order to identify changes in the geopolitical orientation of German foreign policy and sketch a profile of German foreign policy, the article includes official German government documents. It can be concluded from the study that the geopolitical codes of German foreign policy are of a varying character, and can be characterized into three geopolitical spatial structures: the Atlantic, European and Eurasian regions. In terms of the geopolitical orientation of German foreign policy, the Federal Government develops German strategy in a multipolar world system, in which it aims to turn Europe into a world power. While the continued existence of NATO remains a goal of German foreign policy, the Federal Government, in unison with France, seeks a multipolar world order, in which Germany and France assume leading roles within the European spatial structure, and are liberated from US supremacy in the transatlantic spatial structure.*

Keywords: ***Geopolitical Codes; German Foreign Policy; Foreign-Policy Pendulum***

Introduction

Following the end of the East-West conflict, a world political situation has arisen that has not yet found its structure and thus carries an indeterminate character. With regard to the spatial-political developments of the world order following the end of the East-West conflict, the global political situation changed, and numerous international conflicts arose that pose new challenges for the international community at large, and for Germany, in particular, due to its historical and geographical situation. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, the intensification of the Syrian civil war, the escalation in the conflict in Ukraine, enduring chaos in the Middle East, the emergence of the Islamic State, the looming crisis in the EU following the Brexit vote, it is evident that the dynamics of the world order are beginning to change (ibid.). In large part due to events listed above, the geopolitical world order is in a state of transition. This geopolitical shift in the order of states that comprise the global system has an impact on German foreign policy and demands that German foreign policy (Hellmann 2004) appropriately adjust to face the new challenges (Hellmann 2015; Maull 2014a, and 2014b; Hacke 2012; Masala 2008). Accordingly, demanded a reassessment of the geopolitical codes and geopolitical orientations that have been central to German foreign policy is necessary (Oßenbrügge and Scholvin; 2013 Schwarz 2005; Brill 1994a; Maull 2011; Hellmann 2006). Following these shifts in geopolitical structures, German foreign policy should match its central position in the 'hot spots' of world politics (Stürmer 2006) – structurally between the Westphalian state system and the postmodern Statehood (Boesler 1997), geographically between the Euro-Eurasian landmass and the Euro-Transatlantic area (Meyer 2014), and temporally between the certainties of the bipolar world order and the uncertainties of an indefinite post-bipolar order. (Stürmer 2006). Germany is currently geographically in the midst of these geopolitical contradictions within the context of the European Union. However, 21st-century Germany, with its postmodern and liberal character within the EU, aspires to overcome power politics and lead the world into a new era of international order based on laws and institutions. Thus arises the question of what happens when Germany or the EU is challenged by major powers or by a traditional power such as Russia, which tends to practice the old power politics of the 19th and 20th centuries, as evidenced in the crisis in Ukraine and the Syrian civil war. Germany may be poorly prepared to respond to a conflict that it has to this point not expected. His postmodern and liberal foreign policy toolset is not designed to deal with more traditional geopolitical challenges.

Geopoliticians, political scientists, and German foreign policymakers often debate the direction that German foreign policy is to develop in to best face the new geopolitical situation and geopolitical structures of relations. Therefore, the present article deals with the following crucial question: how have geopolitical

codes been modeled in German foreign policy? The aim of this study is to show how geopolitical thinking, at once, relates to *"spatiality"*, namely, the influence of space on foreign policy but also to *"temporality"*, including the historical developments for German foreign policy that are systematically reflected. The article focuses specifically on German foreign policy from 2013 to 2018. Against this background, the present article presents a geopolitical survey of geopolitical codes in German foreign policy in relation to the Atlantic, European and Eurasian spaces a structural analysis perspective. The guiding thesis contends that the geopolitical codes in German foreign policy prior to reunification were shaped and predetermined in a specific spatial-political structure between East and West. After the end of the East-West conflict, however, they remain underdetermined in an open and indefinite post-bipolar world. Within the framework of the structural-geopolitical approach, the geopolitical codes of German foreign policy from 2013 until 2018 are discussed in relation to the three geopolitical spatial structures – the European, the Transatlantic and the Eurasian areas. This question is aimed at how geopolitics and politically, spatial thinking demand a strategic change of course or a new orientation for German foreign policy after reunification, and how German foreign policy can be characterized by space-related factors.

This article, following the introductory section, will deal with the theoretical foundations in its second section. First of all, the most important theories of International Relations, namely Realism and Liberalism, are explained in greater detail in order to specify these constants and to establish a connection to a structural geopolitics. The two approaches contain elements that, when combined, develop the argument for geopolitical code and an understanding of German foreign policy actions. Subsequently, the basic concept of *"geopolitical code"* is used as a basic pattern of German foreign policy to explain the development of German foreign policy. The influence of geography on German foreign policy after the reunification of Germany is described by geopoliticians as one of the most important factors to German foreign policy. Therefore, in the second section, studies and relevant approaches are presented, that in differing ways have dealt with the influence of space on the development of German foreign policy. In the next section, a short description of the development of German foreign policy from 2013 to 2018 will be provided and systematically explained. To answer the question of how the geopolitical visions of German foreign policy and its structures are modeled depends upon how they are geopolitically coded. Therefore, the ideas and concepts of geopolitical thinkers are classified. Subsequently, to answer the question of the article, behavioral profiles of the three geopolitical spatial structures will be created to show how the geopolitical orientation of German foreign policy has developed. In the final section, the article will explore the legitimacy of these spaces and what role they play in German foreign policy.

Theoretical Framework: Foreign Policy between Realism and Idealism Towards a Geopolitical Code as a Lens for Analysis

Realism is a systematic theory for foreign policy analysis and for understanding international geopolitics. Political realism focuses on a tradition of power politics analysis practiced by states (Morgenthau 1963: 77, and 1977). Realism emphasizes that international politics is based upon state egoism and anarchy, which focuses primarily on power and security. Rationality and state centrism are identified as the core elements of realism (Morgenthau 1977: 80). In order to renew notions of classical realism developed by Morgenthau, Kenneth N. Waltz (1979) coined the term *"structural realism"* presenting it as the most influential form of realism in International Relations. Waltz's notion of structural realism contends that anarchy and the distribution of capabilities are crucial for the behavior of states in the international system. Unlike classical realism, Waltz's theory focuses on the structure of the international system (Waltz 1979: 118). It is the structure of the international system that compels great powers to respect the balance of power. According to Waltz, the international system consists of a structure and cooperating units (Waltz 1979: 80). The international system is organized according to the principle of anarchy and consists of equal units in terms of its coordination. The units are distinguished not by their function, but by their capabilities (Waltz 1996: 54). The distribution of capabilities is not an attribute of the units, but of the system at large. Therefore, the structure of an international system changes with alterations of distribution capabilities (Waltz 1979: 195). Accordingly, the distribution of power determines the structure of the international system (ibid.: 96). In Waltz's view, a state's first concern is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system (Waltz 1996: 54). In this way, Waltz argues that states could restrict their quest for power to maximize their security (Waltz 1979: 16). Contrary to the theory of offensive realism supported by John J. Mearsheimer (2001, and 2005), Waltz has suggested in his theory of defensive realism that maximizing power is not the most rational strategy for a state to increase its security in an anarchic international system. The concept of defensive realism developed by Waltz indicates that, above all else, states pursue strategies to achieve security (ibid.).

In contrast to the theory of realism, theorists of liberalism advocate in line with the fundamental ideas of Immanuel Kant —particularly the concept of *"ewigen Friedens"*—that peaceful coexistence between the states in the international system is possible (Czempiel 1996). Democracy is a crucial core assumption in this theory and, moreover, the pursuit of permanent peacekeeping in the world is at its center. Theorists of liberalism believe that there are prevailing domestic values in democracies, including the rejection of the use of force as a means of political conflict. Therefore, democratic states try to resolve conflicts among themselves (Czempiel 1986: 113; Russett 1993: 35). Liberal theorists ar-

gue that the political culture of democracy should be transferred on and to the international level (Moravcsik 1997). From the liberals' perspective, democratic states can form a common image of confidence at the international level, so that democratic states cooperate in the resolution of international problems for the preservation of peace, and these states set up institutions for this purpose. Compared to neorealism, in which power is at the center of the analysis, the term *"state preferences"* is at the forefront of the analysis of liberalism (Moravcsik 2008). Moravcsik argues that states are likely to be united in making domestic policy choices for their foreign policy preferences, but are constrained in enforcing other's preferences in the international system. Moravcsik theorized that the structure of the international system does not determine the actions of states, but rather the key players are the individuals, organized groups and the social environment. The individuals and social groups are the main actors of international politics and the state is merely the representative of these groups in which their interests are exposed on an international level (Moravcsik 1997, and 2008).

In order to characterize the development tendencies of the geopolitical codes of German foreign policy following reunification, then, the concept of geopolitical codes developed by Peter J. Taylor and Colin Flint to analyze German foreign policy in their spatial relationship structures is used as the present paper's theoretical basis. The concept of geopolitical code was first introduced by John Lewis Gaddis (1982) in his analysis of United States security and policy. From a geopolitical perspective, he argues that geopolitical codes play a crucial role in formulating the foreign policy of a state. He defines geopolitical codes as follows: *"[...] I would suggest that there exist for certain "strategic" or "geopolitical" codes, assumptions about American interests in the world, potential threats to them, and feasible responses, that tend to thereafter*" (Gaddis 1982: ix).

Following Gaddis, Gertjan Dijkink describes geopolitical codes as a map with countries painted in different colours according to their degree of hostility/friendship (Dijkink 1998, 293). Using the concept of Gaddis geopolitical codes, Dijkink developed the term *"Geopolitical Visions"*. From a discourse-theoretical perspective, Dijkink defines the geopolitical visions of a state as follows: *"any idea concerning the relation between one's own and other places, involving feelings of (in) security or (dis) advantage (and / or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy"* (Dijkink 1996: 12).

Similarly, Peter J. Tylor and Colin Flint use the concept of geopolitical codes as a starting point in their approach. For Taylor and Flint, geopolitical codes are *"[...] the set of strategic assumptions that a government makes about other states in forming its foreign policy [...] such operational codes involve evaluation of places beyond the state's boundaries in terms of their strategic importance and as potential threats. Geopolitical codes are not just state-centric; they also involve a particular single state's view of the world. They are by definition, therefore, highly biased pictures of the world*" (Taylor and Flint 2000: 91).

From this point of view, Flint describes geopolitical codes as follows: *"The manner in which a country orientates itself toward the world is called a geopolitical code"* (Flint 2011). In order to study states' international strategies within the international system, they use a suitable analytical concept of geopolitical codes when addressing their geopolitical thinking, referring to the national interests of a country in reference to its geographically relational structures (Taylor and Flint 2000). From their perspective, geopolitical codes are spatial-political orientations of a country focused on foreign policy. Against this backdrop, the analysis of geopolitical codes is a method through which political actors can formulate their foreign policy strategies and interests in regional and global politics with a theoretical basis (Taylor 1993a). By turning to geopolitical codes, Taylor and Flint use a structure-oriented perspective in their analysis of international politics (Flint and Taylor 2007). They assume that the inevitable structure of international politics is generated by the interaction of actors, and that the actions of these actors in this structure are both embedded and restricted (Flint 2011; Taylor 1993a, and 1993b). On the basis of this political-geographical assumption, they address the geopolitical codes of a state on the basis of which its foreign policy paradigm is developed (Taylor and Flint 2000). Taylor and Flint start from a global geopolitical model in which the geopolitical codes of states are formed on three different levels, and their operationalization is characterized by *"a set of Political Geography assumptions"* (Taylor and Flint 2000: 91). Taylor and Flint point to a strong correlation between geopolitical codes and the geopolitical world order. They expressly support the thesis in their work *"Geopolitical World Orders"* that geopolitical codes are the building blocks of the geopolitical world order (Taylor and Flint 2000: 91ff.). Unlike the geopolitical approach developed by Gaddis, which contends that geopolitical codes are not a fixed concept and are changed by governments (Gaddis 1982), Taylor and Flint come up with the following basic thesis: though geopolitical codes tend to be modifiable and changeable, they do not change so quickly and, in principle, have a relatively constant character (Taylor and Flint 2000). With reference to the geopolitical world order, they assume that the change of a state's geopolitical codes occurs gradually and within the limitations of a long historical period referred to as the geopolitical world order (Flint 2011).

Geopolitics and Search for a New German Foreign Policy

The German state is looking for its role as a sovereign state in the new geopolitical world order following reunification (Bruns 1991; Brill 1994a; Baring 1994). In the "New World Order", German foreign policy is no longer under the influence of the West-East geopolitics, but develops under the geopolitical conditions of far-reaching globalization and transnationalization (Hellmann et al. 2007), which are closely related to a global geo-strategy, geo-economy, and globalized

conflicts (Brill 2002, and 2004). The political situation of the united Germany is, in many respects, very different in Europe and in the international system than it had been before reunification (Zimmer 1997). Germany as a sovereign state has returned to the world political stage (Schöllgen 1993; Schwarz 1994).

On the one hand, some geopoliticians and political scientists argue that the new geopolitical situation offers Germany many opportusnities (Brill 1994b), and, on the other hand, some German politicians doubt how foreign policy can be pursued in Germany's new geopolitical position of centrality. From a historical point of view, from the foundation of the German Reich until the end of the Second World War, they had no successful foreign policy built upon this geopolitical position of centrality (Baring 1994). German foreign policy operates in a field of tension between the logic of continuity and a proclivity to change (Risse 2004; Roos 2010, and 2012; Hilz 2017). Above all else, the advocates of continuity in German foreign policy argue for adaptation to changing global political conditions as the needed foreign policy change (Katzenstein 1997; Hengehan 2000). The counter-position assumes that Germany has regained power in the international system after reunification. Critics of continuity in German foreign policy point to a strategic reformulation of German foreign policy. Therefore, the proponents of change in German foreign policy view the new geopolitical situation as a unique opportunity for German foreign policy (Brill 1994b; Zimmer 1997; Sandschneider 2012).

Another perspective emerges from the studies conducted by Randall Newnham, Jonathan Bach and Peters on the new central position and the new direction of German foreign policy. Newnham argues that Germany has transformed itself from a realistic-modern state into a post-modern state. It is characteristic of postmodern Germany that it freely surrenders its sovereignty rights to the supranational organizations, avoids the use of military force and instead relies on values like human rights and democracy instead of geo-strategic interests (Newnham 1999, and 2002). In his study, Newnham also refers to the previously mentioned historical postmodern identity of German foreign policy and poses the question of whether this identity is evolving in an era of changing world politics or is changing due to the new structural shifts in the world order (ibid.). In this context, Bach and Peters discuss that geopolitical thinking is again at the center of German foreign policy when it comes to the new Mittellage. In this new position of centrality, Germany is looking to the future and viewing global politics with as self confidence and maturity (Bach, Peters 2002). In doing so, they pick up an argument from David Harvey: *"Its* [i.e. Germany] *position in the future, however, is not primarily spatial, but reflects the space-time compression of globalization and its subsequent privileging of the temporal over the spatial. In this context, what matters for Germany's understanding of itself and of its ability to project power, is less its position between and among spheres of influence than one that seeks to negotiate flows of influence"* (Bach, Peters 2002: 10).

On the basis of this view —that German foreign policy distances itself from the old geopolitical narratives, which refer to influence politics primarily in the form of direct and indirect exercise of power and control of the territory, the population, and the resources— they advocate for a new discourse of the Mittellage in Germany's foreign policy: *"The new geopolitics intimates the arrival of flows of influences, where Germany is more concerned with seeking international influence through the shaping of norms and supporting its commercial activities than controlling adjacent territory"* (Bach, Peters 2002: 10). From their point of view, it is characteristic of Germany that it no longer sees itself in the new Mittellage, but that Europe takes the place of the middle position (ibid.). In this sense, Philip Gordon argues that the principle of normalization was the basis of German foreign policy in the period from 1945 to reunification. He points out that German foreign policy has become more multilateral, self-confident and more assertive on a global scale than in the past (Gordon 1994). Matthias Zimmer argues that the German position of centrality in the context of today's power constellation is different from earlier historical experiences, because the new German central position is incompatible with the power and security structure of the contemporary world's politics (Zimmer 1997), The new central position points to an increase in the distribution of power and capabilities and to the strengthening of Germany's position of power in the international system and highlights the reintegrated role of Germany as the central power in the middle of Europe. In this role, Germany is once again positioning itself in world politics, redeveloping its foreign policy and opening up new horizons and perspectives for itself (ibid.). Zimmer assumes that German foreign policy is no longer based upon revisionist territorial goals, but on the stabilization of the immediate international environment. As Germany has integrated itself into the Western community of states in a democratic context, it distances itself from the concept of the German's Sonderweg or *"Special Way"* (ibid.).

In his comprehensive study, Hyde-Price investigated the structure of the international system, arguing it changed in different dimensions after the end of the Cold War. In this context, he argues that the unipolar world order has transformed itself militarily, economically and security-politically into a new multilateral world order, and that the new geopolitical order has offered German foreign policy new potential possibilities for change (Hyde-Price 2000). Werner Link also refers to these shifts, and argues that the antagonistic order no longer exists in Europe and that the restrictions on German foreign policy have thus been lifted. In addition, Germany is no longer a frontline state, but a country circled by friendly neighboring countries, most of which are also members of the European Union (Link 2002a, 2002b, and 2002c). The new geopolitical order represents a potential change in German foreign policy (ibid.). Thus, the move from Bonn to Berlin is a symbolic step towards Germany's reestablished position in the middle of Europe (Hyde-Price 2000). Further, Werner Link and

Ralf Roloff observe the change in the structure of the international system, the orientation of globalization (especially in the economic sphere), which poses a challenge for nation-states. In this regard, they argue that German policy should be able to gain influence in the new world order through the regionalization of the economy in the European Union against the US and China (Roloff 2001). Similarly, Josef Janning and Claus Giering emphasize that Germany is a key state in Europe. Many analysts agree that Germany acts as the *"Engine of European Integration"* in the new Mittellage (Janning 2016; Janning and Giering 2002).

The Suppleness Maneuver Discourse of German Foreign Policy from 2013 to 2018

In the Bundestag election of 2013, the CDU / CSU narrowly missed establishing an absolute majority and was no longer able to continue the Federal Government with the previous coalition partner, the FDP. This was due to the fact that, for the first time since the founding of the Federal Republic, the FDP was no longer represented in the Bundestag. The CDU therefore led coalition negotiations with the SPD and on November 28th, 2013, the coalition agreement was completed and Chancellor Angela Merkel entered the Chancellor's Office for the third time with a grand coalition. After four years of restrained and disappointing foreign policy during the legislature under the Black-Yellow Administration, the new federal government decided to pursue a more self-confident and reliable foreign policy (Maull 2015: 222), and advocated that Germany engage more actively in world politics and take on more responsibility in Europe and the world, so as to shape the global world order (Roos and Rungius 2016; Keller and Gleichmann 2016). In the foreign policy strategy set out in the Coalition Agreement, the new federal government sought to *"take a responsible and inclusive role in Europe"* as a basic EU member and trusted partner by improving relations with France. The new federal government tried to re-establish the *"questioned confidence"* in the transatlantic relationship and to develop the *"strategic partnership"* with Russia (Coalition Agreement between CDU, CSU and SPD 2013). This active foreign policy began with a speech on January 31st, 2014 on *"Germany's Role in the World"* (Gauck 2014), which the Federal President delivered at the Munich Security Conference. He pleaded for a course correction in German foreign policy in relation to globalization and permanent changes in the world, because *"Germany is [...] above average globalized"* [and] *"Changes in the world are becoming faster than they are predicted"* (ibid.). In his speech, he highlighted the consequences of globalization for German foreign and security policy and criticized restrained German foreign policy: *"man könne in Deutschland einfach weitermachen wie bisher das überzeugt mich nicht"* (ibid.). At the same time, he called for new directions in the Euro-Atlantic Alliance. He advocated that Germany, as a *"guarantor of*

international order and security,", be able to take more responsibility for international conflict management and, in addition, participate in military operations (ibid.). The Federal President's position advocating a new and active German foreign policy was supported by the federal government at large, in particular by the Minister of Defense, Ursula von der Leyen, and Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Both ministers also emphasized that German foreign policy should take on more responsibility in global politics (Staack 2014: 2; Roos and Rungius 2016: 39).

In view of the increased responsibility, and with regard to a new and active German foreign policy, Germany now faced a great challenge. After some time, the crisis in Ukraine, gradually developed in late 2013.The Ukraine crisis dealt with Ukraine's foreign policy orientation and was actively involved by large-scale geopolitical actors (USA, Russia and the European Union) (Staack 2014:8). The crisis unfolded with the annexation of the Crimea by Russia and on-going armed conflict broke out in Donetsk and Luhansk. The pro-Russian forces, who were supported by Russian troops, fought for the annexation of Donetsk and Luhansk from Ukraine against the Ukrainian military (Hedenskog 2014: 21f.). With the escalation in the Ukraine crisis, the cooperative security structures of Europe were endangered, and the interests of German foreign and security policy in the center of Europe were significantly threatened (Grabau 2018: 319ff.). The crisis in Ukraine has led to a new international conflict as a result of Russia's aggressive foreign policy and territorial conquest. The conflict in Ukraine led to a change of course in German foreign policy and, as a result, sanctions were announced by Germany in tandem with Western partners against Russia, and diplomatic relations were restricted (Rinke 2014: 41f.), in order for the West to find a way out of the crisis through political dialogue between the conflict parties (Staack 2014: 18f.). In contrast to the perspective of the Chancellor and the Union parties, the Social Democrat Foreign Minister Steinmeier took the deviant view that Russia was part of the solution to the crisis (Rinke 2014: 35f.). He therefore pleaded for dialogue with Russia: *"in times of tension, we stick to the path of diplomacy, the way of dialogue* [...] *even if it is difficult – and we will have more dialogue with Russia and no less."* (Steinmeier 2015a). In addition, the coalition agreement stipulated that security in Europe would only be achievable with Russia and not against Russia (Coalition Agreement between CDU, CSU and SPD 2013: 170). Germany took the leading role alongside France in the Ukraine crisis in order to find a peaceful solution (Hellmann 2016:11). With the signing of the Minsk Agreement I on September 5th, 2014, a ceasefire with Ukraine, Russia and the separatists was reached (Grabau 2018: 328ff.). The ceasefire did not last long, and the escalation intensified, leading to a renewed Minsk II ceasefire agreement on February 12th, 2015 that halted bloodshed in Ukraine (Rinke 2015: 19f.). The conflict between Russia and the West intensified and the third stage of economic sanctions came into

force. At the moment, it seems that the conflicting parties in the Ukraine crisis are far from a peaceful solution.

With regard to German European politics, the German government emphasized European integration as the basis of its foreign policy under the second grand coalition (Maull 2015: 232) and was committed to ensuring that the European Union establish itself as a global political player in the international system through coordinated foreign and security policy (Coalition Agreement between the CDU, CSU and SPD 2013: 156f.). The financial crisis started in 2015 in Greece. Once again, Greece was bankrupt due to a high level of public debt. The financial crisis in Greece was controversial within the European Union (Papagiannopoulos and Agridopoulos 2016: 1f.). As a basic member of the Eurozone, Greece was unable to obtain more financial market lending because of its budget deficits and its lack of effective bureaucracy. The financial crisis in Greece put Germany under pressure because there was no consensus in the federal government (Illing 2017: 185ff). On the one hand, German Finance Minister Schäuble speaks of a *"Grexit"* from the European Union and, on the other hand, the German Chancellor tried to exclude the Greek exit, in between was the German Foreign Minister solidarity with Greece and called *"Grexit"* a *"devastating signal"* for the appearance of the European Union (Steinmeier 2015). Despite fierce disputes between critics and supporters, the EU states, the ECB and the IMF finally agreed on a solution to the financial crisis in Greece under tough conditions on August 11th, 2015, and subsequently approved a third aid program (Illing 2017: 164ff.). In return, Greece agreed to advance fundamental structural reforms for its financial and economic administration, to increase taxes and to carry out privatizations in the country (ibid.: 170ff.).

Another controversial aspect of German foreign policy under the second grand coalition was the Chancellor's refugee policy, which polarized the political situation within the EU and deeply divided not just the domestic political situation in Germany, but the Union parties (Mück 2017: 245). The Chancellor tried to justify her refugee policy in her 2016 New Year's speech, in which she stressed the following: *"We want and must learn from the mistakes of the past. Our values, our traditions, our understanding of law, our language, our laws, our rules – they carry our society"* (Merkel 2016). However, Merkel could not explain to Germans the correctness of their decision in refugee policy. The Chancellor's decision was the beginning of a new era in German history in world politics (Mück 2017: 265). Although the German Chancellor's refugee policy garnered much respect abroad (Kämper 2015), it sparked skepticism in society and distrust within her own party. Overall, the Chancellor's refugee policy was contradictory (Mück 2017: 261ff.). On the one hand, she advocated for the adoption of a 'welcome culture' within Germany with her famous phrase "*Wir schaffen das"* (Merkel 2016a), but, on the other hand, she settled upon the refugee agreement with Turkey (Çopur 2018). She emphasized that *"a situation like late summer 2015 can*

not be repeated" in a speech at the CDU party congress in 2016 and, in another speech delivered to the Bundestag, the Chancellor said: *"Germany will remain Germany with everything, which we love"* (Merkel 2016b). Merkel thus doubted the correctness of her decision and regarded it as a mistake.

At such a difficult time, Britain decided to quit the European Union following the results of a referendum. This decision—known commonly as Brexit— shook the European Union deeply and put the future of Europe at stake (Welfens 2017: 1f.). In a referendum on June 23th, 2016, the United Kingdom decided to leave the European Union. The former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, subsequently led the exit negotiation process from the EU under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union on March 29th, 2017 to avoid the scenario of a disorderly separation without a contract. At an EU special summit on April 10th, 2019, the European Council approved and agreed to withdraw by October 31st, 2019. Whether all of the details can be comprehensively and mutually negotiated in this period is considered to be doubtful. A delayed Brexit is therefore not unlikely. The debate on the British exit referendum from the EU looks controversial for German foreign policy. The German government emphasized the principle of responsibility for preserving the integrity of the European unification process. The Federal Republic is provided a special role in preventing the European Union from falling apart (Wendler 2019). The Federal Government has denied any special or selective benefits to the United Kingdom and postulated a special responsibility for the stability of political relations in Europe, both in the form of the continuation of EU integration and in remembrance of the founding phase of European integration, maintaining close and friendly relations with the United Kingdom (ibid.). In addition, German foreign policymakers pleaded for the preservation of the internal market, but also for a pragmatic agreement with Great Britain.

In German-American relations, cooperation remained factual despite the wiretapping scandal and its consequences (Szabo 2015: 446f.). US espionage activities in Germany after the Iraq war and the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States in 2017 led to the second stage of transatlantic alienation in German foreign policy, and the Federal Republic has tried to express its interests self-confidently towards the United States. The Federal Government has, however, continued to advocate joint security cooperation within NATO and, participated more actively in global political conflicts (Rizzo 2016: 22ff, Maull 2015). Despite the divergence of interest between the two countries in terms of their present values, there is a lot of interest between the two states.

Geopolitical Codes in German Foreign Policy between Values and Interests

Many scientists have dealt with German national interests. At the beginning of the 1990s, Hans W. Maull described the German foreign political identity before and after German reunification as a civil power or peace power (Maull 1992, 2006a, and 2006b). With regard to German foreign policy identity, Maull also sees Western orientation as one of the most important cornerstones of German foreign policy. The Western-focused orientation of the Federal Republic is about the alliance with the United States and European integration. In this sense, Germany pursues a multilateral foreign policy instead of national power politics, renounces its sovereignty rights to supernational organizations, renounces military means in its foreign policy and tends to seek diplomacy, peaceful solutions, and non-violent means (Maull 2007: 76). Maull further argues that German civilian power promotes active international interdependence. In regard to interdependence and multilateralism in German foreign policy, Maull considers Europeanization and transatlanticisation as essential components of the civil-German identity of German foreign policy (ibid.: 77). In light of Germany's interest in making itself an independent, a sovereign player in world politics, Hans W. Maull argued that the category of national interest in German foreign policy led to misunderstandings and had greatly overestimated its significance as a foreign policy-oriented action (Maull 2006a). As this term is historically burdened with Germany and refers to categories such as nation, power and balance, the national interest in German foreign policy should initially isolate itself against misunderstandings and reconcile them with the interests of other states (Maull 2006a, and 2014a). With reference to the orientation of German foreign policy's continuity, German politicians critically consider the emphasis on a power-conscious German foreign policy based solely on national interests in the classical sense of the term (Maull 2006b). They take up the argument that Germany should articulate its interests because of its changed global political framework. In this way, German foreign policy can create predictability (and thus reliability) vis-à-vis other states. However, from Maull's point of view, a fundamental paradox is that expectations and intentions are contradictory both at the domestic and international level (Maull 2006a, 2014a, and 2014b).

On the one hand, it is argued that Germany should assume greater international responsibility because of its increased power in world politics but, on the other hand, German supremacy in Europe is held up and Germany's pursuit of its interests is regarded as a power policy (Maull 2011). Accordingly, German politicians emphasized that, although the formulation of German interests is necessary for the geopolitical codes of German foreign policy, the interests should first be legitimized (Maull 2006b). In this context, they advocate

a value-oriented foreign policy with regard to the normative requirements of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (Das Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland). Starting from the view that the German interests are intertwined interests, they advocated a value-oriented foreign policy within the framework of the principle of multilateralism, in particular with regard to NATO and the EU. Therefore, German interests could be definable based on this value-led foreign policy (Maull 2014a).

In contrast to the position just presented, a number of geopolitician and political scientists advocate a power-conscious, German interest-oriented foreign policy. It should be noted that they do not completely rule out values and norms in the formulation of geopolitical codes in German foreign policy, but they emphasize that German foreign policy should not be dominated exclusively by values and ethics. Accordingly, Hans-Peter Schwarz acknowledges how difficult it is for Germany to make its foreign policy power-conscious and to self-confidently pursue its interests (Schwarz 1994, and 1985). He opposes an exclusive value orientation for the Federal Republic (Schwarz 1985), which could cause German's role to become limited and the relations with its allies within the EU and NATO to be burdened. Schwarz argues that after the catastrophe of the Third Reich, Germany rejected the national categories and use of national interests in determining its foreign policy, and formulated its foreign policy goals in an idealistic and humanitarian way (Schwarz 2005). As long as the Federal Government pursues a foreign policy based on universal values and cannot confidently address its national interests with regard to its geopolitical central position, it andembodies a disoriented and unstable position in world politics (ibid.). In this sense, Germany must operate according its national interests in the context of a power-conscious foreign policy as a result of the changed global political framework conditions (ibid.). Moreover, Schwarz did not exclude the values of German foreign policy, but emphasized that value--based German foreign policy could be successful if it were to be reformulated with consideration of international interests.

Like Schwarz, Gregor Schöllgen and Michael Stürmer state that German foreign policy must confidently define its national interests because of its new geopolitical position of centrality. They emphasize that German national interests must be defined in the context of power politics (Schöllgen 2004a, and 2004b). As German foreign policy made itself a prisoner (at least, in Schöllgen's opinion), he claimed that the German foreign policy must liberate from the load and feelings of guilt from the past and look to the future (Schöllgen 1997). The principle of the *"Culture of Restraint"*, which established itself after the Second World War in the context of value structure as a feature of the geopolitical codes of German foreign policy, had led German foreign policy to passivity (Schöllgen 1993, and 1999). Nevertheless, in this sense, value-oriented foreign policy does not correspond to the framework conditions of German foreign policy and the

reality of world politics after reunification. Therefore, the geopolitical codes in German foreign policy should not be determined solely by the values (ibid).

In addition, the proponents of German interest-based foreign policy refer to the idea of Germany as a central power in Europe. The idea of the German "special way" between East and West was replaced by Western integration and Germany's renunciation of the search for a territorial revision, which characterized the German foreign policy from the Treaty of Versailles to reunification and destabilizes the European security structure (Stürmer 1994, and 1995). The conditions point to a new Mittellage that differs from the discourse of the Mittellage before German reunification and that develops in a new form. With regard to the new centeral position, Michael Stürmer criticizes value-oriented German foreign policy, which is based upon a foreign policy of "Culture of Restraint" (Stürmer 1998). He demands that Germany should formulate a new foreign policy that matches both its new central position and the spirit of the times (Stürmer 2001, and 2004). Gregor Schöllgen argues in much the same way for a new strategic foreign policy based upon power and interests. He argues that Germany should leave the past behind and responsibly formulate power politics foreign policy (Schöllgen 1997, 1999, 2004a, and 2004b).

In this context, the proponents of the civil-power role of German foreign policy argue that German identity, or its values and interests, are not objective and predetermined, but are comprised of social constructs. With regard to the geopolitical shifts in global politics, the critics of the civil-power identity plead for a German foreign policy identity that is driven by interest. From their point of view, the interests, and values of German foreign policy are not subjective, but objective and predetermined, being derived from the circumstances of the geopolitical world order. German foreign political identity is thus divided between values and interests, and it is an ambivalent feature that moves unsteadily and inconsistently in different areas of tension and cannot decide in different situations with different notions of identity.

In light of this question of, whether German foreign policy seeks power and uses it to pursue its own interests, it can be summarized that there can be no talk of a direct power policy shift in German foreign policy. However, the goal of increasing one's own power through efficiency optimization in competition with other states has gained more importance in the course of the investigation. Federal governments orient their action plans not only along with the analysis of international power distribution, that is, following the hypotheses of offensive realism, that maximizing power is the most rational strategy for a state to increase its security in an anarchic international system. The more power a state has in the international system, the higher it's chance of long--term survival. Rather, federal governments were interested in the hypotheses of defensive realism in relative power gains by increasing efficiency in competition with other major states. The first concern of states is not to maximize power,

but to maintain their positions in the system. Although the German civilian power strove for more responsibility in the regulation of international relations, this does not mean renouncing classical power politics, but instead aims at increasing national power in comparison and competition with other states, adapting traditional means to the modern one's conditions. After unification, the concepts of responsibility lost their relevance due to their own history or responsibility as a self-evident selfless contribution obligation (Roos 2012). They have been replaced by concepts of responsibility as a claim to participation based upon their own contributions, as well as the concept of reputation acquisition through the assumption of responsibility (ibid.). In place of a fundamental commitment to the civilization of world politics, one of the considerations of efficiency was a fixation on one's own advantage and one's own relative position of power. German foreign policy, which had been de-idealized in this way, prepared itself for the ever-increasing concentration of interests of the major powers in a multipolar world system, instead of continuing to believe in the possibility of mutual cooperation among members of the world community. In summary, it can be stated that German politics is divided between a value--oriented paradigm and an interest-based paradigm when it comes to foreign policy and German foreign policy is viewed as problematic in terms of both values and interests. From the point of view of the new Mittellage, values and interests did not oppose each other, but rather are two sides of the same coin, which are interconnected and should be considered as action-guiding factors for German foreign policy.

Geopolitical Codes of German Foreign Policy in its Spatial Relationship Structures

From a spatial perspective, three geopolitical structures of space in German foreign policy after reunification can be traced. The first geopolitical orientation in German foreign policy refers to the transatlantic space, in which the geopolitical code shows a fluctuating strategy between alignment and emancipation. A second alternative involves the European space. This option and the European orientation in German foreign policy can either expand the Euro-transatlantic region as a strategic power formation or create a counter-power to the United States as an independent Europe. The third foreign policy orientation goes far beyond Euro-Transatlantic space towards the Eurasian. Germany sees Eurasia, particularly Russia, as a potential means through which to establish its role as a global leader. The German geopolitical code moves in relation to the Eurasian space between approximation and demarcation.

Geopolitical Codes of German Foreign Policy in the Transatlantic Spatial Structure

The times when we could totally rely on others are a bit over. [...] And that's why I can only say that we Europeans really have to take our fate into our own hands. [...]Of course in friendship with the United States of America. We must fight for our own future, as Europeans, for our destiny (Merkel 2017).

Leaning or Emancipation? Ambivalences of German foreign policy to the United States

Merkel has expressed these words in view of the lack of reliability in German--transatlantic relations. Is this the end of an era?, Does it point to a change in the orientation of Germany's foreign policy?. If one examines the structure of German-transatlantic relations after German reunification, one encounters a vacillating attitude between leaning and emancipation, whereby one does not replace the other (Bredow 2008). With regard to the transatlantic spatial structure, it can be stated that the geopolitical codes of German foreign policy in this area vary between leaning and emancipation. Against this background, questions can be asked as to what influence the transatlantic area has on German foreign policy after German reunification and what geopolitical interests characterize German-transatlantic relations.

For security-political reasons, German-transatlantic relations played (during the Cold War era) and still play an essential role in the geopolitical orientation of German foreign policy after German reunification (Schwarz 2007). Moreover, the presence of the United States in Europe and its importance for German foreign policy not merely in military-political terms, but also from a cultural--economic perspective is considered as a power factor for the establishment of a stable world order and the maintenance of European security (Stürmer 2006). Thus, after the Second World War, German foreign policy integrated itself into the transatlantic community and as a result, established the transatlantic region as a basic geopolitical orientation in German foreign policy (Schwarz 2007). This suggests that Germany should continue to lean on the hegemonic power of the United States (Baring 2006). After the recent the geopolitical shifts in European and in global politics, the US is the only superpower that can act as a proper and peace-making power in the new unpredictable and unclear geopolitical situation on both global and European levels (Hacke 2002). From this perspective, German foreign policy is assigned with the task of orienting itself in relation to the United States. This will safeguard the balance of power and peace in Europe and the world, in order to prevent power-political rivalry among European states (Schwarz 1994). Stability and security are two central interests of German foreign policy in Central and Eastern Europe and can only

be achieved in solidarity with the United States (Berninger and Jäger 2017). In addition to security interests, the economic factors also form the framework and direction for German foreign policy within the transatlantic relationship (Schwarz 2007). For Germany, the transatlantic community plays a crucial role in term of economic integration with the European Union (Falke 2007). Despite the growing markets in the Asia-Pacific region, the economic and financial relations between the USA and Germany remain closely intertwined (Steingart 2006). Due to the German exports to the USA, the continuously increasing bilateral trade between the USA and Germany and the mutual direct investments, the two countries remain economically dependent on each other and are each others' most important trading partner. Against this background, it is argued that preserving the hegemonic power of the United States is of vital importance to German foreign policy (Berniniger and Jäger 2017).

With the end of the Cold War and reunification, the intimacy of German--American relations began to lessen. Although there have been disagreements over the years with Russian relaxation, burden-sharing, and trade policy, security issues have prevented these differences from jeopardizing relations as a whole (Schöllgen 2004a). After the end of the Cold War, the United States turned its back on the euro-transatlantic to the Asia-Pacific region and alienated itself from German and Euro-transatlantic relations. The criticism of American politics comes not only from countries that are severely damaged and affected by United States security policies but also from close allies. Against this backdrop, the European side argues that the transatlantic structures are to be reformed and expanded in relation to the European role. While both sides criticize NATO and recommend its disbandment, there are also advocates who point to NATO's importance for stability and security in Europe and the world (Moravcsik 2005). At the same time, they are in favor of reforming the federal structure vis a vis the role of Europe. They note that NATO should transform its identity from a defense community into a community of values (Hamilton 2005). In this sense, they speak of commonly shared values and mutual economic and security dependency, which would provide the Euro-transatlantic region new strategic importance in the age of globalization (Hacke 2004). For this reason, Germany should reject any alternative counter-power formation on the part of the French or the United Kingdom that weakens the power of the United States in view of its geopolitical position. Since German-transatlantic relations are, in terms of security policy, essentially in the interests of German foreign policy, European integration and cooperation should supplement the transatlantic alliance (Stürmer 1995, and 2006). Accordingly, Germany should work together with the United States to deepen its strategic cooperation and help shape the European Union through its leadership role (Baring 2006, and 1994). The tension points in German-transatlantic relations arise from their distribution of capabilities or power resources and differing perceptions of world politics

(Algieri 2012). Although military policy plays an important role in American foreign policy in how conflicts and problems in world politics (with regard to traditional power politics) are dealt with, German foreign policy is in favor of approaches to peace and diplomacy in terms of a multilateral and networked world. Starting from a value-guided foreign policy in contrast to the American strategy, German foreign policy does not see the use of military force as the correct solution to increasingly complex conflicts in world politics (Szabo 2007). This is why Germany critically examines the course of American foreign policy course, and also pleads for crisis prevention and the consolidation of peace processes (Kempin 2012).

German-transatlantic relations have to some extent lost their constructive powers, and their primary function after German reunification is viewed in different ways by German governments (Zimmer 2009). The US security guarantee no longer plays a crucial role for Germany, as Germany does not see any immediate threat from Russia. Therefore, Germany does not have to be controlled by a guardianship of the US when it comes to divergences of interest. For this reason, Germany is expected to seek independence in terms of security and defense policy (Bierling and Steiler 2011). As Germany is no longer dependent on American support differences of opinion over questions of global importance gain importance. The Iraq war in 2003, the Libyan crisis in 2011 and the NSA wiretap scandal in 2013 have made German-American relations particularly difficult in recent years. Although problems in the fields of politics, economics, and security arose in German-American relations, the German-transatlantic partnership remains essential (Sloan and Borchert 2005). The geopolitical codes of German foreign policy after reunification in the transatlantic spatial structure confirms this thesis that, in this space, Germany is trying to operate according to the as-well-as policy (Ross 2012). The German strategy aims at adopting a mediating position between the EU and the US. The Federal Government is convinced that the EU must both pursue autonomous security policy and expand the influence of the EU within NATO. The goal of German foreign policy is emancipation from the US but not emancipation from NATO (ibid.). This seesaw strategy, which confirms Hans-Peter Schwarz's thesis, has been identified as a kind of back and forth, a permanent backlash between NATO cooperation and the quest for a new autonomous European defense force (ibid.). This fluctuating strategy can also be interpreted as German foreign policy trying to increase its influence over NATO, depending on the situation and its interests, while at the same time expanding its scope for action through the European security and defence policy (Fröhlich 2012, and 2017).

German-American relations were factually conducted. Despite espionage activities by the USA in Germany, Germany tried to confidently express its interests to the US (Staack 2014). Although the Federal government continued to advocate for joint security cooperation within NATO, it participated more

actively in global political conflicts and generally assumed more responsibility (Rachel 2016). Since the change of power in the White House – when Donald Trump won the presidential election against Hillary Clinton in November 2016 – German-transatlantic relations have bottomed out. Against this backdrop, the federal government calls for a common and strong foreign and security policy in the European Union continues to pursue its economic and geostrategic interests in the European Union and seeks to rebuild the strategic partnership with Russia in the Eurasian spatial structure, In addition, the federal government has been developing closer relationships with China and Japan.

Geopolitical Codes of German Foreign Policy in the European Spatial Structure

For Germany, the European space is a strong point of attraction, both as relates to the United States of America and to France as an independent actor (Janning 2016). The post-war reconciliation with France has been fundamental since 1950. German politicians worked closely with France to plan and create the European Coal and Steel Community, the Common Market, the European Community, the European Union and the introduction of the Euro. For the enlargement of the EU, France and Germany were together the driving force behind the unity of Europe (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2012). However, in recent years, the partnership with France has proved increasingly inadequate. Although France, unlike Germany, has nuclear weapons and a seat as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, in a much enlarged Europe, it relies Germany for its global role within the EU. For Germany, however, this new position of power was a double-edged sword (Algieri 2012). When it comes to economic, political and security issues, Germany remains hesitant. As there is no political component to the EU, a common foreign and security policy remains a long way off. It should be noted that without a European army supporting security and deterrence, Europe will lack the effectiveness and impact of the international system when it comes to enforcing its geopolitical weight. European integration still plays an important role for German foreign policy, even though the European Union's ability to act as an important geopolitical actor is limited due to the divergent national foreign policies of the EU Member States. Germany is in a complex and aggravated situation within the EU and is far from reaching consensus on common foreign and security policy (Hellmann 2015). This new mixed situation offers Germany the basis for asymmetric action and influences its foreign policy. In this way, Germany is trying to structurally promote a political program for strengthening international organizations in the multilateral context. German foreign policy demands sustainable value standards within the European Union and assumes that environmental protection and ecological values should be taken into account in the international system. From this

perspective, the German government demands a certain restriction on freedom of action, justice between poor and rich countries and concern for the livelihoods of future generations (Wagner 2007).

German foreign policy accepts the institutional limitation of power by integrating Germany into the EU in order to peacefully improve its position without entering into conflict with neighboring states and major powers. However, the EU is a supernational organization at the regional level, which is why German foreign policy also has bilateral relations both worldwide and within the EU (Bredow 2008). Although German foreign policy towards the EU and supranational organizations is characterized by multilateral structures, an ambivalent attitude in German foreign policy toward these organizations is apparent (Link 2007a). Due to the lack of integrity of other member states and the pursuit of national interests, instrumental multilateralism is also evident, which is oriented to and pursued in line with the interests of the respective countries. Due to the divergence of interest, Germany's role as a mediator is limited and leadership is made difficult. The discrepancy between the claim to leadership as a central power in Europe and the lack of power to act as one despite greater resources when it comes to the implementation of its foreign policy goals has led to a fluctuation in German foreign policy (Algieri 2012). The global role for Germany as a leading force in the relatively advanced and prosperous context of the EU may have been an alternative, but is not possible because of the weakness of the institutions and the lack of political union in the EU, as well as the reluctance of Germany itself and a deep-seated aversion to the use of military force. Germany, therefore, remains committed to the European Union and the need for a sustained but troubled relationship with the United States. From the German point of view, a close partnership with France in a united Europe and a strong transatlantic alliance in terms of security and economic cooperation are seen as cornerstones of German foreign policy (Roos und Rungius 2016). The development of geopolitical codes of German foreign policy in the European space following reunification makes it clear, that the image of a multipolar world prevails in German foreign policy (Roos 2012). Germany understands that after the end of the East-West conflict, the EU and the US are two separate value communities with different identities that share many beliefs and principles. Therefore, the EU must become a leading world power and an independent pole in the new multipolar world system (ibid.). The EU must be seen as an independent monlith and independent pole. This strategy should be predominantly shaped by German ideas and correspond to German interests.

Geopolitical Codes of German Foreign Policy in the Eurasian Heartland

While Germany is oriented in the transatlantic space, as a junior partner of the United States (the global power), and, in the EU, as a junior partner of France (which enforces its interests according to the concept of counter-power formation), proponents of a self-confident German foreign policy plead for a new strategic orientation in the Eurasian Heartland (Rühl 1997; Stürmer 1995). Turning to Germany's hegemonic role in world politics shows that Germany emancipates itself from the Euro-transatlantic area, but is forced to build its global role in a narrow East-oriented Eurasian spatial structure. Beyond the idea of a Eurasian space formation with regard to Russia as an alternative to the Atlantic or European approaches, there is the concept of an ambitious global role (Voigt 2005). In order to preserve the current geopolitical status quo and to prevent possible counter-power formation or alliances that could emerge from a possible coalition between Europe and Eurasia, the Euro-transatlantic spatial structure plays and will continue to play a decisive role in US foreign policy, considered to be a vital interest of the United States for the stability of the world order (Zänker 1995). Although Germany is seen as a potential threat to averting Euro-transatlantic relations, its foreign policy and any attempt at German foreign policy towards the East is criticized by supporters of the transatlantic community (Bastian 2006). Since Germany has, since the turn of the century, been back in its old middle position, which historically led to a seesaw policy between East and West, German-Russian foreign policy and German-Russian rapprochement are both problematic and the rejection of the West has been evaluated (Spanger 2011). The French side is seriously questioning a Euro-transatlantic orientation in Europe and advocating for the establishment of a Euro-Gaullist spatial structure in a multipolar world order, as France strives for a European pole in a new multipolar world order, so that France and Germany can join forces to assume the leadership role in Europe, and free itself from the supremacy of the United States (Voigt 2005).

With regard to the geopolitical orientation of German foreign policy in the Eurasian Heartland, geopoliticians and scientists have different views. In the eyes of the critics of Eurasian space formation as an option for German foreign policy, Russia is seen as an expansive power that wishes to exert its influence on the European continent and, further, to expand its spheres of influence. Unlike critics of Russian power of influence on the European continent, many advocates see the future of Germany and the European Union in Eurasia. The advocates are thus in favor of a policy approach and strategic partnership with Russia (ibid.). From this perspective, Russia is seen as a key player in German foreign policy in the Eurasian Heartland (Zänker 1995: 9). From the point of

view of some geopoliticians, it is assessed that the future of German foreign policy and the European Union can be secured through a strategic partnership with Russia (Kraus, and Schulak 2003: 116). In order to preserve the future of Germany or Europe and to multilateralize the world order, Russia is in the foreground of German foreign policy in the Eurasian region (Bastian 2006: 186). The questions about what interests German foreign policy has in common with Eurasia and Russia, what kind of foreign policy Germany should pursue towards Russia (Straub 2003), and how German foreign policy could europeanize Russia are answered by the statement that peace and stabilization in Europe are dependent on close German cooperation with Russia (Kraus, and Schulak 2003). From this perspective, Russia is considered historically as a strategic choice for German geopolitics (Spanger 2011: 668). For critics of these strategic considerations, any rapprochement between Russia and Germany is regarded as a threat and considered by advocates of a Euro-transatlantic community and by Central and Eastern European states (Bastian 2006: 95). It is assumed that this geopolitical possibility could lead to Germany's turning away from Europe. In addition, it is pointed out that close German-Russian cooperation could restrict the interests and room for maneuver for the Central and Eastern European states (Rotfeld 1997).

Proponents of a Eurasian spatial structure in German foreign policy point to the fragile situation of Germany in the center of Europe due to its geographical conditions. They see the future of Germany or Europe as in danger (Béhar 1994: 27). Accordingly, they plead for the determination of new perspectives in German-Russian relations. In this way, they represent the view that Germany could have a future in a new constellation of the great powers and, moreover, contend that peace and prosperity could be secured within Europe (Straub 2003: 8), if Germany and the rest of Europe come to Russia in the European Union (Rahr 2009).

With regard to the Eurasian area, some German geopoliticians agree that German foreign policy should free itself from the influence of the US and establish a multipolar world order with Russia within the whole of Europe (Zänker 1992: 9). Germany would thus be able to push through its interests with Europe as a decisive pole (Detlefs 1998: 220). They point out that, if Germany intends to establish itself as a pole in the world order, Germany would be able to assert its interests in a multipolar world only within the European Union in close strategic cooperation with Russia or the Eurasian region (Link 2006: 62). In this way, Russia, with its focus on the multipolar world order and the power-political possibility of German foreign policy, is of crucial importance (Bahr 2003). This geopolitical orientation of German foreign policy became clearer in part due to the Iraq war in 2003, when France, Germany, and Russia together rejected the United States policy strategy towards Iraq (Schöllgen 2004b: 11). This strategic reorientation in German foreign policy was promoted by the red-

-green government under the leadership of Schröder, whotargeted the future of Germany in multipolar world order (Spanger 2011: 648).

The leitmotiv of shifting German foreign policy towards the Eurasian area is the economic value of this region. For example, Russia plays an important role in German foreign policy because of its energy resources and nuclear power. When it comes to Germany's orientation to Eurasia, geopoliticians refer to Russian deposits of raw materials, their population size, and their territorial size (Stent 2007: 452). They state that the Eurasian space is a very dynamic one and could become a pole of power in the world economy if Germany becomes economically and industrially involved there. This region could secure Germany and Europe's energy supply and strengthen the competitiveness of the German economy (Rahr 2008). It is clear that Germany has a vital interest in this region because of its geopolitical position in Europe (Béhar 1994). Against this background, German foreign policy has the task of orienting itself in this area, building up the infrastructure in the Eurasian area through its investments and industry, and developing economic as well as – political relations (Rahr 2002: 317). From this perspective, Germany and the EU's strategic partnership with energy and in economic and security areas with Russia has crucial importance. This advocates for a close German-Russian partnership in the Eurasian region (Hoffmann 2012: 320).

Due to its territorial size, its population and its historical role on both a European and a global level, Russia is a major power. Further, its military potential and its mineral and natural resources are significant (Béhar 1994: 219). From a geographical and historical-political point of view, Russia belongs to Europe and is an indispensable player for German foreign policy in Europe (Hoffmann 2012: 271). The German-Russian relationship is historically characterized by ambivalence. On the one hand, German economic interests in terms of the power-economic constellation speak for an interconnectedness or a strategic alliance with Russia. On the other hand, a German foreign policy closer to Russian interests would endanger democratic values (Kalinin 2016: 1). For this reason, Russia did not prove to be an opponent nor an ally of Germany after the Cold War. Against this background, the German-Russian partnership experienced a discontinuity (Stent 2007: 436). After the end of the Cold War, however, in part due to the Soviet approval of German reunification, the German-Russian partnership intensified. Accordingly, the German-Russian partnership became built upon concrete economic cooperation. German foreign policy aims to integrate Russia into Europe through economic and political development processes because Russia belongs to Europe for historical and geographical reasons, and Germany feels responsible for Russia after the peaceful reunification process (Rahr 2008). However, German foreign policy lacks an overall strategy, so German-Russian relations could influence the Russian reform process. While Germany assumed greater global political responsibility and plays an active role

on the world's political stage, Russia is in an identity crisis after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and is endeavoring to strengthen its position and role in the world (Kalinin 2016: 138).

The German Russia Policy: Break line between Values and Interests

German-Russian relations have improved since 1990 with the Treaties on German Unity, but these relations have been and continue to be problematic due to the memories of the Second World War, Germany's Western orientation, and the expansion of Central Eastern European transatlantic relations (Buck 1996). German-Russian relations are closely linked after reunification in the fields of economic and energy policy, but have not been further developed on the political level due to the different perceptions of world politics and conflict-laden relations. In addition, German foreign policy towards Russia fluctuates due to partisan foreign policy and the ambivalent attitude of German governments. For this reason, German foreign policy lacks a long-term foreign policy position on Russia; rather, relations have developed only on an economic level (Bastian 2006).

Different interests and values form the conflict of German foreign policy in the case of Russia. The question of how German foreign policy is perceived by Russia is answered by two different foreign policy factions in German politics (Kalinin 2016). On the one hand, the majority of SPD politicians and part of the CDU politicians advocate for a pragmatist perspective in terms of the economization of German-Russian relations. From an interest-guided perspective, they see Russia as an important supplier of energy and raw materials and as a growing sales market for the German economy (Spanger 2011: 658). In the foreground of their Russia policy, commonly held values are not emphasized. The CDU deputies, FDP and the Greens are of a differing opinion. They assume a value-led foreign policy towards Russia. The advocates of a common basis of values in Russia's policy advocated for the political and socio-cultural democratization of Russia and highlighted the need for a common foundation of values in order to integrate Russia into the whole of Europe (Kalinin 2016: 146). Russia is perceived in the foreign policy of the Federal Government from these two different positions (Spanger 2011). This is why the Federal Government is pursuing an approximation policy with Russia, and Russia thus proves neither an opponent nor an ally of Germany (Kalinin 2016). However, from a German point of view, the inclusion of Russia is necessary and crucial for peace and stability in the whole of Europe in multipolar world order.

Conclusion

In light of the global political developments in the international system and the structural change at the European level, geopoliticians are calling for a strategic reassessment of German geopolitical codes in relation to three spatial structures: the transatlantic, the European region and the Eurasian region. Against this backdrop, geopoliticians argue for both power-oriented and interest-driven geopolitical codes in German foreign policy. At the same time, geopolitical patterns of power and counter-power formation in these three geopolitical spatial structures can be seen at the center of German foreign policy. Although the meaning and importance of the transatlantic space are, on the one hand, emphasized in terms of defense and security policy, but, on the other hand, the transatlantic supremacy is not only beneficial by proponents of a multipolar world order, but also considered to pose a threat to the future of the world order. Therefore, it is necessary that the German foreign policy in Europe be oriented to establishing its geopolitical codes according to the geopolitical pattern of countervailing power in a European spatial structure but also aimed at becoming a global political actor that faces the transatlantic area. However, Euro-transatlantic proponents point out that this shift in power from the transatlantic structure to a European space should not be confrontational but cooperative. Therefore, the regulatory power of the United States should not be called into question. In this context, Germany focuses its interests on a European spatial structure in cooperation with the transatlantic region in order to rebuild its influence and consolidate its position vis-à-vis other major powers in a multipolar world order within Europe. If Germany wants to build up its position of power and free itself from the shadow of the past, this option can be realized in a multipolar world order in which Germany counterbalances the influence of the major powers, particularly the United States, via counter-power formation. To do so, German foreign policy needs a strategic orientation in the Eurasian Heartland, act in close cooperation with France and become more deeply involved with Russia, in order to act as an independent actor on an international level. For the United States of America, regardless of its peaceful or antagonistic orientation, this constellation is viewed as a threat. In this context, no specific strategies or geopolitical codes in German foreign policy vis-à-vis the transatlantic or Eurasian spatial structure are discernible. For this reason, geopolitical codes of German foreign policy is fluctuating in this situation, as it moves between three different geopolitical structures of relations that resulted from the historical basis of German foreign policy and the existing world order. Thus, it can be concluded that the geopolitical codes of German foreign policy have been of a varying character since reunification. This new geopolitical code in German foreign policy can be understood as situational and action-based, which has not been shaped by predetermined interests and values, but by an

open political process. In this reading, geopolitical codes in German foreign policy are constituted by a multitude of different patterns of cultural meaning, which are combined in a different foreign policy of action to form divergent strategies. For this reason, German foreign policy varies considerably according to the situations of these three geopolitical spatial structures. This fluctuating and situation-based feature of geopolitical codes in German foreign policy can be characterized in the three geopolitical spatial structures and will continue to shape German foreign policy in the future.

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The Difficult Look Back: Slovenian Democratic Path after European Union Accession

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Abstract: *In the third wave of democratic changes in the early 1990s when the Central and Eastern European (CEE) political landscape changed radically and the democratisation processes started in the eastern part of the continent, Slovenia was one of the most prominent countries with the best prospects for rapid democratic growth. Slovenia somewhat luckily escaped the Yugoslav civil wars and towards the end of the 20th century was already on the path towards a stable and consolidated democracy with the most successful economy in the entire CEE area. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Slovenia had a simple and straight-forward political goals, i.e. to join the European union as soon as possible, thus consolidating its place among the most developed countries within the region. After some setbacks, this goal was accomplished in (so far) the biggest enlargement to the Union in May 2004. But what happened after Slovenia managed to successfully achieve its pair of major political goals? In this chapter, we search for an answer to this question and find out why Slovenian voters are increasingly distrustful not only of political institutions, but why so-called new political faces and instant political parties are so successful and why Slovenian democracy has lost a leading place among consolidated democracies in CEE.*

Keywords: ***Slovenia; European Union; membership; distrust; democracy.***

Introduction

After declaring its independence from former Yugoslavia in 1991, the Republic of Slovenia expressed its willingness and objective, both in its strategic development documents and at the highest political levels, to become a full member of

the European Union (EU).[1] As the crucial developmental documents[2] indicate, the optimum long-term development of the Slovenian economy is inextricably tied to Slovenia's full membership in the EU. Thus, soon after the country's liberation, membership in the European Union became one of Slovenia's key objectives. The first diplomatic relations between Slovenia and the European Community were established in April 1992, as Slovenia proposed the conclusion of the Europe Agreement and asked for support regarding the restructuring and consolidation of its economy. The following year (April 1993) a co-operation treaty was signed between the two. In June 1996, a treaty on the integration of Slovenia into the European Union was enacted. Slovenia thereby started negotiations on full membership in the European Union, along with some other former socialist states from CEE. This European treaty enabled political dialogue, increased commercial co-operation, established the grounds for technical and financial support from the European Union and also supported the integration of Slovenia into the European Union (Fink-Hafner – Lajh 2005: 55). All parliamentary political parties with a single exception (the Slovenian National Party), supported the integration and therefore signed a joint co-operation treaty. The National Assembly passed a decree on the priority of discussing European legislation, thereby accelerating the adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire*. Membership in the European Union became the national interest (Fink-Hafner – Lajh 2005: 56). In November 1996, Slovenia and the Union signed a provisional trade agreement, which entered into force in January 1997. This enabled the activation of the trade section of the Association Agreement defining the free trade area between Slovenia and the-then EU 15. In May 1997, Slovenia adopted the fundamental points of departure of its strategy on European Union accession, confirming the desire to attain full membership to the European Union and, in June that year, the European Commission presented its opinion on candidate states for joining the European Union (the so-called Agenda 2000). Because this opinion was favourable towards Slovenia, the latter was allotted to the primary group of states that would enter negotiations. Accession negotiations between Slovenia and the Union were completed in 2002 and in April 2003 the Treaty on Slovenia's Accession to the European Union was signed. Hence, on 1 May 2004, Slovenia became part of the European family of nations. In this manner, the *Acquis Communautaire* became part of Slovenian legislation and European affairs became the internal affairs of Slovenia.

The support for European Union membership was quite stable during the accession process, resulting in a good turnout (60,4 percent) and support (89,6 percent) at the referendum on joining the European Union, which was carried

1 We will uniformly use the term European Union (EU) in this article, acknowledging the term European Communities pre-1993.

2 See, e.g., Slovenia's Economic Development Strategy, The Strategy of International Economic Relations of Slovenia, Strategy for Improving the Competitiveness of the Slovenian Industry, etc.

out on 23 March 2003 (Haček et al. 2017: 150). The referendum was more or less just a formality due to the high level of public support, which did not dissipate over the years but rather increased when the accession date approximated (Velič 2003). Among the ten countries joining the European Union in Spring 2004, the highest support for the membership was recorded in Lithuania (with 52 percent of survey respondents saying it benefited their country to become a member of the EU), followed by Malta (50 percent). Slovenia, at 40 percent, was on the lower end, surpassing only Latvia (33 percent) and Estonia (31 percent). However, the citizens of Slovenia (64 percent), Hungary and Lithuania (both 58 percent) most often expressed expectations of certain benefits as a result of their country's membership. From spring 2003 to spring 2004, the trend of support for European Union membership in Slovenia reflected the average for new Member States at the time of the referendum on Slovenia's accession (Spring 2003), when support reached its peak (57 percent), followed by a trend of decreasing support. From 1999–2002, support in Slovenia was continuously below the average for new Member States (by between five percent and eleven percent). However, the percentage of inhabitants of Slovenia who maintained that European Union membership would be detrimental to Slovenia was consistently lower as well, ranging from seven to 17 percent (Eurobarometer 62 2004: 18; see also Haček – Kukovič 2014: 106).

The worst fears of Slovenian citizens were related to (potential) increased difficulties for the country's farmers (67 percent of responses), which was a topic frequently promoted by opponents of Slovenian membership to the EU, and the migration of jobs to countries with lower production costs (63 percent). The latter probably reflected previous similar experiences in the Slovenian economy – such as the case of Tobačna Ljubljana, which moved its production activities abroad to reduce production costs – and the fact that Slovenia has the highest labour costs of all new European Union member states, making other locations more attractive to foreign business investors. This was followed by fears of increased illegal drug trafficking and international organised crime (58 percent), based on Slovenia's strategic geographical position connecting Western Europe to the former Yugoslavia and south-eastern Europe. Concerns that Slovenia might become a net contributor to the European budget (57 percent) were also frequently advanced by opponents of Slovenian entry to the European Union. Even supporters of Slovenia's membership listed these same four problems. On the other hand, fears about the declining use of the Slovenian language and the loss of Slovenian national identity and culture were relatively rare (Eurobarometer 62 2004; see also Haček – Kukovič, 2014: 106).

The goal of this chapter is not, however, to analyse and evaluate the processes of the Slovenian accession process to the European Union. It is to analyse and evaluate the main political, societal and economic developments in a far less

known and analysed period, i.e. the period after Slovenian accession to the European Union which influenced the democratic development of the country in both a positive and negative way.

We are searching for answers to this basic question in this chapter, which first focuses on the three periods, i.e. European Union accession, the right--wing Janša government and the beginning of the global economic crisis (2004–2009), the global crisis (mis)management and politico-economic consequences (2009–2014) and the recovery and strained relationship with the Juncker Commission (2014–2019). The analysis searches for answers to the questions why Slovenian voters are increasingly distrustful not only of their own national politics, but also of the European union *per se* and European union institutions, why so-called new political faces and instant political parties thrive in Slovenia and why Slovenian democracy took some damage and lost a leading place among consolidated democracies in CEE. Our analysis will also put an important emphasis on the results of the European Parliament elections and electoral turnout in 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019 with analysis of public opinion changes about the European Union over the first fifteen years of European Union membership.

European Union accession and early years of membership

European Commission President Romano Prodi welcomed the 75 million 'new fellow citizens' on 1 May 2004 as he attended celebrations marking the expansion of the European Union to ten new members in Nova Gorica. He was joined by Slovenian Prime Minister Anton Rop, who in turn welcomed Europe by saying: 'So far Europe was the future of Slovenia; now Slovenia is the future of Europe'. Just a month and a half after entry, Slovenia was faced with its first major European Union event, as the first European Parliament elections in Slovenia were held on 13 June 2004. There were 91 candidates (42 females) for the seven Slovenian seats in the European Parliament. Candidates were grouped in 13 candidacy-lists among which there were seven parliamentary parties and six non-parliamentary parties or other groups. The 2004 European Parliamentary elections were marked by the poorest turnout to date – 45,7 percent. Turnout even decreased in the 'old' member states of the EU (compared to the 1999 elections), but what was most alarming was the turnout in new member states (below 50 percent), among which only Malta (82,4 percent) and Cyprus (71,2 percent) were the exceptions. Slovenia and the Czech Republic both had a 28,4 percent turnout, which only outperformed Estonia and Slovakia – in the latter it was as low as 17 percent. Such a poor turnout was interpreted as the result of the insufficient appraisal of the importance of these elections and the European Parliament's work (Haček et al. 2017: 147). But those were not the only reasons, as the poor electoral turnout in Slovenia was also caused by

growing dissatisfaction with politics, the general disinterest of the public and its incomprehension. The key factor in electing Slovenian representatives was the candidate's personal charisma and popularity. This was clearly visible by the election of Borut Pahor (SD) through preferential voting, even if he was the last name on the list. Elections to the European parliament were a clear indicator of coming political changes, as four out of the seven elected representatives were on the opposition lists.

Regular parliamentary elections were held on 3 October 2004 and brought substantial political shift, as the twelve year reign of Liberal Democracy ended. This had been forecasted by the European Parliament election results a few months before and by the retreat of long-term Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek to the post of President of the Republic in 2002. For the first time ever, the winner of the elections was the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), which received 29,1 percent of votes and formed a centre-right coalition government under the leadership of new Prime Minister Janez Janša. The new centre-right government had three big challenges ahead (Haček et al. 2017: 202–205), all three closely connected with the European Union.

The first one was the adoption of the Common Currency. Slovenia introduced the Euro on 1 January 2007 and joined the Eurozone as the first new Member State. The transition from the Slovenian Tolar to the Euro mostly ran swiftly and smoothly, causing no major problems as the population had been informed of the new currency in advance. People had a very positive attitude towards the common currency and expected mostly positive effects.

The second challenge was entry into the Schengen Area on 22 December 2007, when Slovenia ceased to execute border control on internal land and maritime borders with the EU Member States. By entering the Schengen Area, Slovenia abolished border control on its borders with Austria, Italy and Hungary, while intensifying control on the border with Croatia, which became a Schengen external border.

The third challenge seemed like the most daunting one, as Slovenia took over the Presidency of the EU Council and led the community, uniting 27 Member States and almost half a billion people. Slovenia grasped an exceptional historical opportunity, as this was the first Presidency of a Member State that entered the Union in the 2004 enlargement and the first ever Council of the EU Presidency of a Slavic state. The Presidency of the EU Council turned out to be one of the most demanding and complex tasks in terms of contents and a challenge in the organisational and logistical sense at the same time.

The next regular parliamentary elections were held in September 2008 and were again very politically intense. Once again they brought a complete political U-turn, as the right-wing ruling coalition suffered defeat, and one of the coalition parties (NSi – New Slovenia-Christian People's Party) failed to reach

the four percent parliamentary threshold.[3] The political U-turn announced itself a year or two beforehand: a) with the win of formally non-partisan, but in political reality left-wing adored, mayor of national capital Ljubljana, Zoran Janković at local elections in 2006 (Kukovič 2018a: 88); b) the unexpected defeat of coalition-candidate Lojze Peterle, president of the first democratically elected government in the 1990s, at the presidential elections in 2007, when the election campaign took an extreme ideological turn; c) with the emergence of the new left-wing political party ZARES-New Politics, which surfaced from the once major political force, Liberal Democracy, and became the second power on the left-side of the political continuum. The reasons for the defeat of the centre-right government after a relatively successful and stable term in office are multi-layered, in large part the result of the profound socio-political cleavage in Slovenian society, originating from early 20th century political cleavages that intensified into shocking civil-war-like proportions during the Second World War and have not been subdued to this very day. The results of this political cleavage are also constant political, economic and societal conflict between so--called left-wing political forces, that are more closely connected and supported by the NGOs and major media outlets, and mostly less influential right-wing political forces that failed to seize the opportunity presented to them during the democratic transition period after the end of communism to make up the half-century deficit between 1940s and 1990s.

The painful years of global crisis and democratic regression

Almost immediately after the new left-wing government took over in November 2008, the impact of the world economic crisis hit Slovenia hard. It was easily visible to the Slovenian public and opposition that the government had great difficulties dealing with the crisis, as it appeared to be not only in a major economic crisis, but also in a major political crisis, supplied by the inability of then Prime Minister Borut Pahor to effectively steer the government away from the crisis. Instead the government appeared to be weak, indecisive, and ineffective and above all, disunited, contributing to the growing distrust of Slovenians towards politics in general and especially towards political parties.

A few months after the shift of political power the second European Parliament elections since Slovenian membership to the EU were held on 7 June 2009. There were 81 candidates (40 females) for seven Slovenian seats[4] in

3 The New Slovenia-Christian People's Party is also the only political party in modern Slovenian history to bounce back at the next parliamentary elections (held in December 2011), where they managed to get 4,9 percent of votes to re-enter the parliament.

4 Because of the change in the number of European Parliament representatives from each member country (according to the Lisbon Treaty) and the amended Law on the Elections of Representatives from the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenia in 2011 received one additional MEP, SDS candidate Zofija Mazej Kukovič.

the European Parliament, and candidates were grouped in twelve candidacy-lists, among them all seven parliamentary parties of the time and five non-parliamentary parties. Voting turnout decreased even further across the EU (43 percent), but in Slovenia it was almost identical to five years before (28,3 percent).[5] Just eight months after losing the national parliamentary elections, the now leading opposition party the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) won the elections conclusively with three elected Members of the European Parliament (MEP), followed by the ruling party at the time, Social Democrats (SD) with two MEPs, and with ZARES – New Politics, Liberal Democratic Party (LSD) and the non-parliamentary New Slovenia-Christian People's Party (NSi), each with one elected MEP.

The election period to the European parliament was already influenced heavily by poor economic conditions that continued into 2010 and 2011 and then even further deteriorated. The government initiated several economic reforms to revitalise the economy and again generate economic growth; the most important reforms were those for retirees (Pensions and Disability Insurance Act) and for the labour market (Prevention of Illegal Work and Employment Act). The government failed to present and label the reforms as economically necessary and as positive to the general public, and consequently the reforms were met hard by the unions and political opposition, who demanded several corrigenda in each of the reforms and threatened with referendums if the demanded corrigenda were not implemented. As neither side was prepared to bend, a triple referendum was held on 5 June 2011 for the first time in recent Slovenian history. The referendum was initiated by the unions and opposition parties, and greatly contributed to the fall of the government three months later. The most important of the three referendums was the Pension and Disability Insurance Act,[6] containing retirement reform. The government put all their efforts and political weight on winning at least this referendum only to fail completely, as all three legislative acts were rejected decisively (70,9 to 75,4 percent of votes against with 40,5 percent voter turnout). The defeat only added fuel to the ongoing political crisis, and the government consequently failed to get the vote of confidence in the National Assembly in September 2011 (Haček et al. 2017: 176).

Pahor was more successful in the bilateral relations with neighbouring Croatia, which was in negotiations to enter the European Union as the latest member state and the second from the Western Balkans. He negotiated an Arbitration Agreement with Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor over the border dispute that originated from the early 1990s, when both countries gained independence but failed to agree on the exact border line on land and especially

5 Source of data: European Parliament, About Parliament, available at http://www.europarl.europe.eu/about parliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-(1979–2009).html (4 June 2019).

6 The other two being referendums on the Prevention of Illegal Work and Employment Act and Protection of Documents and Archives and Archival Institutions Act.

on the sea coast. The border dispute was always useful fuel for internal political squabbles with numerous, sometimes violent incidents, especially in Piran Bay. The Slovenian government managed to sign the arbitration agreement with Croatia in 2009, which determined that the dispute would be resolved in front of the five-member Arbitration Court established for this case only; the decision made by the Arbitration Court should have been obligatory for both sides. The referendum on the Arbitration Agreement with Croatia over the border dispute was called by the 86 MPs and carried out in June 2010. With the relatively low turnout (42 percent), surprisingly 51,5 percent voted for the Agreement and only 48,5 percent against it, effectively opening European doors for Croatia to enter the Union.

The Triple referendum defeat resulted in the first precocious parliamentary elections, held on 4 December 2011. We also witnessed an at-the-time novice political phenomena, as several new political parties were established in the sixty days prior to the elections, and two of them[7] playing a critical role in the elections and coalition-building procedures that followed. The Precocious elections were surprisingly won by Positive Slovenia (PS), which managed to overtake long time favourite Slovenian democratic party (SDS), but PS leader Zoran Janković failed to understand that in a proportional system he actually needed a ruling coalition in order to get elected as Prime Minister. PS couldn't form any kind of coalition, and after several political turns the new right-centre coalition emerged, led by the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and Prime Minister for the second time, Janez Janša. But the coalition proved to be short-lived, as three coalition partners, namely Citizen's Alliance of Gregor Virant (DLGV), DeSUS and SLS, abandoned the ruling coalition in the first two months of 2013 following the political impacts of the report issued by the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC). In the report, Prime Minister Janša and opposition leader Janković were accused of violating financial disclosure obligations. Specifically, both systematically and repeatedly violated the law by failing to properly report their assets to the CPC, according to the CPC. Janša rejected the calls for resignation and the ruling coalition of two right-wing parties (SDS, NSi) was left to rule with only a minority of votes (30) in the National Assembly.

On 27 February 2012, a majority of MPs in the National Assembly supported the vote of no-confidence for Prime Minister Janša, and at the same time also elected a new Prime Minister, Alenka Bratušek from Positive Slovenia. Her election was supported by the centre-left coalition (52 MPs), comprised of Posi-

7 The first one is Civil List of Gregor Virant, founded by Gregor Virant, former minister of public administration in the right-wing government from 2004 to 2008; the second is Positive Slovenia, founded by mayor of the national capital city of Ljubljana, Zoran Janković, who was always presenting himself as a non-partisan figure, but who was also always very strongly in favor of left-wing political parties. Zoran Janković decided that he would seek election for Prime Minister, and most of the political left strongly supported him, which resulted in the failure of ZARES and the once mighty Liberal Democratic Party (LDS) to get the four percent needed in order to reach the parliamentary threshold.

tive Slovenia (PS), Social Democrats (SD), DLGV and the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS). There was considerable haste in assembling the new government, since the National Assembly appointed the new government in only 22 days. The government had to act quickly in this extremely unstable period, marked by a multitude of political and economic affairs and scandals, which resulted in a frequent change of ministers, interpellations, a serious decline of the economy and a serious crisis in the banking sector. However, the government consequently did not fall because of such instabilities, but because of internal discords. Zoran Janković rather surprisingly resumed leadership of the largest coalition party, Positive Slovenia, in April 2014, after he had to retire from the same position the previous year due to a very incriminating report from the Commission for Prevention of Corruption. For this reason, tensions emerged both within the party and within the ruling coalition, which led to the resignation of Alenka Bratušek as Prime Minister. Her retreat from the party and the establishment of her own party (Alliance of Alenka Bratušek). All of this led to a second consecutive early parliamentary election, which, for the first time in independent Slovenia, were held during the summer holidays, on 13 July 2014, with a visible negative impact on voter turnout (51,7 percent compared to 65,6 percent in 2011).

Amidst the most serious political crisis to-date in modern Slovenian history and just 49 days prior to another set of early elections to the National Assembly, the third European Parliament elections were held on 25 May 2014. Voter turnout was slightly lower than in 2009 (24,6 percent), while the turnout in the EU decreased only slightly (42,6 percent); lower turnouts than in Slovenia were recorded only in Slovakia, Poland and in the Czech Republic. For the eight Slovenian MEPs there were 118 candidates on sixteen party lists, of which 57 were female. The winner of the election (24,8 percent) was again the largest opposition party the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), which won three MEPs, a joint list of the Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and New Slovenia – Christian People's Party (NSi) won two MEPs, while centre-left parties Social Democrats (SD), the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS) and "I Believe!" each got one MEP.

The economic crisis recovery and the difficult relationship with the Juncker Commission

For the second time in a row a newly formed political party won early parliamentary elections, this time the Party of Miro Cerar (SMC), which was officially established only 41 days prior to elections. The SMC was concentrated mostly around the personality of Miro Cerar, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Ljubljana and long-time expert legal advisor to the National Assembly. SMC designed its campaign to advocate for the rule of law, higher ethical standards in politics, sustainable development, social responsibility and

human dignity, while the new party extensively used voter dissatisfaction with the existing political climate in the country. The Party of Miro Cerar, which in 2015 was renamed into the Modern Centre Party, won 36 mandates, and quite easily established a new governing coalition, consisting of the Modern Centre Party (36 MPs), the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSUS; 10 MPs) and Social Democrats (SD; 6 MPs). At the time of the government's appointment in the National Assembly in September 2014, the new coalition had a total of 52 MPs.[8] Due to the extremely high number of acquired mandates, SMC also had superiority inside the government with nine ministers, and both coalition partners had seven ministers between themselves.

Despite bringing a higher degree of political and economic stability to the country and working in more favourable economic conditions in comparison with previous governments, Slovenia remained mostly static in the period of Cerar government. The government and public authorities faced general distrust due to the ruling coalition's low effectiveness in dealing with systemic problems of capture by influential lobby groups, a continuing trend from the previous periods, despite the ruling Modern Centre Party (SMC) promises of a 'different politics of higher ethical standards'. Distrust was also chronic with regard to the judiciary and the fight against corruption, as progress that would, for example, allow the prosecution of important individuals, was insufficient. Financial dependence and political capture continued to hamper civil society and the media. Due to internal divisions and a lack of political will, the centre-left coalition was ineffective in tackling the country's major problems, such as the inefficient public healthcare sector and the irresponsible management of state assets (Lovec 2018: 2–3).

In the Cerar government term, the recovery from the economic recession of 2008–2014 continued. The country's robust economic growth, reaching about five percent in 2017 and 2018, helped reduce the fiscal deficit and resulted in a strong decline in unemployment. At the same time, however, the favourable short-term economic situation reduced the pressure on the Cerar government to move on with policy reforms. Although Slovenia features the largest long-term sustainability gap of all EU members, the announced comprehensive health care reform was left to the next government. As for pensions, the Cerar government eventually agreed with social partners upon the broad outline of pension reform to be adopted in 2020, but refrained from taking any controversial decisions. The tax reform eventually adopted in summer 2016 has been

8 In the first two years of the 2014–2018 term, the number of coalition MPs has shifted quite a bit. In March 2017 Party of Modern Centre (SMC) had 35 MPs, Slovenian Democratic Party 19 MPs, Democratic Part of Pensioners (DeSUS) 11 MPs, Social Democrats (SD), United Left and New Slovenia – Christian Democrats each had six MPs, and there were five unaligned MPs (two former members of SMC, two former members of Alliance of Alenka Bratušek and one former member of SDS). Alliance of Alenka Bratušek became first parliamentary party in modern Slovenian history to lose all (four) MPs to other political groups.

more modest than initially announced, and minor changes announced by the minister of finance for 2017 were only partially implemented. The promised privatisation of Telekom Slovenia, the largest communication company in the country, fell victim to political opposition from within and outside the governing coalition. The same happened with the promised privatisation of NLB, the largest Slovenian bank (Haček et al. 2019).

In March 2018, Prime Minister Cerar surprisingly resigned, pointing to increased criticism from public sector unions and the strong opposition to the government's high-profile project of a second railroad track to the port of Koper. In yet another set of early parliamentary elections in June 2018, Cerar's Modern Centre Party (SMC) and most other traditional centre-left parties lost votes. However, the rise of a new centre-left party, the Party of Marjan Šarec (*Lista Marjana Šarca*; LMŠ), a comedian turned mayor who came second in the presidential elections in 2017, allowed the centre-left parties to refuse to even discuss the possibility of forming the ruling coalition with the winner of the elections, the centre-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) of Janez Janša, which got twice as many votes as its nearest rival. In September 2018, the five centre-left parties succeeded in forming a minority government tolerated by the far-leftist Levica party, making Marjan Šarec the newest Prime Minister (Haček et al. 2019). The quality of democracy continued to suffer from widespread corruption. While the Cerar government implemented the Anti-Corruption Action Plan adopted in January 2015, and the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption managed to upgrade its supervisor web platform and launch its successor ERAR in July 2016, doubts about the political elite's commitment to fighting corruption were raised by two developments in particular. The first involved the non-transparent management of a government project in which a second railway track is to be constructed between Divača and the port of Koper. The second involved investments by Magna Steyr, a Canadian-Austrian company that received large subsidies and unconditional support from the government for a plan to build a new car paint shop close to Maribor, but failed to manage things transparently and deliver on its promise of bringing several thousand new jobs to the region. The differences in opinions between the government and civil society organisations on the financial construction of the second railway track project resulted in a referendum being called in September 2017 and repeated because of transparency irregularities on the government's side in May 2018. Nonetheless, the project was not halted as turnout levels for both referendums were too low to render the vote binding, despite the fact that votes opposing the government's plan slightly outnumbered votes in support of the plan in May 2018 (Haček et al. 2019). The dormant conflict between government and local communities over constitutionally guaranteed autonomy of the latter intensified under the Cerar government (Kukovič 2018b: 185).

The Cerar government term also marked the first time since the fall of Berlin wall and the democratisation of CEE that Slovenia lost its leading place in the Freedom House's measurement 'Democracy Index'. This actually happened in 2016, when Slovenia's score dropped substantially for the first time since the early 2000s (to 2.00) and Slovenia was overtaken by improving Estonia (1.93). The trend, which was not only the result of the Cerar government's failure, but also that of previous governments, continued in 2017 and 2018, when Slovenia's score regressed, and Slovenia was caught up by yet another Baltic country, this time Latvia (Table 1). The areas where Slovenia especially struggled compared to the other most successful countries of democratic consolidation, are mainly an independent media and judicial framework, which is also consistent with the analysis above.

Table 1: Nations in Transit 2018 – ratings of specific indicators and the collective Democracy Index for a group of consolidated democracies.

COUNTRY	EP	CS	IM	NGOV	LGOV	JFI	CO	DEMO-CRACY INDEX
SLOVENIA	**1.5**	**2.0**	**2.5**	**2.5**	**1.5**	**2.0**	**2.75**	**2.7**
ESTONIA	**1.5**	**1.75**	**1.5**	**2.0**	**2.25**	**1.5**	**2.25**	**1.86**
LATVIA	**1.75**	**2.0**	**2.0**	**2.0**	**2.25**	**1.5**	**3.0**	**2.7**
CZECH REPUBLIC	**1.25**	**2.0**	**2.75**	**3.0**	**1.75**	**1.75**	**3.5**	**2.29**

The Democracy Index score is an average for Electoral Process (EP); Civil Society (CS); Independent Media (IM); National Democratic Governance (NGOV); Local Democratic Governance (LGOV); Judicial Framework (JFI) and Corruption (CO). Source: Nations in Transit (2018).

Still, by far the most important event in Slovenian foreign relations in the period of the Cerar government was the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling on the border dispute with Croatia. However, the Croatian delegation refused to respect the court's findings, citing revelations that, in 2015, the Slovenian delegation to the Court had inappropriately received confidential information from a judge sitting on the panel. The publication of the Court's decision in June triggered another set of tensions between the two countries, which included blockades and hostile rhetoric by some political actors in Slovenia. The final decision came against the backdrop of disputes related to the delays created by the strict implementation of Schengen border control, which Croatia interpreted as Slovenian pressure over the arbitration issue. Slovenia declared that it would block Croatia's accession to the OECD for its supposed lack of respect for international law and sue Croatia in the Court of Justice to the EU

over the breach of European law (Lovec 2018: 3, 5). Slovenia submitted a letter of complaint against neighbouring Croatia to the European Commission on 16 March 2018 after Croatia refused to implement an arbitration decision on their border dispute in the Adriatic Sea. The letter submitted by Slovenia contained over hundred pages of alleged violations of European law that Slovenia says stem from Croatia's refusal to abide by the arbitration court's ruling. According to procedure, before an EU member state initiates court proceeding against another member, it must first refer the matter to the Commission. But to Slovenian disappointment, the Juncker Commission did not support Slovenian position and decided to remain neutral. The Commission's decision disappointed many in Slovenia and fuelled anti-EU sentiment. The decision was widely interpreted as politically motivated, favouring the right-wing coalition that was ruling Croatia and disregarding the rule of law as one of the EU corner-stones at the same time.

The fourth and latest elections to the European Parliament were held on 26 May 2019. Voter turnout was slightly higher than in 2009 and 2014 (28,9 percent), while the turnout in the EU increased quite a bit (50,9 percent); still, lower turnouts than in Slovenia were recorded only in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic. For the eight Slovenian MEPs there were 103 candidates on fourteen party lists, of which 51 were female. The winner of the election was once again the largest opposition party the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) that had a joint list with the Slovenian People's Party (26,3 percent), which won three MEPs, Social Democrats (SD) received two MEPs, the leading ruling coalition Party of Marjan Šarec also received two MEPs, while New Slovenia – Christian People's Party (NSi) received one MEPs.[9] Low turnout at the European elections in Slovenia, which characterise all four elections in the past fifteen years, is primarily due to disillusionment with politics in general, the lack of interest among voters and also a lack of understanding about the EU among the electorate. A key factor in the selection of candidates for MEPs among Slovenian voters are the individual's charisma and popularity, which can be seen with the election of all eight candidates through the preferential voting at the 2019 elections.

Public opinion towards the European Union and major European Union institutions

We compared the results of public opinion surveys on the satisfaction with the European Union from the time of accession to the present. Support for European Union membership reached its peak at 57 percent in Spring 2003 – at the time of the successful referendum on Slovenia's accession to the European Union – but after the accession, support started to slowly decrease. Going back

9 Source: National Electoral Commission, available at https://volitve.gov.si/ep2019/#/rezultati (28 June 2019).

to Autumn 2004, one finds that 52 percent of survey respondents said European Union membership of Slovenia was a good thing, and only five percent thought it was a bad thing. The data published in July 2016 present a very different picture, as 54 percent of Slovenian respondents expressed distrust towards the European Union. A further reason for concern is the finding that 50 percent of Slovenian citizens said they were not satisfied with how democracy works in the EU; at the same time 53 percent feel that Slovenia should search for its future outside of the Union, which is highest score in the European Union. The satisfaction of Slovenian citizens with the European Union has decreased quite significantly since 2004, and the same observation can be made about trust towards the European Union and its major institutions. Any definitive explanation of these low levels of satisfaction and trust remains elusive, although we can easily find at least partial answers in recent events, especially in the migration trends and the inability of the European Union to find a common response to it, the global economic crisis and the political and economic impacts the crisis has had, with both processes negatively impacting Slovenian politics and contributing to a permanent state of political crisis.

Table 2: Trust of Slovenians towards the European Union and key European Union institutions (in percent)

	EUROPEAN UNION	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	EUROPEAN COMMISSION
2004	60	66	64
2005	55	66	64
2006	70	73	73
2007	65	63	61
2008	60	62	61
2009	50	46	46
2010	48	49	51
2011	38	43	40
2012	39	48	47
2013	34	38	40
2014	37	35	34
2015	41	41	42
2016	35	34	33

2017	42	39	38
2018	44	38	38

Source: Eurobarometer surveys from 2004 to 2018 (Number 62, 63.4, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89), available at www.ec.europa.eu. Numbers represent percentages of respondents who expressed trust towards the European Union as a whole or towards specific listed institutions.

There seems to be little doubt that the generally negative view towards the political sphere among Slovenia's citizens over the last few years must be taken into account (Kukovič – Haček 2016: 139). In general, we must conclude that Slovenian citizens are still much less satisfied with the European Union compared to during the period of accession to the Union, although a limited positive trend in the most recent period can also be observed.

Table 3: Familiarity among Slovenians with key European Union institutions (in percent)

	COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK	COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EU
2004	74	95	90	74	83
2005	79	95	92	76	77
2006	81	97	91	77	82
2007	86	96	91	88	84
2008	88	94	90	91	n.a.
2009	88	96	91	91	n.a.
2010	87	96	92	92	n.a.
2011	83	99	88	93	n.a.
2012	87	98	92	95	95
2013	88	98	94	95	95
2014	n.a.	97	93	94	n.a.
2015	n.a.	98	97	96	n.a.
2017	n.a.	98	96	94	n.a.
2018	78	98	96	95	89

Source: Eurobarometer survey from 2004 to 2018 (numbers 62, 63.4, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89), available at www.ec.europa.eu. Respondents were asked "Have you heard of…?" Numbers represent percentages of respondents, who answered positively to the above question.

Eurobarometer 89 (2018) shows that exactly half of Slovenian respondents distrusted the European Union, which is a bit less than in several previous years, but still much more than in the period after Slovenian accession to the Union. As to how satisfied Slovenian respondents were with how democracy works in the European Union, a minority of respondents (39 percent; EU28 average was 57 percent) express their satisfaction, and 59 percent of survey participants said that they are not satisfied in this regard, compared with the EU28 average of 41 percent. Consistent with the slightly deteriorated data in Eurobarometer survey 89 (2018) was also the result with the statement 'My voice counts in the European Union' – 50 percent of the respondents disagreed with that statement and only 45 percent agreed, offering some insight into the reasons for the consistently low voter turnouts at the European Parliament elections in Slovenia.

Interestingly, at the same time 43 percent of respondents agreed (and 50 disagreed) with the statement 'Slovenia could better face the future outside the European Union', which is the second highest score in the whole EU, just a percent lower than the Brexit ridden United Kingdom. Distrust towards key European Union institutions further diminished a bit after the period of 2014–2016, when Slovenia recorded some of the highest figures of distrust towards the Union; 52 percent of respondents expressed their distrust towards the European Parliament and 51 percent expressed their distrust towards the European Commission, both slightly lower figures compared to surveys in previous years (2016, 2017). To the largest part of the respondents (49 percent) the European Union still represents freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union, and 45 percent connect the European Union with the euro. On the other end of the spectrum, only 16 percent of the respondents connected the European Union with democracy, 15 percent with the lack of control to external borders, 11 percent with unemployment and eight percent with social protection (Eurobarometer 89 2018).

Growing public distrust towards the democratic institutions[10]

The main characteristic of public opinion is its instability; it changes frequently and often in short periods. The comparative data from the Eurobarometer research presented in Table 4 focuses on satisfaction with democracy as a societal and political system in Slovenia and all other 27 EU member states in the period from 2004 to 2018. If we compare the results over the years, then some changes in satisfaction can be detected. In general, one of the most common observations is that in all new CEE democratic systems (shaded rows) there is a high level of dissatisfaction with democracy itself, and trends are rather negative in the

10 For more information about the trust in Slovenian political institutions, please see Brezovšek – Haček (2016).

first period after the accession to the EU and more positive in the most recent period. Similarly, Slovenia started with relatively good levels of public satisfaction with democracy in the period of accession to the EU (57 percent satisfied with democracy in 2004), but this moderate satisfaction quickly turned into serious dissatisfaction (only 26 and 27 percent of satisfaction in 2012 and 2014, respectively), as almost three-quarters of voters expressed their dissatisfaction with democracy at those points. The situation improved with more stability in politics and in the economy in the period from 2014 to 2018 (41 percent of satisfaction with democracy in 2018). Dissatisfaction could also be at least partially connected to the outcomes of the democratic transition and consolidation processes and not with democracy as a type of social-political relation itself.[11] In this case, dissatisfaction can also be expressed through the existing political participation mechanisms like elections, referendums, political protests and so forth. Other research (Norris 1999: 67–72) confirmed the positive connection between the disintegration processes of contemporary societies (especially because of growing inequalities, which are becoming even more evident with the impact of the global economic crisis), with drops in public trust towards key state political institutions.

Table 4: Satisfaction with democracy in the EU member states (total satisfied; in percent)

EU Member State	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
AUSTRIA	71	75	80	78	70	64	64	80
BELGIUM	70	68	66	56	57	63	69	72
BULGARIA	/	/	26	25	24	21	30	35
CROATIA	/	/	/	/	/	24	37	35
CYPRUS	63	63	61	54	33	24	37	41
CZECH REPUBLIC	45	58	51	45	30	47	53	60
DENMARK	91	93	94	92	90	86	91	91
ESTONIA	45	43	53	45	38	49	51	61
FINLAND	83	78	77	69	78	75	77	81

11 This emphasis is supported by a number of public opinion polls. For instance, the 'Democracy in Slovenia' survey (2011) carried out in March 2011 among 907 respondents across the country asked whether democracy is the best possible form of governance and whether democracy, in spite of its imperfections, is still better than other types of social-political relations. Respondents strongly agreed with both statements; on a scale from 0 to 4, where 0 represents 'strongly disagree' and 4 'strongly agree', the first statement got an estimated 3.49 and the second one 3. 38.

FRANCE	57	45	65	54	60	49	45	50
GERMANY	61	55	66	62	70	70	69	73
GREECE	68	55	63	31	11	19	21	26
HUNGARY	37	46	24	35	29	35	42	53
IRELAND	77	75	69	57	50	59	73	79
ITALY	46	53	40	47	27	30	33	42
LATVIA	45	41	43	32	42	47	52	59
LITHUANIA	34	23	24	17	21	30	42	35
LUXEMBURG	83	83	73	83	84	76	87	82
MALTA	48	48	53	45	49	62	64	71
NETHERLANDS	71	75	80	75	75	74	78	82
POLAND	30	38	48	54	48	59	57	64
PORTUGAL	39	30	36	29	25	25	52	64
ROMANIA	/	/	36	20	13	25	38	34
SLOVAKIA	25	25	35	36	29	22	43	45
SLOVENIA	57	54	48	38	26	27	36	41
SPAIN	64	71	77	53	32	22	39	40
SWEDEN	76	74	80	84	86	82	79	81
UNITED KINGDOM	63	60	62	59	60	65	64	63
EU 25/27/28 AVERAGE	**58**	**57**	**57**	**51**	**47**	**50**	**53**	**57**

Sources: Eurobarometer 62; available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb62/eb62_en.htm; Eurobarometer 65; available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb65/eb65_en.pdf. Eurobarometer 70; available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb70/eb70_en.htm. Eurobarometer 73; available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/ archives/eb/eb73/eb73_anx_full.pdf. Eurobarometer 78; available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/ archives/eb/eb78/eb78_anx_en.pdf. Eurobarometer 82; available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ eb/eb82/eb82_en.htm. Eurobarometer 86; available at http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2137. Eurobarometer 90; available at http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2215 (all accessed in June 2019). The question was: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in your country?" Only answers to "Very satisfied" and "Fairly satisfied" are taken into account.

In general, the public opinion polls show that new democratic systems are faced with a relatively high degree of dissatisfaction with democracy and therefore also with the democratic institutions. Additionally, we also clearly see that satisfaction with democracy is a highly unstable phenomenon. Slovenia does not differ much from this general framework, rather the opposite, since on average,

more than half of the citizens are constantly dissatisfied with the democratic regime after 2008. In Table 5 we see that the level of discontent substantially rises through the years, but especially after 2008 due to the growing impact of the global economic crisis and a sense that politics is being ineffective in dealing with the crisis. In 2013 and 2014, the level of dissatisfaction with democracy were the highest ever at 87 percent. The question is, how high can frustrated tolerance actually be and how much can the 'fragile' post-socialist democratic political system withstand before the high levels of dissatisfaction transfer into the denial of the legitimacy of the democratic political system and its key institutions?

Table 5: Satisfaction with the democracy (in percent)

Year	SATISFIED	UNSATISFIED	NO REPONSE
1998	31	58	11
1999	39	49	12
2000	40	48	12
2001	42	46	12
2002	44	46	10
2003	38	55	7
2004	41	51	8
2005	34	59	7
2006	39	51	11
2007	36	58	6
2008	39	55	6
2009	32	62	6
2010	11	86	3
2011	12	84	4
2012	12	85	3
2013	8	87	5
2014	8	87	5

Source: Politbarometer. Data from last conducted survey in each calendar year is shown. For 2014, data from June survey is shown. After 2014 the survey was discontinued. The question was: »Are you generally satisfied or unsatisfied with the development of democracy in Slovenia?

Trust towards the state administration is relatively low in Slovenia, but still slightly higher than the level of trust towards the majority of other established political institutions (Haček et al. 2017: 133–136). The reasons for the relatively low levels of trust towards the state administration might be found in the 'inheritance' of the administrative system of the former non-democratic regime, which is understandably relatively unpopular, as well as the slow public administration reform in Slovenia in general. Distrust can also be explained because of – mostly unjustified – allegations that the state administration and the entire public sector in Slovenia are ineffective and inoperative, which certainly does not contribute to their positive reputation. To make the picture clearer, an analysis of the longer period of public opinion measurements is needed. It may be noted that in the period from 1990s to 2008 there were still relatively high levels of trust in the key political institutions of the Slovenian political system,[12] but for the aforementioned reasons those levels dropped quite dramatically after 2008 and never really recovered. In 2010 Slovenia recorded a major additional loss of confidence in political institutions,[13] with similar trends and the reasons somewhat earlier (Table 5) indicated in the measurement of citizens' satisfaction with democracy.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter we posed some seemingly simple and straight-forward questions that should reveal what happened after Slovenia managed to successfully enter into the European Union. As our extensive analysis clearly showed, Slovenia has walked a rocky and steep political and economic path for the last 15 years, which was not only leading upwards, but in some periods also downwards in the dark alleys of democratic regression.

To understand the character of contemporary Slovenian democracy it is necessary to look back into recent political history. Two key factors, which have as a political constancy determined this development and largely also marked Slovenian political culture, can be identified. The first is ideological exclusivism as an expression of great differences in ideas, while the second one is collectivistic corporatism which, with its tendency to unity, not only expressed resistance to political conflicts but also resistance to differences and competition because it could hurt social harmony. From here the strong tendency originates to overcome the divisions in the political space through the creation of grand coali-

12 For 2008, data is as follows: Government (3.0), Prime Minister (3.2), Parliament (3.0), President of the Republic (3.4), political parties (2.5) and state administration (3.0) on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'I do not trust at all', and 5 means 'I trust completely' (Haček et al. 2017: 136).

13 For 2010, data is as follows: Government (2.1), Prime Minister (2.1), Parliament (2.1), President of the Republic (3.1), political parties (2.0) and state administration (2.7) on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'I do not trust at all', and 5 means 'I trust completely' (Haček et al. 2017: 136).

tions, which was the characteristic of the first decade of Slovenian independence. This practice changed after entering into European Union in 2004 into a more competitive and conflict-oriented mode of policy, which is constituted by a distinction between authority and opposition. Accordingly, the different ways of narrowing the possibilities to express and confront opposite opinions and positions do not benefit the development of a parliament democracy. But they partly match the prevailing tendencies to narrow the possibilities of direct democracy and to spread the influence of governing political parties onto non-governmental stakeholders, such as media and NGOs. Also, the reanimation of populist rituals and ideology should not be overlooked which co-exist with decreasing sentiments towards the European Union and its institutions, with both tendencies holding back the development of the liberal-democratic characteristics of a Slovenian democracy.

Experience Slovenia has had in its construction of a democratic political system since entering into the EU has been subject to varying assessments. The most negative assessments of Slovenian political system are related to the persistence of authoritarian behavior patterns and manipulation of democratic institutions that have found its way into the structures of political parties, to the partitocracy resulting from this and the bureaucratic sprawl (Haček et al. 2017). Until the mid-2010s, different surveys placed Slovenia among 'consolidated democracies' usually with the highest total marks among the CEE countries. However, in 2015 this changed and Slovenia began to regress. The problems of the Slovenian political system, which were further exposed with the inability of the ruling political class to effectively battle the economic and political crisis in the period from 2008 to 2014, are related to various forms of nepotism, clientelism and corruption, the implementation of the rule of law and the insufficiently developed democratic culture and with it, the culture of public and tolerant dialogue. Democracy cannot be effective unless it is underpinned by the rule of law and a well-functioning judicial system, and those are the areas that have become most problematic since the political and economic crisis ended in 2014. As the European Union and its institutions are often the ones bringing attention to the issues mentioned and the ones demanding the construction and implementation of reform programs, and as Slovenian politics has grown into a populist particracy without any sense of democratic accountability towards the electorate since European Union accession, one cannot wonder that the European Union is no longer seen as a political and societal fairytale honey-land that will solve every possible problem in a heartbeat. On the contrary, it is very evident and clear to even the average Slovenian voter that Slovenia today has almost zero influence in the European Union, mostly because of its own miscalculations, the politicisation of merit bureaucracy and a total lack of consistent foreign policy. Unless there is substantial change in Slovenian politics in the next few years, which seems unlikely in the state of

constant political conflict and the total distrust of voters towards politics and political institutions, Slovenian democratic regression could very well continue for many years to come.

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Authoritarian Liberalism in Contemporary Europe: methodological approaches and conceptual models

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Abstract: *The author conducts a comparative analysis of authoritarian liberalism's concepts in contemporary political theory. The paper deals with the main directions of interpretation of authoritarian liberalism in the framework of methodological approaches and conceptual models of neoliberalism, ordoliberalism, political liberalism, J.-W. Mueller's 'restrained democracy', J. Habermas' 'legitimation crisis', C. Crouch's 'post-democracy', C. Macpherson's 'participatory democracy', M. Wilkinson's 'dedemocratisation and delegalisation', W. Streeck's 'democratic capitalism crisis' and G. Majone's 'crypto-federalism'. The basic analytical concept is the idea of authoritarian economic liberalism, first proposed by H. Heller and K. Polanyi. This paper will substantiate that in crisis and transformational periods the actualisation of authoritarian liberalism corresponds to the fundamental tension between market capitalism and representative democracy. The author conceptualises authoritarian liberalism as the practice of dedemocratisation and restrained democracy, which results in the regionalisation of radical protest against the supranational regime of political integration in Europe. Latent political authoritarianism strengthens economic liberalism, which, in turn, reinforces the further EU's 'liberal authoritarian transformation'. Authoritarian liberalism restricts traditional forms of representative democracy, contributing to the reanimation of populism and political radicalism. The authoritarian restriction of representative democracy can lead not only to the strengthening of market capitalism, but also to the revival of reactionary forms of 'new nationalism' and illiberalism. Today, the EU's regime is transformed from a nominally rule-based structure supported by market discipline into a 'discretionary order' reinforced by bureaucratic power. The EU's transnational solidarity can become a democratically legitimate tool for a de-escalation of tensions between market capitalism and representative democracy.*

Keywords: ***authoritarian liberalism, market capitalism, representative democracy, neoliberalism, ordoliberalism, political liberalism, dedemocratization, restrained democracy, post-democracy, legitimation crisis, transnational solidarity, European integration, EU.***

Introduction

In the period covering the decade since the beginning of the 2008 financial crisis, the authority and legitimacy of the constitutional state and the state system in Europe were affected by a number of existential challenges related to the future of the European project, its fundamental values and Euro-integration perspectives. Now, the EU remains relatively stable; outside the UK, political ideas for ending the Euro-integration experiment remain marginal, although anti-European pressure is increasing in leading European countries, and Euro-skeptical parties are on the rise. Obviously, systemic and anti-systemic challenges are associated both with the legitimacy of domestic regimes and with the very functioning of the EU, which is due to fragmentary pressure from 'below' in the context of subnational claims for autonomy. In the regions of Europe, where there is an increase in support for speakers from autonomist positions of parties, political mobilisation of supporters of independence occurs on the basis of belonging to a territorial community. The desire for inclusiveness, declared in European public discourse, gives such a mobilisation a positive civil connotation.

The constitutional crisis concerns not only the European Union as a whole, but also the regional political system and order of governance on the continent. The fundamental conditions for these multiple sub-crises were created in the era of the Maastricht Treaty and the accompanying geopolitical reconfiguration of modern Europe. Maastricht created the constitutional structure of the Economic and Monetary Union, laid the foundation for the Schengen regime and opened the door to differentiated integration and expansion of Europe to the East. This marked a change in the economic balance of power, 'depoliticization of capitalism' (W. Streeck), 'reunification', which opened the way to 'German Europe' (U. Beck) (Streeck 2015; Beck 2013). According to J. Habermas, after 1992 it is impossible to escape from the 'universe of capitalism'; the only remaining option is to 'civilize and tame the capitalist system from the inside' (Habermas 2012: 106).

W. Bonefeld and M. Wilkinson describe the constitutional crisis in contemporary Europe as 'authoritarian economic liberalism' (Bonefeld 2017; Wilkinson 2015), which was first analysed as a political phenomenon by H. Heller as an essential characteristic of the late Weimar regime (Heller 2015). K. Polanyi des-

ignated 'authoritarian liberalism' as a general characteristic of the entire period of interwar collapse of liberal democracy (Polanyi 2001). J.-W. Muller introduces the concept of 'restrained democracy' for a reinterpretation of the phenomenon of authoritarian liberalism (Muller 2011). Contemporary authoritarian liberalism with the principles of 'de-democratization and delegalization' transforms the norms of democratic constitutionalism and representative democracy in order to maintain liberal economic commitments regarding currency stability and prices, tight fiscal discipline and competitiveness, on the one hand, and avoidance of 'moral responsibility', on the other hand (Wilkinson 2015).

Authoritarian liberalism ignores the ethical dimension of public policy and constructs an ideological barrier to 'positive liberty', creating conditions for the materialistic reduction of moral imperatives of social liberalism and participatory democracy. Contemporary authoritarian liberalism is accompanied by systemic and anti-systemic challenges to the dominant order in the process of searching for EU integration alternatives, enhancing right-wing conservatism and 'new nationalism', returning political populism and neo-authoritarianism, which is most evident in Central and Eastern Europe, but also reflected in the growth of Euro-skeptical parties such as 'National Front' and 'Alternative for Germany'.

The goal of this paper is to assess the cognitive potential of the concept of 'authoritarian liberalism' and to analyse the main directions of interpretation of this phenomenon within the framework of various methodological approaches and conceptual models with a view to further conceptualisation. Conceptualisation of authoritarian liberalism as a category of contemporary political discourse becomes a priority to explain the current EU's crisis. This paper will substantiate that in critical and transformational periods the actualisation of authoritarian liberalism corresponds to the fundamental tension between market capitalism and representative democracy. Identifying modern liberalism as a political liberalism, the political and constitutional theory excludes conflict dynamics between capitalism and democracy, which creates difficulties for perception of the concept of 'authoritarian liberalism'.

Liberalism and democracy

Analysing four models of liberal democracy – protective democracy, developmental democracy, equilibrium democracy, and participatory democracy – C. Macpherson notes that the prospects for moving toward a more democratic society are not so bleak. Moving towards it at the same time requires an increase in the measure of participation and encourages such participation. As a basic condition for the emergence of a 'liberal participation democracy', C. Macpherson calls 'a significant reduction in the level of social and economic inequality'. He argues that we cannot achieve more democratic participation without a prior change in the level of social inequality and a change in con-

sciousness, but we cannot achieve a change in the level of social inequality and a change in consciousness until we increase the level of democratic participation (Macpherson 1966).

Chronologically, liberalism precedes democracy and relations between them are contradictory. G. Sartori explains the theoretical distinction between liberalism and democracy by the fact that liberalism is 'a technique of restricting state power', while democracy is 'introducing people's power into the state'. Liberalism and democracy determine the constitutional and social spheres, the first of which is assigned to liberalism, which regulates the role of democracy in the state, and the second to democracy, which regulates economic welfare and social equality (Sartori 1993). According to B. Barber, 'liberalism poorly serves democracy and its survival depends on the search for new institutional forms that weaken the connection of democracy with liberal theory' (Barber 2003: 34). F. Zakaria takes the opposite position, stating that liberalism supports and strengthens democracy, while democracy without liberalism is dysfunctional: the more liberalism 'controls' democracy, the higher the quality of the democratic regime (Zakaria 1997). M. Crozier, S. Huntington and D. Watanuki previously confirmed this thesis in the report 'The Crisis of Democracy' in 1975 as part of the work of the 'Trilateral Commission' (Crozier – Huntington – Watanuki 1975).

The merging of authoritarianism and liberalism seems incompatible due to the long dominance of discourse of political, rather than economic liberalism. For most of the twentieth century, liberalism developed in the Western countries, having as its antithesis the concept of totalitarianism, and therefore emphasising its fundamental disagreement with any forms of collectivist ideology. During the deep-rooted ideological battles of the Cold War period, liberalism was associated with democracy and opposed authoritarian socialism. This was reinforced by 'the end of history' thesis of F. Fukuyama, in which liberal democracy was the culmination of historical progress (Fukuyama 1992). Influenced by the ideas of J. Rawls and J. Habermas, liberalism was identified as a synonym for democracy, even from egalitarian positions in a social democratic and neo-Marxist paradigm (Habermas 1995; Rawls 1993).

The post-war political mainstream did not offer alternatives to capitalism as a potential threat to the democratic order, which was reflected in the criticism not only of the economic liberalism of F. von Hayek, but also of the political liberalism of J. Habermas and J. Rawls for the lack of consistency with the problem of the ability of economic power to influence politics (Wolin 1996; Mouffe 1999). Speaking about the long-term relationship of economic liberalism and democracy, we recall F. von Hayek's distrust of not only social justice, but also of democracy, as well as his flirting with political authoritarianism (Hayek 1960; Scheuerman 1997). Supporting C. Schmitt's criticism of the German left's attempts to influence the former Kaiser's private property, F. von Hayek proposed

developing general rules for deterring the 'whim of the electorate' to ensure the free flow of capital, goods and labor (Hayek 1960). Akin to the concept of 'democracy', liberalism is nevertheless not identical with it; moreover, in its neoliberal incarnation liberalism is rather opposed to democracy. On the contrary, J. Schumpeter revealed a causal relationship between modern democracy and capitalism. In his opinion, democracy dominated the process of political and institutional changes, through which the bourgeoisie changed the form of social and political structure that preceded its domination, and made it more rational. The democratic method was a practical tool for this reconstruction. Contemporary democracy is a product of the capitalist process (Schumpeter 2000).

The democratic paradigm of contemporary political science is based on the concept of competitive electoral democracy. To define the state as an 'electoral democracy', indexes calculated by Freedom House (competitive multiparty political system; universal suffrage; regular alternative elections; wide public access to main political parties through the media and through open political campaigning) are widely used. Electoral democracy is procedural and limited in nature and is defined as a 'method': this interpretation does not interfere in the economy and political system. As P. Schmitter and T. L. Karl note, 'democratization does not necessarily lead to economic growth, social stability, managerial efficiency, political harmony, a free market, or the end of ideology' (Schmitter, Karl 1993: 61). Political analysts consider the mechanism of electoral democracy apart from political institutions of the capitalist economy. In this context, many critics see liberal democracy as a 'political tool and the most suitable shell for capitalism, rather than a means of liberating a person.'

In liberal-democratic regimes, the political sphere is mainly the sphere of liberalism, and the social sphere is the sphere of democracy: 'democracy is more than liberalism, in the socio-economic sense, but less than liberalism, in the political sense' (Sartori 1993: 210). The political is the sphere of limiting the powers of the state and the protection of the rights and freedoms of the individual; the social is the democratic space for the redistribution of welfare. The modern left advocates for sociocultural liberalism, which promotes individual rights and equality of opportunity, while the right advocates for authoritarian economic and political liberalism, which protects the free market, freed from the shackles of the bureaucratic state. These conflicting forms of neoliberalism mutually reinforce each other and contribute to the convergence of market individualism, bureaucratic authoritarianism and socio-cultural atomism, which leads to the depoliticisation of the socio-economic sphere of society, makes it dependent on the market, at the same time reducing the freedom of self-realisation, destroys the former social ties and activates right-wing conservatism.

The process of 'European depoliticization' as one of the important sources of authoritarian liberalism reached its apogee in the concept of the E. Giddens's 'third way' (embodied in the centrism of the 'New Labour' by T. Blair

and subsequently imitated by all European social democrats). This approach offered an alternative to the neoliberal paradigm, but in many cases deepened it (Wilkinson 2015). European integration has reinforced 'radical centrism' thanks to its institutional procedures of 'consensus lawmaking' and of imperative support of market liberalism. In the absence of a sustainable system of supranational democracy, member states are left with 'the politics but without policies', and the EU – 'with policies but no politics' (Mair 2013). Western representative democracy breaks ties between voters and party elites, who in the past provided the legitimacy of the system. Labor and socialist parties have fewer connections with grassroots organisations and act as technocratic organisations created to manage the system regardless of voters' preferences (Mair 2013). Capitalist globalisation creates structural pressure on left-wing governments to limit the welfare state and increase incentives for private investors. As W. Streeck writes about the new phase of the euro crisis and the depoliticisation of the economy, 'where there are still democratic institutions in Europe, there is no economic governance that would not be seized by non-capitalist interests that transform the market. Where there is economic governance, there is no democracy' (Streeck 2015).

Within the framework of the Habermas' theory of communicative action, this dynamic can be described as 'legitimation crisis' and profound change in the 'democratically legitimate cycle of power': a democratic policy is stable and functional if it is founded and legitimised by 'communicative power' formed by the public sphere of 'mutual understanding'. Communicative power is the force of resistance and limitation of the 'functional imperatives' of the systemic reproduction of the state's economy and administrative system. Communicative power should prevail over such 'functional imperatives', limiting them by laws. However, when the momentum of the public sphere disappears and people become apathetic, the functional imperatives of the economic system cease to meet resistance and begin to 'colonize' the political process: politics becomes a tool for stabilising the capitalist system and restrictions on human rights (Habermas 1984; Habermas 1996).

Authoritarian tendencies of European integration are becoming increasingly apparent in political practice, which G. Majone calls 'crypto-federalism' and 'integration by stealth' (the idea of J. Monnet). Crypto-federalism is 'federalism without a federal constitution', when the forces and subjects of political integration do not operate openly in the direction of the federal constitution — the main goal of neofunctionalism — but pursue a strategy of 'minor steps and grand effects'. Crypto-federalism secretly and non-publicly launches the integration process, while political integration takes place 'under the guise of' economic integration. The strategy of 'stealth integration' makes democracy irrelevant and provides key solutions to European elites (Majone 2009: 72).

The main conditions of the euro regime imposed by the member states of the Euro group, as well as the 'Troika' institutions (IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Commission), are neoliberal 'austerity' measures (privatisation, liberalisation, labor market reforms, regressive taxation). This requires extreme state intervention in the society, breaking social contracts and breaking existing relationships. Analysing institutional changes in the management of the Economic and Monetary Union, in particular, the new powers and authority of the Euro group and the European Central Bank, it is important to note that the neoliberal trend is a symptom of long-term trends in the constitutionalism of Europe (Kaupa 2017).

The ousting of social democracy in favor of 'market technocracy' and 'market rationality' is also a manifestation of these tendencies. Concerns about the lack of democracy in the EU existed long before the 2008 financial crisis. In 1995, J. Habermas noted an increase in the deficit of democracy in Europe: in his opinion, the socio-economic dynamics within the existing institutional structure led to the erosion of national states through European law (Habermas 1995). In this context, it is necessary to understand whether authoritarian liberalism is a modifying or deterrent factor of democracy. The internal electorate can accept the idea that there is no alternative to neoliberal structural reforms if this idea is imposed as a 'constitutional coercion' and an ideological construct, despite the fact that it still appears to be contradictory (Blyth 2013). Today, the EU's regime is transformed from a nominally rule-based structure supported by market discipline into a 'discretionary order' reinforced by bureaucratic power.

Authoritarian liberalism in the epoch of post-democracy

The term 'authoritarian liberalism' covers two basic symptoms of the constitutional development of Europe. In the EU and especially in the Eurozone, there is an authoritarian aspect of governance, represented by the binary process of dedemocratisation and delegalisation, which is related to ignoring parliamentary powers and parliamentary debates, as well as violating the guarantees of the rule of law and the protection of social rights (Wilkinson 2015). To understand this binary process, the terms 'executive managerialism' (Joerges 2013) and 'emergency Europe' (White 2015) are used in contemporary political analysis.

In the context of radical democratic criticism, neoliberalism ignores the danger of authoritarian rule, not limited to the socio-economic sphere (Rawls 1971; Cohen 2008). Liberalism takes 'for granted' the existence of a 'lively democratic culture', underestimating its fragility and evading the recognition of threats arising within the capitalist economy: the logic of individualism and market competition can lead to the erosion of social solidarity that democracy needs (Polanyi 2001). Constitutional theorists also avoid the question of the nature and consequences of economic liberalism in capitalist society by analysing the

general problems of the legitimacy of a constitutional review of legislation to protect civil liberties (Alexander 1998). According to M. Sandel, the celebration of the metaphorical 'market of ideas' is not concerned about the actual market for goods, capital, services and, in a broader sense, the impact of commodification and market behavior on social relations, not counting marginal examples of market immorality (Sandel 2012: 42).

The synthesis of political authoritarianism and economic liberalism is not unique within the framework of the Euro-crisis, this approach was used in the context of the transformation of capitalism in Southeast Asia and Latin America to denote autocratic and even dictatorial measures to implement a 'free market economy' (Jayasuriya 2001). This type of authoritarian-liberal synthesis is called 'authoritarian neoliberalism', which is associated with the transition from the relatively consensual neoliberalism of the 'third way' to a new 'coercive type' that arose during the recent financial crisis (Bruff 2014; Procházka – Cabada 2020). The relative autonomy of the economy, acting according to the logic of the depoliticisation of inequality, the commodification of social relations and the erosion of solidarity, affects the legitimacy of the political dimension of democracy and the relationship between governors and the governed. Liberal theory shies away from analysing this dynamic, taking market capitalism for granted: it does not resolve either the capitalist contradictions between public goods and private interests, or the structural inequalities inherent in the capitalist state (Wilkinson 2015).

C. Crouch, using the concept of 'post-democracy' to explain the contradictions between modern capitalism and democracy, conducts a political analysis of 'authoritarian liberalism'. 'Post-democracy' is associated with the decline of social classes and the spread of global capitalism. According to C. Crouch, if there are only two concepts – democracy and non-democracy – we will not make too much progress in discussions about the health of democracy. The idea of post-democracy helps us to describe those situations where democracy advocates embrace fatigue, despair and frustration; when an interested and strong minority is much more active in trying to exploit the political system to its advantage; when political elites have learned to control and manipulate people's demands; when people are almost dragged to the polling stations by the hand (Crouch 2010: 35). Post-democracy is associated with the emergence of a closed political class, more interested in creating links with business groups than in conducting democratic programs that meet the interests of all citizens; under authoritarian liberalism, when power is in the hands of a 'strong minority', there is no reason to rely on an egalitarian policy of redistributing power and wealth.

Today the separation between political and economic spheres reflects tensions between democracy and capitalism as real political and social forces. According to W. Streeck, in the post-war period the capitalist state is transformed from a 'tax state' through a 'debt state' of the neoliberal era into a new

'consolidation state' with the principle of austerity (Streeck 2013). The modern state continues to develop as a democratic state; its constitutional authority essentially depends on its connection with the 'people'. The 'people' here represent the rhetorical and symbolic power of sovereignty, which reflects the relative autonomy of the political sphere not only from a classical theocracy in the context of modern secularisation, but also from an economic power. This is not only a modernist worldview, but also a continuous and fragile process of modernisation, due to the social struggle against the merger of political and economic power and class society. This narrative includes class, worker, feminist, anti-colonial, ethno-national movements and other forms of political struggle for equality and recognition. A modern state can be represented as the tension between democracy and capitalism, solidarity and individualism.

In critical periods, when capitalism and democracy enter into an explicit conflict, both in terms of interests and values, the state is 'perceived' as a representation of this tension in political economy, and in some cases as an actor in conflict resolution. The reason why we can speak here about the state, and not just about the temporarily elected government, is that all the institutions of the state ('ideological and repressive state apparatus' according to L. Althusser) strengthen and reformat the relationship between democracy and capitalism through the military, police, judicial authorities, central banks, cultural institutions and the media (Althusser 2014). This 'repressive ideological apparatus' in Europe (the European Commission, the European Council, the European Central Bank, the Eurogroup, the European Parliament), without having a strong representative body as a 'corrective force', evades democratic control (Wilkinson 2015).

Just as modern capitalism and inequality can threaten a democratic state, the democratic struggle for political and social equality can act as a potential threat to the capitalist state. Democratic movements can threaten a fundamental structural change in politics and economics with a new demand for political and democratic control over the economy (in the case of democratic socialism). In such a context, in order to preserve the status quo, the 'ideological and repressive apparatus' of the capitalist state offers a more advanced form of liberal neo-authoritarianism. To reflect the conflict dynamics of authoritarian liberalism in modern Europe, it is necessary to present a diachronic review of the problem under consideration.

Ordoliberalism and authoritary liberalism

During critical periods of transformation, tensions between the democratic and capitalist states increase, which entails a deep constitutional crisis. The most important moment in the history of European integration is the interwar period, which marks the end of the 'long nineteenth century'. In late Weimar

Germany, the democratic capitalist state reached its apogee due to the growth of a politically emancipated proletariat, which began to threaten the political and economic differentiation created and defended by the Constitution. The reaction of the ruling elite to this threat was the convergence of authoritarianism and economic liberalism, as the social democrat and constitutional theorist H. Heller first pointed out in 1933 (Heller 2015). The basic principle of 'authoritarian liberalism' in H. Heller's phenomenology is the principle of rigid authoritarian rule instead of the principle of a democratic majority; but authoritarian support for economic liberalism does not necessarily come down to a fascist 'quasi-religious salvation' (Heller 2015: 645). Authoritarian liberalism is based on a rational understanding of economic necessity and conclusions that speak about the absence of a real alternative to depoliticising the economy and reducing social programs (Heller 2015: 652–653).

The term 'authoritarian liberalism' was used by H. Heller to radically criticise Germany's attempts to enter into an alliance with big business in the period between 1930 and 1933 in order to maintain economic liberalism at the cost of intervening in politics in favor of capitalist interests (Heller 2015). The purpose of the criticism of H. Heller was not only the centrist policy of Chancellor H. Brüning, but also K. Schmitt's constitutional theory with the formula 'strong state, free economy'. C. Schmitt recommended Germany 'a strong state with a free market' that opposed the threat of democratic socialism and experiments of economic democracy (Cristi 1998).

The centrist government of H. Brüning ignored parliamentary democracy, using presidential decrees under the cover of an emergency to impose austerity and protect the basic principles of economic liberalism. This policy was based on disappointment with democratic solidarity for maintaining a capitalist economy during the critical period of post-war deflation, unemployment and political turbulence. For the authoritarian liberals of Germany, the fear, reinforced by the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia, was determined by the potential turn of democracy towards socialism (Cristi 1998). This model of authoritarian reaction to the economic crisis was not unique to the late Weimar – countries around the world tried to maintain the requirements of the Gold Standard, resisting social democracy until they abandoned gold, which led to Welfarism in Great Britain and the New Deal in the US. According to K. Polanyi, the more fiercely the countries resisted social democracy through authoritarianism in the name of economic liberalism, the stronger and harsher was the backlash: authoritarian liberalism ousted democracy, weakening its ability to respond to the fascist threat (Polanyi 2001).

The main argument of H. Heller is that social inequality is incompatible with constitutional democracy since it requires a high degree of social homogeneity, or at least its prospects for maintaining political legitimacy (Heller 2015). However, contemporary constitutional theory still underestimates the chal-

lenges to democracy on the part of economic liberalism and sees in democracy the main threat to capitalism. After the Second World War, political theory substantiates the key idea of the constitutional protection of liberalism, neglecting the studies of power structures that can formally undermine democracy in a capitalist state (Hailbronner 2015). Constitutional theorists involved in the design of legal and political institutions are developing internal, international and supranational institutional mechanisms for controlling majoritarianism and 'democratic irrationality'.

Independent technocratic institutions, such as constitutional courts, commissions and central banks, are becoming the norm and are gradually taking root in the liberal consciousness. European integration is becoming an integral part of the post-war liberal-constitutional process of building a 'militant democracy': J.-W. Muller offers the concept of 'restrained democracy' as a representation of this phenomenon (Muller 2011). The principle of 'militant defense' of liberalism in the name of democratic consolidation is due, primarily, to concern for economic liberalism, rather than the goals of protecting political liberalism and strengthening representative democracy. In contemporary constitutional theory, the focus is on analysing the challenges and dangers of 'unfettered democracy', rather than the obvious intentions of 'unfettered capitalism', to social and economic inequality, as warned by H. Heller and K. Polanyi (Wilkinson 2015).

The 'Thirty Glorious Years' (Les Trente Glorieuses, J. Fourestie's term) of the 'welfare state' facilitated the contradictions of capitalism and democracy. Post-war democracies were created not just in opposition to state terror or aggressive nationalism, but also in opposition to the totalitarian concept of spontaneous historical action carried out by collective political actors, such as the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft. In response, Western Europeans built a highly controlled form of democracy, marked by a stamp of deep distrust of popular sovereignty and even traditional parliamentary sovereignty (Muller 2011). Liberal theory has sought to resolve the 'majoritarian dilemma' by restricting democracy, both institutionally (constitutional control) and ideologically (the concept of 'reasonableness' by J. Rawls) (Rawls 1993). Thus, contemporary constitutional theory is moving away from critical interaction with political economy. European integration is seen as an aspect of the 'restrained democracy' project, and not as a further stage of reconstructing the relationship between politics and economics.

The post-war development of Europe was characterised by a new vision of not only technocratic management functions, but also management relations; in particular, the nature and limits of economic management. M. Wilkinson calls this new vision 'the dedemocratisation of power, sovereignty and government'; in his opinion, this approach sets forth a new vision of the individual as a market participant, not a political citizen (Wilkinson 2015: 42). A new

concept of the economic role of the state was proposed by the Freiburg ordoliberals, for whom unlimited capitalism was a threat and a challenge to a social market economy based on competition. C. Friedrich, analysing the ideological significance of the 'new liberalism', noted a fundamental theoretical turn of German ordoliberalism with its idea of transforming people's sovereignty into individual freedom as a tool to legitimise constitutional order (Friedrich 1955). For ordoliberals, economic constitutionalism, based on equality, individual rights and competition, was intended to ensure the complete elimination of class and ethno-national conflicts from the political sphere. From this point on, the self-identification of subjects of constitutional relations in Europe (in particular, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission) will be determined by the ideology of economic rationality and the logic of market competition (Muller 2011).

Social democracy was not a key component of post-war liberal constitutionalism — starting from Maastricht, it was held back in parliaments and referendums (Wilkinson 2013). With the beginning of the Euro-crisis, liberal centrism will try to stabilise, becoming the subject of growing political disputes from the standpoint of state power. Having lost faith in the power of institutional tools, the European state system will begin to resort to coercion in an attempt to maintain order. Since democratic support for liberal centrism remains weak, it can compensate for it in other ways, presenting its criticism as an irrational and anti-European force. As a result, authoritarian liberalism today must support not only 'de-democratization' in order to strengthen the liberal economic order, but also justify 'hegemonic' relations between the capitals in the new 'German Europe', where each country should be 'similar' to Germany, despite the impossibility of such a requirement (Wilkinson 2015). In essence, the ordoliberal rules of economic liberalism established by the Economic and Monetary Union conflict with democratic and social movements against austerity (in the case of Greece, this conflict was brought to a limit after the election of a pro-European government opposing austerity). Democracy and the rule of law, including the protection of social rights, are also nominally protected in the EU treaties and the Charter of the European Union. Thus, the Euro-crisis is being transformed into a 'legitimation crisis' and a clash of main political goals: ordoliberalism, market capitalism, European integration and democratic self-government. The lack of rationality in the sphere of public administration, notes J. Habermas, means that the state apparatus in these border conditions cannot perform any sufficient positive management functions in relation to the economic system; the lack of legitimisation means that legitimate regulatory structures cannot be maintained or produced to the required extent using administrative means (Habermas 1984).

Conclusion

Contemporary authoritarian liberalism seeks rational management of free markets. Institutionally, this is manifested in the constitutional consolidation of economic freedoms and the transfer of control over economic activity to expert bodies and the executive branch of the EU. If authoritarian liberalism focuses on economic liberalism, then authoritarian ways of implementing policies are subject to the interests of private property, contributing to the further authoritarian transformation of the European Union. Authoritarian liberalism recognises that a free economy as a political category is based on a certain social order and represents a comprehensive practice of dedemocratisation and restrained democracy.

Transnational solidarity, suppressed by authoritarian liberalism, can become a democratically legitimate tool for resolving the contradictions of market capitalism and representative democracy, but the EU is developing in a 'neocolonial paradigm' in accordance with the relations between the core and the periphery between creditor countries and debtor countries and inevitably transforms into a 'neocolonial regime' of European integration (Wilkinson 2015). Political equality and supranational European solidarity become illusory, since relations between debtor countries and creditor countries resemble the conditions of unconditional surrender. Supranational constitutions are based on fundamental rights and freedoms, legal principles and sanctions, which grow out of democratic processes of the development of law and politics and prove their suitability within the framework of democratically organised national states.

The institutional model of limited democracy consists of several principles: constitutionally proclaimed and protected human rights and procedures for making binding political decisions either remain unchanged for a long time or are more difficult to change than the provisions governed by ordinary legislation. The adoption of a model of constitutionally limited democracy in post-war Europe was impossible without two conditions: first, the development of the welfare state, which guaranteed each member a certain share in social wealth; second, the processes of authoritarian liberalisation and political integration that unfolded in the 1950s and 1960s impose restrictions on the national sovereignty of European democracies through the creation of supranational institutions.

De-democratisation lies in the fact that distribution and production issues are derived from the public sphere of politics and are determined by market rationality and technocratic bodies. When politics and reformism are reduced to economic logic and constituent power, the autonomy of 'political' is reduced to the perspective of 'revolutionary breakthrough' of right-conservative fundamentalism. In the EU, right-wing euro sceptics are gaining popularity, and authoritarian 'restriction' of democracy can lead not only to strengthening

capitalism, but also to the revival of the reactionary forms of new nationalism and illiberalism. Authoritarian liberalism in Europe becomes the practice of dedemocratisation and restrained democracy, the result of which is the 'regionalization of protest' against the supranational regime of European integration. Latent political authoritarianism strengthens economic liberalism, which, in turn, reinforces the further EU's 'authoritarian transformation'. Authoritarian liberalism restricts traditional forms of representative democracy, contributing to the reanimation of populism, political radicalism and political extremism. Today, the EU's regime is transformed from a nominally rule-based structure supported by market discipline into a 'discretionary order' reinforced by bureaucratic power. The EU's transnational solidarity can become a democratically legitimate tool for a de-escalation of tensions between market capitalism and representative democracy.

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Proportional Electoral Systems and Number of Parties in Parliament Evidence from Macedonia

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Abstract: *What is the best electoral system to increase the number of political parties represented in Parliament? This article answers the question using data from all the elections in Macedonia since 2002, and by making simulations of the results according to different electoral systems. In principle, we found that the electoral model that would bring most parties to the Macedonian Parliament is the Droop and Hare used in one electoral district. Moreover, the article answers the question how favourable different electoral systems are to larger/smaller parties. We find that the following is the order of electoral systems from most to least favourable for larger parties: Imperiali highest averages, D'Hondt, Sainte-Laguë, Largest remainders – Imperiali, Danish, Largest remainders – Droop, Largest remainders – Hare.*

Keywords: ***proportional electoral systems, favourable to large/small parties, Macedonia.***

Introduction

Proportional electoral systems (PR) based on party lists in multimember constituencies are widespread throughout Europe. This article provides a detailed analysis of the electoral system used in Macedonia focusing on the rationale for the use of the proportional electoral system. As a multiethnic, new democracy the country has employed this electoral model since the 2002 elections. The idea behind using the proportional system is that it will well reflect the interests of different segments of the society. Indeed, the implementation of this electoral system in Macedonia supplemented with special gender provisions has im-

proved the representation of women in Parliament to the extent that the country has among the highest percentage of female deputies in the national assembly. While it has also had good results when it comes to the representation of ethnic minorities, the current proportional electoral system has made it difficult for smaller parties to enter Parliament. We tackle this issue by making simulations based on the electoral results in all parliamentary elections in Macedonia from 2002 to 2016, using different models of the proportional systems.

Following the introduction, the paper offers a review of the theoretical discussion regarding electoral system design in liberal democracies. In the next section we outline the main aspects of the relationship between proportional electoral systems and the number of parties represented in Parliament. Afterwards we focus on the electoral results in Macedonia and make simulations of how various electoral models would benefit small or large parties. We seek to answer the question what is the best electoral system to increase the number of political parties represented in Parliament? In principle, we found that the electoral model that would bring most parties to the Macedonian Parliament is the Droop and Hare used in one electoral district. Moreover, the article answers the question how favourable different electoral systems are to larger/smaller parties. We find that the following is the order of electoral systems favourable to larger parties (from the most to the least favourable): Imperiali highest averages, D'Hondt, Sainte-Laguë, Largest remainders – Imperiali, Danish, Largest remainders – Droop, Largest remainders – Hare.

Proportional Elections in Multiethnic Countries

Electoral experts agree that there is no single best electoral system, as 'each electoral environment has different factors to take into account and that each electoral system has particular general advantages and disadvantages' (Wall and Salih 2007). For example, majority/plurality electoral systems are more likely to lead to two-party political systems, which inevitably lead to the formation of stable governments by a single party. However, these systems produce disproportional outcomes that tend to exclude minorities and smaller parties from representation in the legislature. PR systems ensure that both majority and minority groups are represented in the legislature but tend to be more unstable as they usually require coalitions of two or more parties to form a majority. Possible breakdowns in governing coalitions weaken the stability of the executive and the legislature, which may lead to frequent elections.

Achieving broad representation of different ethnic groups has 'important implications for the stability and quality of democracy in multiethnic societies' (Lijphart 2004: 97). In political science literature it has been argued that the capacity of ethnic minorities to win parliamentary seats is a consequence of electoral systems and the size and geographic concentration of minority

populations (Reilly and Reynolds 1999). Moreover, it is generally accepted that proportional representation (PR) increases minority representation. While minorities can gain representation under certain 'conditions in other electoral systems, it is still viewed as providing crucial advantages' (Moser 2008: 273). Liberal democracies using PR are characterised by better representation compared with majoritarian democracies. PR allows diverse voices and interests to be heard and considered in Parliament, government, and the policymaking process (Cox 1997; Duverger 1954; Lijphart 1999; Norris 2004; Rae 1967; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). It also enables better representation of minority groups (Shugart 1994), as well as women (Darcy, Hadley, and Kirksey 1993; Norris 1985). PR is expected to provide any ethnic minority, whether it is geographically concentrated or not, 'the ability to gain representation through an ethnic party and/or ethnic balancing on major parties' lists, whereas plurality systems are expected only to promote minority representation for ethnic groups that reach a critical mass within majority-minority electoral districts' (Moser 2008: 275).

Proportional Elections and Number of Parties

The number of political parties is largely dependent on the specific election rules. Electoral systems that follow proportional representation tend to have a greater number of political parties because parties will win seats in the national legislature based on their percentage of the popular vote. In theory and in practice votes are allocated to seats based on various methods. One is the **highest averages method** which requires the number of votes for each party to be divided successively by a series of divisors, and seats are allocated to parties that secure the highest resulting quotient, up to the total number of seats available. In Europe the most widely used is the d'Hondt formula, named after its Belgian inventor, Victor d'Hondt, using divisors (such as 1,2,3 etc.). While the 'pure' Sainte-Laguë method, used in New Zealand, divides the votes with odd numbers (1, 3, 5, 7, and so on) the 'modified' Sainte-Laguë replaces the first divisor by 1.4 but is otherwise identical to the pure version. From the other models used in elections around the world the Danish Method used for awarding seats within parties at elections uses divisors 1, 4, 7, 10, 13 etc, and the equal proportions model used in the USA for allocating representatives to states uses divisors 0, 1.41,2.45,3.46,4.47 etc. (Gallagher 1992: 470). Another highest average method is called Imperiali (not to be confused with the Imperiali quota which is a largest remainder method). The divisors are 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, and so on.

An alternative is the **largest remainder method**, which requires the numbers of votes for each party to be divided by a quota representing the number of votes required for a seat (i.e. usually the total number of votes cast divided

by the number of seats or some similar formula). The result for each party will usually consist of an integer part plus a fractional remainder. Each party is first allocated a number of seats equal to their integer. This will generally leave some seats unallocated: the parties are then ranked on the basis of the fractional remainders, and the parties with the largest remainders are each allocated one additional seat until all the seats have been allocated. The minimum quota, in the simplest calculation is the Hare quota, where the total number of valid votes in each constituency is divided by the total number of seats to be allocated. The Droop quota raises the divisor by the number of seats plus one, producing a slightly less proportional result. A special variant of the greatest-remainder formula, used in Italy until 1994, is called the Imperiali formula, whereby the electoral quota was established by dividing the total popular vote by the number of seats plus two.

Another important factor in electoral systems is the formal threshold that parties must pass to qualify for seats. The formal threshold ranges from at lowest 0.67% of the national vote, used in the Netherlands, up to a 10% hurdle; whereas there is no formal threshold in some countries such as South Africa, where less than 0.25% of the national vote is necessary for election (Norris 2013: 55). In electoral systems in which there is a minimum-vote threshold, the mean number of political parties tends to be lower than in systems in which there is a lower or no minimum-vote threshold. District magnitude, or the mean number of seats per constituency, also influences the electoral results. While in Macedonia 120 members are elected in six electoral units, in Spain the 350 members are elected in fifty list districts, each district electing on average seven members. In principle, the larger the district magnitude, the more proportional the outcome, the more closely each party's seat share tends to correspond to its vote share (Taagepera, Shugart 1989: 19).

Under proportional electoral systems there is a relationship between seat and vote shares of parties. Ideal proportionality would be when all parties competing in the election receive the exact same share of seats in the parliament as they won of the vote – in other words, when seat shares equal vote shares (Taagepera 2007: 65). Such outcome is highly unlikely as it can happen only exceptionally (Gallagher 1991: 33). Even most proportional electoral systems have some deviation from proportionality, which means some degree of disproportionality is inevitable (Gallagher 1991: 33). Using specific proportional systems may have different effects on the results of smaller or larger political parties. Gallagher (1992:490) has done the analysis comparing 11 different electoral systems and ranked them based on how favourable these systems are to larger parties. From the most favourable to larger parties to the least favourable, the order is the following:

1. Imperiali highest averages
2. LR-Imperiali
3. D'Hondt
4. STV
5. Largest remainders-Droop
6. Largest remainders-Hare/Sainte-Laguë
7. Equal proportions
8. Danish

PR Elections in Macedonia

The unicameral parliament can by law have between 120 and 140 members elected by direct, universal suffrage. All parliaments since 1990 have 120 members. Since 2002 members of the Macedonian Parliament (MPs) are elected for a four-year term in six multimember electoral districts. Each district has about 290,000 voters and elects 20 members by proportional representation. Citizens vote for a closed type of electoral list, and seats are distributed on a proportional basis, according to the D'Hondt formula. The nomination lists may be submitted by parties, coalitions of parties, or groups of at least 500 voters. According to the Electoral Law, at least a third of the candidates on each list must be of a different gender. At the moment, the number of women in the Macedonian parliament is 47, which represents 39% of the total number of MPs. Although below 50%, the percentage of women in Parliament is among the highest in Europe, and 20th in the world (Data on Women in Parliaments 2019).

There are currently four main political parties in Macedonia, two from the Macedonian community and two from the Albanian community. Among Macedonian parties, VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM are the two parties that traditionally have the largest share of seats. Whichever of the parties 'wins the largest share of seats is entitled to form the government. Among the Albanian parties, DPA and DUI are the two main parties' (Berisha 2016: 4). Electoral data and analyses 'dealing with the effects of Macedonia's implementation of the proportional system affirms the view that the proportional system provides a better framework for minority groups and smaller political parties to get elected, because the seats are calculated based on the proportion of the votes won' (Berisha 2016: 15). If ethnic minorities and women are well represented in Parliament the remaining question is what kind of modification to the electoral system would also aid smaller parties to win seats in the national assembly.

Note on Data Used and Methodology

Using data from all the parliamentary elections in Macedonia since 2002 where the proportional electoral model was used, we made simulations of the electoral results using Imperiali highest averages, LR-Imperiali, D'Hondt, Largest remainders-Droop, Largest remainders-Hare/Sainte-Laguë Equal proportions, Danish. We have eliminated STV and Equal proportions from our analysis as the first method has not been used in Macedonia and a simulation cannot be made, and the Equal proportions method which is used in the USA for specific reasons tied to the political system of that country and not relevant for Macedonia. We have also made simulation using formal electoral thresholds: from the natural one similar to the Netherlands, to the highest one in Turkey. We have made simulations on the basis of the current electoral model in Macedonia with six electoral districts with a magnitude of 20 seats as well as assuming the country was one electoral district with 120 seats.

Elections in Macedonia and Simulations in Six Electoral Districts

We have made simulations using the Sainte-Laguë electoral model to ascertain the number of parties that could have been represented in the parliament had that model been applied in the elections. Consequently, we compare the results from the simulations to the actual ones.

Simulation of the Sainte-Laguë electoral model if used in six electoral districts

Table 1: Electoral Models if Macedonia was divided into six Electoral Districts

Election year	**Number of parties in parliament using the existing electoral model of 6 Electoral districts (ED) D'hondt**	**Number of parties in parliament if using the 6ED Sainte-Lague model**
2002	7	9
2006	8	11
2008	5	7
2011	5	7
2014	6	7
2016	6	7
Total	37	48

Using the Sainte-Laguë electoral model the parliament would have had more parties represented in Parliament than when using the existing d'Hondt formula. The surplus ranges from three at the 2006 elections to one in the 2014 and 2016 elections with an overall difference of 11.

Next, we analyse the effects this potential modification on the electoral system would have had on the larger political parties. Using the Sainte-Laguë electoral model, the large parties would have lost 32 parliamentary seats. The biggest losses in parliamentary seats would have been experienced by the biggest party in the period 2002–2016, VMRO-DPMNE. On the other hand, the smallest among the four, DPA, would have even gained two seats if the Sainte-Laguë electoral model had been used.

Table 2: Six electoral districts Sainte-Laguë vs. 6 electoral districts D'Hondt model effect on larger parties

Decrease in the number of parliamentary seats if using the 6ED Sainte-Laguë model per elections	VMRO-DPMMNE	SDSM	Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)	Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA)
2002	0	-4	-1	0
2006	-5	-2	-1	-1
2008	-1	2	-2	-1
2011	-4	-3	0	1
2014	-4	-1	-1	2
2016	-3	-3	-1	1
Total	-17	-11	-6	2

Simulations if Macedonia uses proportional electoral models in one district

Simulation of the Largest remainder models

Here we analyse the effects of using one electoral unit in Macedonia through simulation of the parliamentary results in the period 2002–2016. First we analyse the effects of the Largest remainder models, using Hare, Droop, and Imperiali quota.

Table 3: Largest remainder models in one electoral district

Election year	Number of parties in parliament using the existing electoral model 6ED D'hondt	Number of parties in parliament using Hare model in one district	Number of parties in parliament using Droop model in one district	Number of parties in parliament using Imperiali model in one district
2002	7	15	15	14
2006	8	19	19	18
2008	5	13	13	12
2011	5	13	13	13
2014	6	12	12	11
2016	6	11	11	10
Total	37	83	83	78

Using the Largest remainder models in one electoral district the parliament would have had many more parties represented in Parliament than when using the existing D'Hondt formula in six electoral districts. The surplus ranges from its highest at 11 in the 2006 elections to its lowest at five in 2016 with an overall difference of 46 for Hare and Droop models and 41 for Imperiali.

Next we analyse the effects this modification of the electoral system would have had on the larger political parties.

Table 4: Largest remainder models in one electoral district vs. 6ED D'hondt model effect on larger parties

Decrease in seats if using the Largest remainder models in one electoral district	VMRO-DPMMNE			SDSM			DUI			DPA		
	Imperiali	Droop	Hare	Imperiali	Droop	Hare	Imperiali	Droop	Hare	Imperiali	Droop	Hare
2002	-3	-3	-3	-9	-9	-10	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1
2006	-7	-7	-7	-4	-5	-5	-3	-3	-3	-2	-2	-2
2008	-5	-6	-6	1	1	1	-3	-3	-3	-1	-1	-1
2011	-7	-7	-7	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-1	-1	-1
2014	-5	-6	-6	-3	-3	-3	-2	-2	-2	0	0	0
2016	-4	-5	-5	-4	-4	-5	-1	-1	-1	1	1	1
Total	-31	-34	-34	-22	-23	-25	-13	-13	-13	-3	-4	-4
Total per model all parties	-69	-74	-76									

Using the Largest remainder models in one electoral district in the period 2002–2016 all large parties would have had a decreased number of deputies in Parliament, ranging from a maximum of 34 for VMRO-DPMNE to four for DPA. The Hare Largest remainder model would have decreased the number of parliamentarians from the larger parties the most.

Simulation of the Highest averages method

Next we analyse the effects of using one electoral unit in Macedonia through a simulation of the parliamentary results in the period 2002–2016. Here we analyse the effects of the highest averages models, using the D'Hondt formula, the Sainte-Laguë, the modified Sainte-Laguë method and the Danish method.

Table 5: Highest averages models in one electoral district

Election year	**Number of parties in parliament using the existing electoral model 6ED D'Hondt**	Number of parties in parliament using D'Hondt formula in one district	Number of parties in parliament using the Sainte-Laguë in one district	Number of parties in parliament using the modified Sainte-Laguë in one district	Number of parties in parliament using the Danish method in one district	Number of parties in parliament using the Imperiali Method in one district
2002	7	10	15	12	16	8
2006	8	12	15	13	19	9
2008	5	5	11	8	13	4
2011	5	9	10	10	12	9
2014	6	9	10	9	11	7
2016	6	9	9	9	10	7
Total	37	54	70	61	81	44

Using the highest averages models in one electoral district the parliament would have had many more parties represented in Parliament than using the existing d'Hondt formula in six electoral districts. The surplus ranges from its highest at 11 in the 2006 elections to its lowest at four in 2016 with an overall difference of 81 using the Danish method, 70 for using the Sainte-Laguë model, 61 using the modified Sainte-Laguë, 54 for using D'Hondt formula in one district and 44 for using the Imperiali Method in one district.

Next, we analyse the effects this potential modification on the electoral system would have had on the larger political parties.

Table 6: Highest averages models in one electoral district vs. 6ED D'Hondt model effect on larger parties

Decrease in seats if Highest remainder models in one electoral district	VMRO-DPMMNE					SDSM					DUI					DPA				
	D'Hondt	Sainte Laguë	Sainte Laguë *	Danish	Imperiali	D'Hondt	Sainte Laguë	Sainte Laguë *	Danish	Imperiali	D'Hondt	Sainte Laguë	Sainte Laguë *	Danish	Imperiali	D'Hondt	Sainte Laguë	Sainte Laguë *	Danish	Imperiali
2002	0	-3	-2	-3	1	-6	-10	-9	-11	-3	0	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-1	0	-1	-1
2006	-2	-5	-4	-6	0	-2	-3	-3	-4	0	-1	-2	-2	-3	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
2008	0	-4	-3	-6	1	3	1	2	1	2	-2	-3	-2	-3	-2	-1	-1	-1	-1	0
2011	-4	-5	-5	-6	-2	-1	-2	-2	-3	0	-2	-3	-3	-3	-2	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
2014	-3	-5	-4	-5	0	-1	-2	-2	-3	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	0	0	0	0	0
2016	-3	-4	-4	-4	0	-2	-3	-3	-4	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	1	1	1	0
Total	-12	-26	-22	-30	0	-9	-19	-17	-24	-2	-8	-12	-11	-13	-8	-3	-4	-3	-4	-4
Total per model all parties	-32	-63	-53	-71	-14															

Using the highest averages models in one electoral district in the period 2002–2016 all large parties would have had a decreased number of deputies in Parliament, ranging from a maximum of 30 for VMRO-DPMNE to three for DPA. The Danish highest averages model would have decreased the number of parliamentarians of the larger parties the most and Imperiali the least.

Simulation of the electoral results in one district if using a formal electoral threshold

The formal electoral threshold in party-list proportional representation systems is the minimum share of the vote which a candidate or political party is required to achieve before they become entitled to any representation in a legislature. In our study we have made stimulations of electoral results using the D'Hondt system with the following thresholds: 10%, 5%, 3%, 2% and 0.83%.

Table 7: Formal threshold models in one electoral district

Election year	Number of parties in parliament using the existing electoral model 6ED D'hondt	Number of parties in parliament using D'Hondt formula in one district with natural threshold (0.83%)	Number of parties in parliament using D'Hondt formula in one district with 2% threshold	Number of parties in parliament using D'Hondt formula in one district with 3% threshold	Number of parties in parliament using D'Hondt formula in one district with 5% threshold	Number of parties in parliament using D'Hondt formula in one district with 10% threshold
2002	7	10	7	4	4	3
2006	8	12	6	6	6	3
2008	5	5	4	4	4	3
2011	5	9	6	4	4	2
2014	6	8	5	5	4	3
2016	6	9	6	4	3	2
Total	37	53	34	27	25	16

Using the D'hondt system in one electoral unit with a formal threshold of 0.83% would increase the number of parliamentary parties from 37 to 53. In all other cases of using a formal electoral threshold (2%, 3%, 5%, 10%) the number of parties would decrease, most significantly if the 10% threshold is applied when the number of parties in the 2002–2016 period had dropped to 16 in total for all the electoral cycles.

Table 8: Formal thresholds in one electoral unit vs. 6ED D'Hondt model effect on larger parties

Decrease in seats if D'Hondt formula in one district with various thresholds	VMRO-DPMMNE					SDSM					DUI					DPA				
	0.83%	2%	3%	5%	10%	0.83%	2%	3%	5%	10%	0.83%	2%	3%	5%	10%	0.83%	2%	3%	5%	10%
2002	-1	0	3	3	5	-5	-4	0	0	4	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	-7
2006	-2	0	0	0	13	-2	0	0	0	9	-1	0	0	0	4	-2	-1	-1	-1	-11
2008	0	0	0	0	6	3	4	4	4	6	-2	-2	-2	-2	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-11
2011	-4	-2	0	0	12	-1	1	3	3	13	-2	-2	-1	-1	-15	-1	-1	0	0	-8
2014	-2	0	1	1	5	-1	0	1	1	3	-2	-1	-1	-1	1	0	0	1	1	-7
2016	-3	-2	2	5	10	-2	-1	2	5	10	-1	-1	0	0	-10	1	1	-2	-2	-2
Total	-12	-4	6	9	51	-8	0	10	13	45	-8	-6	-3	-3	-18	-3	-2	-3	-3	-46
Total per model all parties	-31	-12	10	16	32															

The effect on large parties is mixed when using the formal electoral threshold in party-list proportional representation systems in one electoral district in Macedonia in the period 2002–2016. While using 0.83% would have decreased the number of seats the large parties won by a total of –31, using the 10% threshold would have increased the number of seats for the largest parties by +32. An increase in seats would have also occurred if thresholds of 3% and 5% were used, while a decrease in the seats would occur if the threshold is set at 2%. However, only the two biggest parties, VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, would have benefited from a higher threshold of 3%, 5%, and 10%, while DUI and DPA would have lost seats. Had the threshold been set at 2% all parties except SDSM would have lost some seats, while set at 0.83% the threshold would result in losses of seats of all parties. Overall then, the 0.83% threshold would have decreased the number of parliamentarians of the larger parties the most and using the 10% threshold the least.

Effects of all electoral models on the number of parliamentary parties

Table 9: Effects of all electoral models on the number of parliamentary parties

Elections n.parties	6ED D´Hondt	6ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED dhondt	1 ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED Sainte modified	1ED Danish	Imperiali Highest Averages Method	Imperiali quota and largest remainders	Droop	Hare	1ED D´Hondt 0.83%	1ED D´Hondt 2%	1ED D´Hondt 3%	1ED D´Hondt 5%	1ED D´Hondt t 10%
2002	7	9	10	15	12	16	8	14	15	15	10	7	4	4	3
2006	8	11	12	15	13	19	9	18	19	19	12	6	6	6	3
2008	5	7	5	11	8	13	4	12	13	13	5	4	4	4	3
2011	5	7	9	10	10	12	9	13	13	13	9	6	4	4	2
2014	6	7	9	10	9	11	7	11	12	12	8	5	5	4	3
2016	6	7	9	9	9	10	7	10	11	11	9	6	4	3	2
TOTAL	37	48	54	70	61	81	44	78	83	83	53	34	27	25	16
Average	6	8	9	12	10	14	7	13	14	14	9	6	5	4	3

As we can see from the results of the elections in Macedonia in the period 2002–2016 and the simulations of the results as presented in Table 9, using specific electoral models in proportional systems may have different effects on the number of parliamentary parties. The electoral models that would produce

the largest number of parliamentary parties are Droop, Hare and the Danish method used in one electoral district. The electoral models that would produce the least number of political parties represented in the parliament are the D'Hondt model used in one electoral district together with a formal threshold of 10%, 5%, 3% or 2%, followed by the existing electoral system that uses the D'Hondt model in six electoral districts and the Imperiali Highest Averages Method. As far as the smaller parties are concerned their chances of winning parliamentary seats would increase if the electoral model was changed.

Smaller parties would need much fewer votes to win a seat than under the current electoral model. For example, as we can observe from the results presented in Table 10, the votes that small parties would have needed to win seats in parliament are two to four times less than the votes that were actually needed at the elections to win parliamentary seats during the period of 2002–2016. While in the period 2002–2016 a party needed to win at least 6459 votes concentrated in one of the six electoral units, if the Droop or Hare electoral models had been implemented in the same period using one electoral model, parties would have won a seat in the parliament with as low as 1925 votes in the whole territory of the country.

Table 10: Minimum number of votes necessary for winning seats in the parliament per electoral model

Electoral year/ model	2002 D'Hondt in 6 units	2006 D'Hondt in 6 units	2008 D'Hondt in 6 units	2011 D'Hondt in 6 units	2014 D'Hondt in 6 units	2016 D'Hondt in 6 units
Party with least votes that has won one seat	Socialist Party	Party for European Future	Party for European Future	National Movement for Prosperity	Grom	Alliance for Albanians
Votes gained in the electoral unit where seat won	8377	6459	7669	8680	8725	7355
If electoral model changed into:	2002 Danish	2006 Danish Droop Hare	2008 Danish Droop Hare	2011 Imperiali largest remainders Droop Hare	2014 Droop Hare	2016 Droop Hare
Party	Social Democratic Party of Macedonia	League for Democracy	Alliance of Tito's Left Forces	Social Democratic Union	Peoples Movement for Macedonia	Party for Democratic Prosperity
Votes	3981	2663	3758	2270	1925	3194
Difference in votes	4396	3796	3911	6410	6800	4161

Effects of all electoral models on the large parties

Table 11: Effects of all electoral models on the largest parties, VMRO-DPMNE

Effects on VMRO-DPMNE seats lost/gained Elections	6ED D´Hondt	6ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED D´Hondt	1 ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED Sainte modified	1ED Danish	Imperiali Highest Averages Method	Imperiali quota and largest remainders	Droop	Hare	1ED D´Hondt 0.83%	1ED D´Hondt 2%	1ED D´Hondt 3%	1ED D´Hondt 5%	1ED D´Hondt 10%
2002	33	0	0	-3	-2	-3	1	-3	-3	-3	-1	0	3	3	5
2006	45	-5	-2	-5	-4	-6	0	-7	-7	-7	-2	0	0	0	13
2008	63	-1	0	-4	-3	-6	1	-5	-6	-6	0	0	0	0	6
2011	53	-4	-4	-5	-5	-6	-2	-7	-7	-7	-4	-2	0	0	12
2014	58	-4	-3	-5	-4	-5	0	-5	-6	-6	-2	0	1	1	5
2016	51	-3	-3	-4	-4	-4	0	-4	-5	-5	-3	-2	2	5	10
TOTAL		-17	-12	-26	-22	-30	0	-31	-34	-34	-12	-4	6	9	51

Table 12: Effects of all electoral models on the largest parties, SDSM

Effects on SDSM seats lost/gained Elections	6ED D´Hondt	6ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED D´Hondt	1 DE Sainte-Laguë	1ED Sainte modified	1ie Danish	Imperiali Highest Averages Method	Imperiali quota and largest remainders	Droop	Hare	1ED D´Hondt 0.83%	1ED D´Hondt 2%	1ED D´Hondt 3%	1ED D´Hondt 5%	1ED D´Hondt 10%
2002	60	-4	-6	-10	-9	-11	-3	-9	-9	-10	-5	-4	0	0	4
2006	32	-2	-1	-3	-3	-4	0	-4	-5	-5	-1	0	0	0	9
2008	27	2	3	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	3	4	4	4	6
2011	42	-3	-1	-2	-2	-3	0	-3	-3	-3	-1	1	3	3	13
2014	34	-1	-1	-2	-2	-3	-1	-3	-3	-3	-1	0	1	1	3
2016	49	-3	-2	-3	-3	-4	0	-4	-4	-5	-2	-1	2	5	10
TOTAL		-11	-8	-19	-17	-24	-2	-22	-23	-25	-7	0	10	13	45

Table 13: Effects of all electoral models on the largest parties, DUI

Effects on DUI seats lost/gained Elections	6ED D´Hondt	6ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED D´Hondt	1 DE Sainte-Laguë	1ED Sainte modified	1ie Danish	Imperiali Highest Averages Method	Imperiali quota and largest remainders	Droop	Hare	1ED D´Hondt 0.83%	1ED D´Hondt 2%	1ED D´Hondt 3%	1ED D´Hondt 5%	1ED D´Hondt 10%
2002	16	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	0	1	1	2
2006	17	-1	-1	-2	-2	-3	-1	-3	-3	-3	-1	0	0	0	4
2008	18	-2	-2	-3	-2	-3	-2	-3	-3	-3	-2	-2	-2	-2	0
2011	15	0	-2	-3	-3	-3	-2	-3	-3	-3	-2	-2	-1	-1	-15
2014	19	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	-1	-1	1
2016	10	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-10
TOTAL		-6	-8	-12	-11	-13	-8	-13	-13	-13	-8	-6	-3	-3	-18

Table 14: Effects of all electoral models on the largest parties, DPA

Effects on DPA seats lost/gained Elections	6ED D´Hondt	6ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED D´Hondt	1 DE Sainte-Laguë	1ED Sainte modified	1ie Danish	Imperiali Highest Averages Method	Imperiali quota and largest remainders	Droop	Hare	1ED D´Hondt 0.83%	1ED D´Hondt 2%	1ED D´Hondt 3%	1ED D´Hondt 5%	1ED D´Hondt 10%
2002	7	0	0	-1	0	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	-7
2006	11	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-1	-1	-1	-11
2008	11	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-11
2011	8	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-8
2014	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	-7
2016	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	-2	-2	-2
TOTAL		2	-3	-4	-3	-4	-4	-3	-4	-4	-3	-2	-3	-3	-46

Table 15: Summary of effects of all electoral models on the four largest Macedonian parties

Effects on seats lost/ gained using alternative Electoral model	6ED D´Hondt	6ED Sainte-Laguë	1ED D´Hondt	1 DE Sainte-Laguë	1ED Sainte modified	1ie Danish	Imperiali Highest Averages Method	Imperiali quota and largest remainders	Droop	Hare	1ED D´Hondt 0.83%	1ED D´Hondt 2%	1ED D´Hondt 3%	1ED D´Hondt 5%	1ED D´Hondt 10%
VMRO-DPMNE	0	-17	-12	-26	-22	-30	0	-31	-34	-34	-12	-4	6	9	51
SDSM	0	-11	-8	-19	-17	-24	-2	-22	-23	-25	-7	0	10	13	45
DUI	0	-6	-8	-12	-11	-13	-8	-13	-13	-13	-8	-6	-3	-3	-18
DPA	0	2	-3	-4	-3	-4	-4	-3	-4	-4	-3	-2	-3	-3	-46
TOTAL	0	-32	-31	-61	-53	-71	-14	-69	-74	-76	-30	-12	10	16	32

As we can see from the results of the elections in Macedonia in the period 2002–2016 and the simulations as presented in Tables 11–15, using specific electoral models in PR may have different effects on the results of smaller or larger political parties. Our analysis compared 15 different electoral systems and ranked them based on how favourable these systems are to larger parties. We have ranked the system using calculations from the most favourable to larger parties to the least favourable, the order is as follows:

1. D'Hondt with threshold 10% used in one unit
2. D'Hondt with threshold 5% used in one unit
3. D'Hondt with threshold 3% used in one unit
4. D'Hondt used in six electoral units
5. D'Hondt with threshold 2% used in one unit
6. Imperiali Highest Averages Method
7. D'Hondt with threshold 0.83% used in one unit
8. D'Hondt without threshold used in one unit
9. Sainte-Laguë used in six electoral units
10. Sainte-Laguë modified used in one electoral unit
11. Sainte-Laguë used in one electoral unit
12. Largest remainders Imperiali quota
13. Danish method
14. Largest remainders Droop
15. Largest remainders Hare

Next we contrast our ranking with the one done by Gallagher comparing only the electoral models analysed in both studies.

Table 16: How favourable electoral systems are to larger parties, from most to least favourable

Our study	Gallagher	Ranking if both studies considered[1]
1. Imperiali highest averages	1. Imperiali highest averages	1. Imperiali highest averages
2. D'Hondt	2. Largest remainders -Imperiali	2. D'Hondt
3. Sainte-Laguë	3. D'Hondt	3. Largest remainders -Imperiali
4. Largest remainders -Imperiali	4. Largest remainders-Droop	4. Sainte-Laguë
5. Danish	5-6. Largest remainders-Hare	5. Largest remainders-Droop
6. Largest remainders-Droop	5-6. Sainte-Laguë	6. Danish
7. Largest remainders-Hare	7. Danish	7. Largest remainders-Hare

The Imperiali highest average is the electoral model that favours most of the largest parties both in this and in Gallagher's study. D'Hondt is second ranked in our study and third ranked in Gallagher's study and if considering both rankings second best model. Largest remainders –Imperiali is fourth ranked in our study and second ranked in Gallagher's study making it third ranked if we consider both studies. These are the top three electoral models favouring large parties when taking into consideration both analyses. If we consider both studies, the other models are ranked in the following order: Sainte-Laguë, Largest remainders-Droop, Danish, Largest remainders-Hare

Conclusions

Using data from all the parliamentary elections in Macedonia from 2002 to 2016 and making simulations of the results in the same period according to different electoral systems, we have found that the best electoral system to increase the number of political parties represented in the Parliament are Droop and Hare models in one electoral district. Using specific proportional systems may have different effects on the results of smaller or larger political parties. We found that the most favourable electoral systems to the larger parties, from the most to the least favourable, are: Imperiali highest averages, D'Hondt, Sainte-Laguë, Largest remainders – Imperiali, Danish, Largest remainders-Droop, Largest remainders-Hare. Our results are similar to the ones in the well-known study of electoral models done by Gallagher. The Imperiali highest average is the electoral model that best favours large parties in both studies. Overall, small Macedonian political parties are well advised to insist on changes to the elec-

1 Ranking based on sum of points from both studies, where best ranked system was given 7 points, the second best 6, and so on. So Imperiali highest averages got 14, D'Hondt 11 points and so on.

toral model to one electoral district using Droop or Hare, while if changes are to be made the big parties are to insist on introducing the D'Hondt in one unit with higher electoral thresholds of 3%, 5% or 10%, in which case they would even gain more seats. A threshold of 2% employing the D'Hondt model or using Imperiali Highest Averages Method in one Unit would only slightly diminish the results of the large parties.

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Annex 1

The Hare quota is equal to the total valid poll (V) divided by the total number of seats (n), or V/n, while Droop quota equals (V/n+1)+1, Imperiali quota equals Q=(V/S+2).

The 0.83% threshold is 1/120th of total number of valid votes. This is equivalent of the threshold in the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) of the Netherlands where the threshold is 1/150th of the total number of valid votes.

Visegrad Group and its Presence in the Mashriq Region

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Abstract: *This paper provides an outline about Hungary's, Poland's, Slovakia's and Czechia's relationships to the Mashriq region, especially Jordan, Israel and Egypt. The Central and Eastern European countries are considered both individually and collectively in the Visegrád group (V4). Therefore quantitative and qualitative indicators are examined. As one result it was found that in most cases the V4 had no common interests and consequently did not formulate common positions. But finally, the results of this work suggest that the migration crisis has indeed increased the interest of the Visegrád countries in the Mashriq and has accelerated their involvement to some extent both in the Mashriq region and within the European Union.*

Keywords: ***Visegrád group, Mashriq region, diplomatic relationships, Eastern Neighborhood Policy, Middle East, migration crisis***

Introduction

Following the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc, the foreign policy of the Visegrád countries, Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, focused mainly on accession to NATO and the European Union (Marek 2011: 310). The interest in cooperation with other regions of the world was only marginal in those days. Only with the ascension to international organisations and the implementation and internalisation of all requisite legislations did the cooperation of the Visegrád Group initially intensify with neighbouring states as well as regions of Central and Eastern Europe in the European Neighbourhood Policy (Cabada – Waisová 2018). With the onset of the 'European Migration Crisis' in 2015 and

the compulsory resettlement scheme for refugees with a quota regulation for each Member State proposed by the European Commission, a controversy arose inside the Union. In particular the V4 countries, often supporting different stances on international issues, held similar positions at that time.

During the Arab Spring and the instability in the Southern Neighbourhood of the European Union (Middle East and North Africa region) the resulting migratory pressure on the external borders of the EU, the Visegrád countries declared their full commitment to effectively addressing the causes of migration flows and participating in common EU measures. In particular, the V4 was concerned with attempts to combat the causes of migration in the migrants' home countries, which contributed, among other things, to various cooperation initiatives with countries in the Mashriq region (Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Syria). By virtue of similar characteristics such as a common history, geographical proximity and a similar structure of national economy and political alliances, the question arises what intentions if any the Visegrád alliance has at the international level to realise common interests in the region of the Mashriq. In particular, it had to be clarified whether there was something of a substantiated non-interest of the V4 in the region and how this changed in the course of the Arab Spring and enabled a joint commitment of the Visegrád Group.

This paper is largely based on quantitative and descriptive characteristics such as statistics, economic indicators and content-related analysis of relevant documents. Thus, the work primarily deals with two in-depth definitions: the Visegrád Group and the region of the Mashriq, which are ultimately essential for the comprehension of this paper. Next, the role of the Visegrád countries' accession to the European Union in the context of international cooperation is considered. Subsequently, quantitative characteristics from the fields of diplomacy and economics will be used and interpreted. The final part of the paper deals with more descriptive topics such as the V4 Development Assistance / Cooperation and the content analysis of joint statements and brief summaries of V4 meetings with the Mashriq states of Egypt, Israel and Jordan.

Definition

The Mashriq (Arabic *mashriq* – المشرق, 'East' or 'Land of the Sunrise') is a supra-regional territory made up of the current states of Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Syria. The counterpart to the Mashriq is the Maghreb region (Arabic *maghrib* – مغرب, 'West' or 'Land of the Sunset'). During the Arab expansion in the 7th century CE, the Mashriq was the seat of the caliphate, the 'representative of the Messenger of God', Allah (Clancy-Smith 2013: 98). After that, many dynasties dominated the region over several centuries until the Ottomans finally began to govern the area from

Istanbul in the 16th century. Even before the end of the First World War in 1918, the victorious European powers decided in the Sykes Picot Agreement of 1916 to divide the area into British (Israel, Jordan, Iraq) and French (Lebanon, Syria) spheres of influence (Ansary 2010: 300). A year later, the British assured the Jews of the establishment of a 'national homeland' (Balfour Declaration: 2 November, 1917). As a result, the Israeli state was founded in 1948, whereby more and more Mizrahi Jews (those from the Middle East) immigrated into the region (Jewish Virtual Library 2018). Ultimately, the European colonialists arbitrarily redrew the borders of the individual Mashriq countries, regardless of cultural or ethnic circumstances, which is still regarded as a cause of conflict in the region (Deutschlandfunk 2014).

Under the leadership of the Egyptian officer and statesman Gamal Abdel Nasser, the loose confederation of the United Arab Republic was founded between Egypt and Syria in 1958 and held only until 1961. With Israel's defeat of Egypt in the Six-Day War in 1967, more and more concurrent tendencies prevailed in the region. These disputes over the recognition of various frontier regions, not only between Egypt and Israel, but especially the Autonomous Palestinian Territories and Lebanon, complicate the political situation in the Mashriq region these days. Also because of this, the Mashriq is not scientifically defined. The individual states deal differently with the conflict with Israel, so while peace agreements exist between Israel and Egypt as well as Jordan, the countries of Iraq, Lebanon and Syria largely insist on their negative or hostile stance.

In addition, other points of potential conflict exist, especially around minority issues, whether ethnic (e.g. with Kurds) or religious (e.g. with Christians or various other confessions such as Druze or Shiite). Islamist movements continue to appear in different forms and within different events with varying political and social influence in every Mashriq country. Strongly traditional lifestyles contrast with a great acceptance of Eurocentric cultures. Three wars since 1980 and a civil war between 2003–2011 have created an ongoing Syrian Civil War and the highly fragile Iraqi state, and has triggered unprecedented flight and migration movements in the region, particularly to Jordan and Lebanon. As a consequence, the number of immigrating refugees and asylum seekers to the European Union has increased. Their journeys commonly follow various routes, such as the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes or across the Balkans, where border crossings to the European Union often took place via Hungary (Weber 2017: 13–15).

Impact of the Visegrád countries' membership in the European Union

The process of transformation and the societal change in the countries of the Visegrád Group, which culminated in European integration, included basic

social and political conditions as well as international development efforts by the candidate countries. Thus, the 'process of Europeanisation' in social and political science as well as in historical science can be seen as an essential factor for the revival of the development policy of the Visegrád states (see Beichelt 2009).

'Europeanisation' is generally understood as the process by which candidate countries adopt formal and informal European rules and guidelines (see Graziano and Vink 2007: 7, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005: 7). The 'basic model of Europeanisation' (see Cowles – Caporaso – Risse-Kappen 2001: 6–12) implied that regulations and directives issued by the European Union may not be compatible with the relevant legislation of the individual nation states. Depending on the significance of the discrepancy, nation states are forced to adopt the European conduct and recommendations (see Toshkov 2012: 91–109) In such cases, they act differently statically or dynamically, which leads to cyclical target-performance comparisons. Their national, institutional and political results regularly try to balance or adapt (see Hille – Christoph 2006: 531–552).

Conditionality and socialisation (see Checkel 2001; Schimmelfennig – Sedelmeier 2005) are the two essential elements for a progressive Europeanisation. The Member States therefore undertake to comply with the strict legislation implemented by the EU institutions. In addition, the Union can formulate explicit conditions for candidates during the accession process. Non-compliance with such requirements may result in the termination of the accession process. On the other hand, the constructivist approach of Europeanisation emphasises the importance of long-term socialisation and social learning. This involves the internalisation of European values and formal rules, as well as the gradual development of the conviction of the exclusive rightness of this mode of behaviour. While Europeanisation through conditionality can occur quite explicitly and quickly, social learning is a slow process and much more difficult to identify in practice. However, the two approaches, which are based on different theoretical backgrounds, are not mutually exclusive. In policy areas where conditionality and coercion are not possible, social learning can be the only option for Europeanisation.

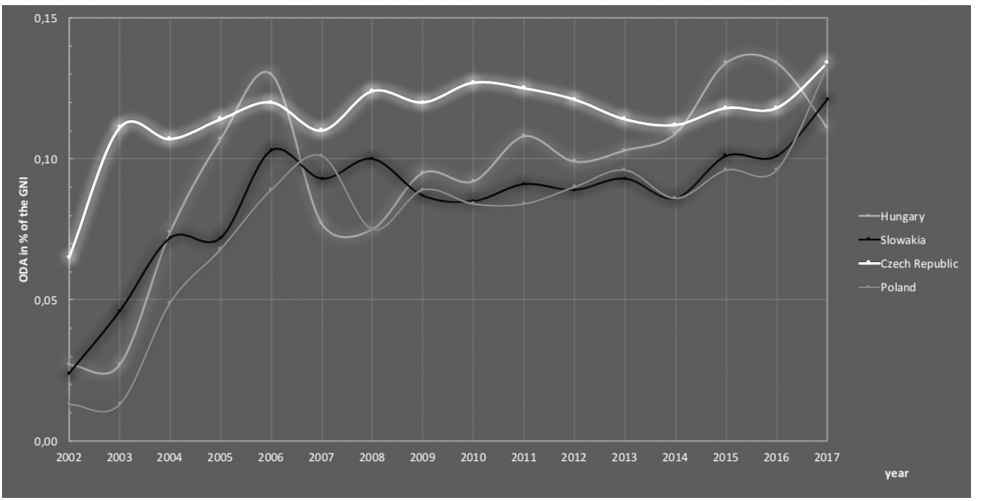
Within the development policies of the individual Member States, the EU also seeks to increase its influence and to stipulate explicit criteria, in particular in the context of accession negotiations of new members such as the Visegrád countries (until their accession in 2004). The EU's influence on the Member States refers to different sources of law. The European Union's development policy is regulated in Art. 177–181 TFEU (primary law) as well as in acts of law in the form of directives, regulations, decisions and recommendations (secondary law). The objective of European development policy under Article 177 TFEU is to promote the sustainable economic and social development of developing

countries, in particular the most disadvantaged developing countries, their harmonic and gradual integration into the world economy and the fight against poverty. In addition, European development policy seeks to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights in the affected areas. Within this framework, given commitments to the United Nations and other relevant international organisations are considered and will be implemented in the objectives.

According to Art. 178 TFEU, the guiding principle is that development policy should be taken into account in all pursued policy areas of the European Union whenever developing countries could be affected. The shared competence between the Union and the Member States is laid down in Art. 180 TFEU (as f.e. measures such as aid programmes; the formation of international organisations and conferences).

In the Treaties of Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997) and Lisbon (2009), which form the legal basis for the commitment to coherence, complementarity and coordination (in short: the three C's) of the joint and nationally external, security, economic and development policies, qualitative requirements have been implemented. In terms of quantitative requirements and the OECD's 2030 Agenda, the European Union has reiterated its objectives of increasing development aid to 0.7% of the gross national income (GNI) of each Member State, with new members such as the Visegrád countries receiving a separate target of 0.17%. In 2017, the European Union provided 0.50% of GNI for ODA grants (Official Development Assistance), a decrease of 0.03% of GNI compared to the previous year. The decrease is due to reduced aid funds compared to the previous year, lower expenditure on migration and flight, as well as the repayment of loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB). Within the Visegrád Group, the increase in ODA subsidies since the EU accession can be seen graphically (see Figure 3). This ultimately speaks for the revival of development aid in the post-socialist countries of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. There is also a percentage adjustment of ODA expenditure relative to the GNI, which shows that the will to realise the target of 0.17% of GNI for 2030 is quite realistic (European Commission 2018).

Figure 2: ODA of the V4 in % of the GNI



Source: elaboration of the author – based on OECD data, www.data.oecd.org

Almost all of the requirements (conditionality) that the EU expresses towards Member States in the context of international development fall into the category of 'soft law' (non-binding agreements) – they are mainly recommendations. Although the EU could have formulated conditions during the accession negotiations of the Visegrád countries, it did not. It is well documented that international developments were neglected during the accession negotiations and that no special requirements were made. The Central and Eastern European countries must set themselves the task of developing such a development policy themselves, because without explicit conditions, there was no reason for the Visegrád countries to adopt the practices advocated by the EU. The really 'tough' requirements (such as binding rules (regulations, directives) that the Member States must comply with) that the EU has in the area of development cooperation are either very technical, such as the classification of aid projects and reporting on specific topics, e.g. political coherence; or in connection with financial issues, for example, the contribution to the European Development Fund (EDF).

Diplomatic relations of the V4 countries in the Mashriq region

The presence of diplomatic missions of the Visegrád countries in the Mashriq has changed massively, especially during the last decade. Conflicts in the region, such as the state of conflict in the Middle East, the Iraq war of 2003 or the civil war in Syria, which has continued since 2011, have frequently led to temporary

closures of consulates and embassies. But it also shows that countries with diplomatic missions are *de facto* prioritised. For example, in comparison to the rest of the Visegrád Group, Slovakia in particular is under-represented in the Mashriq, which in turn can be interpreted as a lack of willingness to cooperate and develop economically. Furthermore, limited material and human resources can be identified among the Visegrád states (Chmiel 2018: 7). Obviously, the diplomatic focus and ultimately the development cooperation is in the near neighbourhood (ENP), such as the EU candidate countries in the Western Balkans or the six post-Soviet states Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (EaP) (Chmiel 2018: 2; Kopiński 2012: 42; Castillejo: 2016: 5). Currently, Czechia, Hungary and Poland each maintain five embassies in the Mashriq and Slovakia three (see Table 1).

Table 1: Embassies, Consulates and Representative Offices of the Visegrád countries in the Mashriq states (as of November 2018)

	Hungary	Slowakia	Czech Republic	Poland
Egypt	embassy: Cairo	embassy: Cairo	embassy: Cairo	embassy: Cairo
	consulate: Alexandria	no consulate	consulate: Alexandria	no consulate
Iraq	embassy: Baghdad	no embassy	embassy: Baghdad	embassy: Baghdad
	consulate: Erbil	no consulate	consulate: Erbil	consulate: Erbil
Israel	embassy: Tel Aviv	embassy: Tel Aviv	embassy: Tel Aviv	embassy: Tel Aviv
	consulate: Jerusalem	consulate: Jerusalem, Haifa	consulate: Jerusalem, Eilat, Haifa	consulate: Jerusalem, Haifa
Jordan	embassy: Amman	embassy: Amman	embassy: Amman	embassy: Amman
	Konsulat: Aquaba	no consulate	no consulate	no consulate
Lebanon	embassy: Beirut	no embassy	embassy: Beirut	embassy: Beirut
	consulate: Sidon	no consulate	no consulate	no consulate
autonomous area Palestine**	no embassy	no embassy	no embassy	no embassy
	consulate: Betlehem	consulate: Betlehem	no consulate	no consulate
	representative office: Ramallah	no representative office	representative office: Ramallah	representative office: Ramallah
Syria*	embassy: Damascus	no embassy	embassy: Damascus	embassy: Damascus
	consulate: Aleppo, Latakia	consulate: Latakia	consulate: Aleppo, Latakia	consulate: Aleppo

* temporarily closed
** Of the 193 member states of the United Nations, 137 (71%) recognized the state of Palestine as an independent state, including the V4. Although the capital of Palestine is given as Jerusalem, Ramallah is actually the political, economic and cultural center of the Palestinian territories.

Source: elaboration of the author – based on data from the directory of diplomatic and consular representations; www.embassypages.com

Within the group, Hungary is most commonly represented by consulates in the region (see Table 1). Hungary and Slovakia even have consular missions in the city of Bethlehem, which holds special religious importance for Jews, Moslems and Christians, and which is located in the West Bank and belongs to the Palestinian Autonomous Territories. In addition, all Visegrád countries except Slovakia have diplomatic representation offices in Ramallah, although the officially designated capital of Palestine is Jerusalem, as indicated by themselves. But so far, the current political, economic and cultural centre of the Palestinian Autonomous Territories is Ramallah. In opposition to Germany, the Visegrád states have official diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Autonomous Territories (see Table 2).

Table 2: Nature of Palestinian External Relations and UN Resolution on the Recognition of Palestine as an Observer State (2012)

	Hungary	Slowakia	Czech Republic	Poland
Palestine's type of external relations	diplomatic relations	diplomatic relations	diplomatic relations	diplomatic relations
UN Resolution* about the recognition of Palestine as an observer state (2012)	rejection	abstention	abstention	abstention

* Since November 29, 2012 (UN-Resolution 67/19), the state of Palestine has the status of an observer State at the United Nations.

Source: elaboration of the author – based on the vote of UN resolution 67/19, original copy under www.web.archive.org and data from the directory of diplomatic and consular missions, www.embassypages.com

And despite the fact that Hungary is the only country that has a consular representation in the Palestinian Authority besides Slovakia (which could be interpreted as recognition of the Palestinian state) it is the only country in the Visegrád Group that rejected Palestinian observer status as a non-member state of the United Nations (see Table 2). The Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia participated in the resolution of the vote in November 2012 (see Table 2).

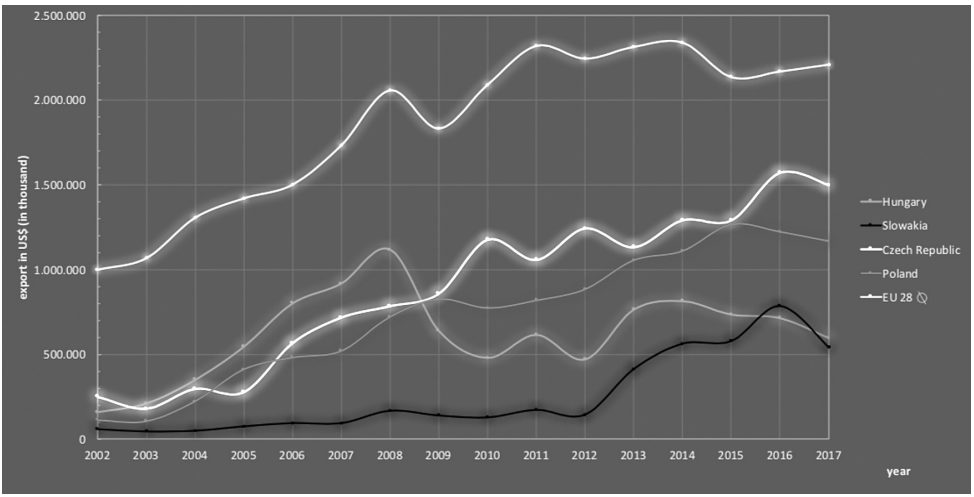
V4's economic relations with the Mashriq states

Although the Mashriq is not a traditional trading region for the Visegrád countries, the Visegrád Group now focuses on security and economic aspects of relations. Following the political, social and economic transformation of the communist system in 1989, the Visegrád countries focused mainly on intensifying relations with the West, which led to strong economic dependence on Western European markets (Marek 2011: 310).

As a result, economic ties with the countries of the Middle East declined following the membership application. The trade conditions associated with EU accession and the recent global economic and financial crisis which hit Western European economies hard in 2009 prompted the Visegrád countries to diversify their trade relations. These led to positive synergy in both regions (see Chmiel 2018: 10, 29).

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the increasing trade exchange between the Visegrád and the Mashriq countries since 2000. The Czech Republic has the strongest export growth and Poland the strongest import growth.

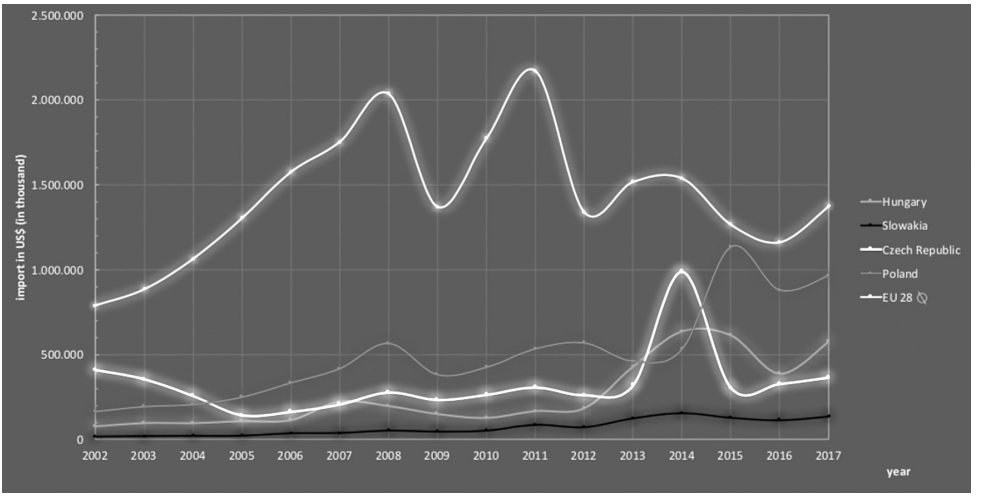
Figure 3: Export of V4 countries to the Mashriq in US $ (in thousand)



Source: elaboration of the author – based on data from the International Trade Centre, www.trademap.org

In particular, products around the car and transport industry are exported, as is equipment from entertainment electronics and agricultural products. The import of Middle Eastern products into the Visegrád region has also increased in recent years, albeit with great fluctuations and national differences. In addition to organic materials, especially hand-made products such as ceramics or glass, pharmaceutical products and laboratory equipment often come from Israel (trademap.org).

Figure 4: Import of V4 countries from the Mashriq in US $ (in thousand)



Source: elaboration of the author – based on data from the International Trade Centre, www.trademap.org

Contrary to constantly growing import and export figures, foreign direct investment by the Visegrád Group rarely increases in either the Middle East or elsewhere. This continues to hamper the deepening of economic relations between the four Central European states and the countries of the Mashriq.

Although economic cooperation is growing, it is far below the European average (see Figures 1 and 2). However, the Visegrád Group is well below the mean value in a Europe-wide comparison. This will be further negatively affected by security concerns and language barriers, but also by the more competitive positions of western companies and the relatively small number of medium-sized businesses in the Visegrád countries (Chmiel 2018: 11).

V4's development aid / cooperation in the Mashriq region

Unlike in Africa, where the Visegrád countries made a specific contribution to the development of communist countries in Africa during the communist era (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Republic of Congo), and based primarily on ideological motives that reflected the logic of the Cold War, in the Mashriq there were hardly any aspirations concerning the development of political interests. National relations were mostly diplomatic. In many places, religious organisations participated in development projects instead of the state during the communist period (Chmiel 2018: 13; Drążkiewicz 2008: 4).

In the last consequence after the change of regime, the Visegrád countries themselves became beneficiary countries supported by numerous countries and international organisations (IMF, OECD, World Bank) as well as the European Union (mainly in the form of pre-accession assistance to accede within the framework of PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD), and they received significant foreign aid. Therefore, intensified development cooperation only became noticeable at the beginning of the new millennium. At that time, accession aspirations persisted for the Visegrád states in accordance with the *acquis communautaire* (EUR-Lex 2018), which sets out all rights and obligations for all Member States committed to increasing their funding in that area and getting more involved in developmental work (see also Chapter 3). Within the EU, the financial contributions from the Visegrád countries could be generated as well through the Union's multi-annual financial framework and the European Development Fund (EDF).

Since their accession to the European Union, all Visegrád countries have made significant progress in implementing their development policies and are now members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia became members in 2013, Hungary in 2016). Two of the Visegrád countries have set up development agencies that implement projects controlled by their respective ministries of foreign affairs (in Czechia, the development agency Šumava and in Slovakia, SlovakAid). In both countries, they created the legal framework and institutional structures for development policy, while in Hungary and Poland, foreign ministries play the central role in coordinating the activities of the participating governmental organisations. (Chmiel 2018: 13) However, all of this does not mean a significant increase in official development assistance (ODA) relative to gross national income, which remains at a low level (see Figure 3).

The four Visegrád countries show similar approaches in their development cooperation programmes, especially because of their common historical perception of the transformation process. It is the experience of the system change that gives the Visegrád countries as donor or auxiliary countries an advantage over other states. There is an NGDO platform (Non-Governmental Development Organisation) in each Visegrád country:

- Czech Republic: FoRS
- Hungary: HAND
- Poland: Grupa Zagranica
- Slovakia: MVRO

Despite years of cooperative engagement, especially in the form of regional seminars, it must be emphasised that the cooperation between the NGDOs of the Visegrád countries is mainly limited to the organisation of workshops and

events in the Visegrád region. As a result, there are no technical or operational joint actions onsite (Chmiel 2018: 16).

According to the OECD Development Committee, there is a significant lack of resources and local presence of all Visegrád countries (Chmiel 2018: 2; Kopiński 2012: 42; Castillejo: 2016: 5). Nonetheless, their commitment to democratisation and market transformation is positive, especially in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. The development policies of the Visegrád countries have focused on an eastern dimension in the past decade since for a long time the Middle East and the states of the Mashriq were only of marginal interest and did not contain individual strategies. Thematic priorities of the individual country's strategies included promotion of democracy and human rights, economic transformation and growth, education and health care, environmental and climate protection as well as sustainable agriculture and forestry, infrastructure (energy, water) and rural development, good governance (responsible Governance) and civil society (Chmiel 2018: 16–17).

V4 meetings with Mashriq states

In addition to conferences of the Visegrád Group, where only the member states (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) participate, there are also meetings with other heads of state and government. For example, summit meetings have been held with leaders from three Mashriq countries in the past, including Egypt (July 4, 2017), Israel (July 19, 2017) and Jordan (May 9, 2018).

At the beginning of July 2017, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, Polish Prime Minister Maria Szydło and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico met in Budapest with the Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah Said Husain Chalil as-Sisi as part of the Visegrád summit. Topics discussed included terrorism and illegal migration. In a joint final statement, all parties expressed the desire to enter into a more intensively political and strategic dialogue to discuss new ways of coordinating international affairs and shared interests. The Visegrád States and the Arab Republic of Egypt underlined the importance of the strategic partnership between Egypt and the European Union and also reaffirmed their determination to continue to invest in comprehensive, mutually beneficial and future-oriented relations (see Table 3).

In mid-July 2017, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended the V4 summit in the Hungarian capital. The final joint statement of five Prime Ministers seeks to intensify relations in the economic, cultural, anti-terror and educational sectors. Furthermore, the relationship between the EU and Israel should be strengthened. The next Visegrád summit will take place at the invitation of Netanyahu in Israel (see Table 3).

In May 2018, the ministers of the Visegrád Foreign Affairs and Trade Group met with their Jordanian counterpart in Amman. The main objective of their

visit was to discuss V4-Jordan relations and current issues at the regional level. Among other things, the VG acknowledged Jordan's resilience and the immense humanitarian aid it has received through a massive inflow of refugees from Syria and Iraq. The Visegrád countries ensured support with regard to difficult challenges by increasing their support for humanitarian and development projects on bilateral as well as the EU level (see Table 3).[1]

Table 3: Main Topics of the V4 Meetings with Egypt, Israel and Jordan

	Egypt	Israel	Jordan
cooperation in politics, economy, culture & science	✓	✓	✘
Promotion of the rule of law	✘	✓	✘
EU relations	✓	✓	✓
research and development	✓	✓	✘
mobility in studies and research	✘	✓	✘
special programs in the high-tech industry	✘	✓	✘
energy policy	✓	✓	✘
cooperation in international organisations (UN, NATO, African Union)	✓	✓	✘
combating terrorism	✓	✓	✓
defense and defense technology	✘	✓	✘
flight and migration	✓	✓	✓
role of diplomacy	✓	✓	✘
Middle East conflict (two-state solution)	✓	✓	✘
contribution in the transformation process through the V4	✓	✘	✘
development projects	✓	✘	✓
interreligious peace / dialogue	✘	✘	✓

Source: elaboration of the author – based on publications of the Visegrád Group, www.visegradgroup.eu/documents

1 No joint statement published.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Visegrád Group has failed to effectively translate its common positions on relations between the EU and the Mashriq states into collective action within the Union. In most cases they had no common interests and consequently did not formulate common positions. With the advent of the current migration and refugee crisis, however, a new field for a joint commitment of the Visegrád countries has emerged. Nevertheless, there are countless technical as well as political constraints on significantly increasing V4 engagement in the Mashriq region in the near future. The lack of knowledge and regional expertise also contributes to the stagnation of development cooperation. Ultimately, facilitating this process requires additional involvement from the Visegrád countries and a clear strategy in formulating their external relations. Furthermore, the focus should be on jointly-initiated V4 development projects in the Mashriq region in order to show synergy effects and cooperation potential.

Moreover, the work has shown that many more questions remain unanswered. For example, are the joint efforts of the Visegrád countries in the Mashriq truly sustainable, or will the focus in the Mashriq region be maintained with a similar intensity as the migration crisis develops (increase or decrease)? This knowledge, in turn, is essential to further debates about the V4 countries' engagement in the Mashriq and should help raise awareness of this issue.

It is important to remember that the foreign policy of the Visegrád countries and the economic priorities are primarily elsewhere. Its focus on Central and Eastern European countries is one of the reasons why the Visegrád countries' involvement in shaping EU-Mashriq relations is limited. Because their interests lie elsewhere, they try to balance the EU's orientation in its external relations. The V4 countries also often point to a lack of interests and expertise in this region.

As the region is not a priority for the V4 countries, they could increase their involvement in multilateral cooperation and make further joint efforts within the Visegrád Group and with EU partners to overcome the many constraints and significant transaction costs. In addition, the V4 could also learn from the experience of other EU Member States. Consequently, not only could the Visegrád and the Mashriq states benefit from such a development, but also the EU itself. Clearly there is a need today to seek more flexible coalitions and networks to support global development (Klingebiel – Tancrède 2018: 1).

In view of the current position of the Visegrád countries on migration issues in the EU, V4 cooperation does not seem to be a possible instrument for promoting sustainable development in the Mashriq. If the four countries continue to focus on strengthening border control and preventing migration, their coordination can indeed be problematic for EU development cooperation with the Mashriq states. Whether the V4 engagement in EU-Mashriq relations is

positive or a challenge for promoting sustainable development depends heavily on their willingness.

Finally, the results of this work suggest that the migration crisis has indeed increased the interest of the Visegrád countries in the Mashriq and has accelerated their involvement to some extent both in the Mashriq region and within the European Union. The tendency to (re)engage in the Mashriq was visible before the migration crisis and was the result of increased interest arising from security concerns and the desire to diversify economic ties. Therefore, it would be advisable to take advantage of the current increase in V4 interest in the Mashriq states and to initiate activities that make this commitment more sustainable, especially in the context of political development cooperation.

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(Un)Trendy Japan: Twitter bots and the 2017 Japanese general election[1]

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Abstract: *Social networking services (SNSs) can significantly impact public life during important political events. Thus, it comes as no surprise that different political actors try to exploit these online platforms for their benefit. Bots constitute a popular tool on SNSs that appears to be able to shape public opinion and disrupt political processes. However, the role of bots during political events in a non-Western context remains largely under-studied. This article addresses the question of the involvement of Twitter bots during electoral campaigns in Japan. In our study, we collected Twitter data over a fourteen-day period in October 2017 using a set of hashtags related to the 2017 Japanese general election. Our dataset includes 905,215 tweets, 665,400 of which were unique tweets. Using a supervised machine learning approach, we first built a custom ensemble classification model for bot detection based on user profile features, with an area under curve (AUC) for the test set of 0.998. Second, in applying our model, we estimate that the impact of Twitter bots in Japan was minor overall. In comparison with similar studies conducted during elections in the US and the UK, the deployment of Twitter bots involved in the 2017 Japanese general election seems to be significantly lower. Finally, given our results on the level of bots on Twitter during the 2017 Japanese general election, we provide various possible explanations for their underuse within a broader socio-political context.*

Keywords: ***bots, Twitter, Japan, general election, bot detection***

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Introduction

Social networking services (SNSs), such as Facebook or Twitter, represent an important new area for civic engagement and political participation (Bode – Varga – Borah – Shah 2013). SNSs and social media in general have been shown to influence political self-expression, information seeking, and real-world voting behaviour (Bond et al. 2012). Thus, it comes as no surprise that SNSs represent an attractive platform for actors who aim to abuse their functionalities (Shirky 2011). A popular tool used on SNSs to manipulate public opinion or disrupt political communication is bots (Woolley 2016), as seen in the Syrian civil war (Abokhodair – Yoo – McDonald 2015), the UK Brexit referendum (Howard – Kollannyi 2016), the 2016 US presidential election (Bessi – Ferrara 2016; Kollanyi – Howard – Woolley 2016), or the 2017 French presidential election (Ferrara 2017).

Although various studies have been published on the role of automation in SNSs during political events in Western democracies, the role of bots during political events in non-Western contexts—in countries such as Japan—remains largely under-studied. The first and, at the time of the writing this paper, only research we are aware of that has touched on the topic of bots during political events in Japan was conducted by Schäfer et al. (2017). However, in their paper, the focus lies mainly on right-wing internet activism facilitated by political bots in Japan. Furthermore, the authors did not elaborate further on the volume of bots used during political events in Japan. Thus, this is—to our knowledge—the first study that empirically demonstrates that bots are not often used in electoral processes in Japan compared to those in Western societies. More importantly, this article also explores the reasons for the underuse of bots within a wider socio-political context of Japan. To achieve the above aim, the presented article first offers background information on the 2017 Japanese general election. Then, it introduces methods and results of the empirical study. Finally, based on the findings of the study, we explore in the article the reasons behind the underuse of bots in the 2017 elections.

The backstory of the election

The Japanese Prime minister Shinzo Abe called a snap election in late September 2017, with the *dai-yonjūhachikai Shūgiin giin sōsenkyo* (48th general election of members of the House of Representatives) election day set for October 22, 2017. The official reasons given for the snap election were the search for public support for Abe's announced policies, such as the constitutional revision, and Abenomics[2]. According to Abe (2017a), these policies address the most severe

2 Abenomics—a comprehensive policy package of PM Shinzo Abe and his government unveiled after he became PM in late 2012. A goal of the policy is to revive the Japanese economy from two decades of deflation, all while maintaining fiscal discipline.

threats facing Japan—the ageing population and the problem of North Korea. However, the hastily called election, together with a relatively short campaign period, given the political situation in Japan at that time, have put the reasons behind the snap election into a peculiar light. Other alternative explanations emerged; among other things, it was mentioned that by calling a snap election, Abe tried to capitalize on the internal turmoil in the greatest opposition party, *Minshintō* (Democratic Party). The internal crisis in this party led to a split and the creation of two new parties, with one of the parties, led by the populist politician Yuriko Koike, being created only a few hours before the snap election announcement.

With the election, Abe might have tried to utilize a trend of increasing public support for his government, mostly in the context of an escalated North Korean threat. This surge of public support came after months of low voter preferences for Abe due to an unfolding political scandal. The Prime Minister and his wife were under accusations of corruption linked with Moritomo Gakuen, a private school operator. In addition to the possibly speculative sale of land in Toyonaka for 14% of the estimated value, Moritomo Gakuen also sparked controversy by implementing a nationalistic curriculum and a daily recitation of the Imperial Rescript on Education from 1890 (Repeta 2017). Nationalism and pre-war sentiment are considered sensitive issues in Japanese society, formed by decades of following the Yoshida Doctrine and the policy of antimilitarism (Berger 2003). This was not the first scandal affecting the Prime Minister's credibility. Another scandal emerged, with the government even being alleged of misleading Parliament as well as the public, over the dangerous situations into which the members of the Japan Self-Defence Forces were placed while taking part in the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan.[3] Despite the scandals of Abe's administration, it seems that the crisis on the Korean peninsula helped Abe, with his stable and hard-line attitude, to recover from the previous slump.

The newly created political parties *Kibō no Tō* (Party of Hope) and *Rikken Minshutō* (Constitutional Democratic Party), led by Yuriko Koike and Edano Yukio, respectively, were considered to be the most important challengers of the *Jiyū-Minshutō* (Liberal Democratic Party). Initial estimates even indicated a close competition between *Jiyū-Minshutō* and *Kibō no Tō* (Asahi Shimbun 2017). Although the public support for the *Kibō no Tō* peaked approximately 13% in the opinion polls[4], the party ultimately gained 17% in the elections. Despite the initial lag, Edano Yukio and the *Rikken Minshutō* were able to win 55 out of 465 seats in the Lower House. This result positioned them as the strongest opposition party. *Kibō no Tō* won 50 seats, lagging behind initial expectations.

3 In this context, it is necessary to emphasize strict conditions under which Japan Self-Defence Forces may engage in overseas missions (Calder 2018).

4 According to a nationwide telephone survey conducted on Sept. 26–27, 2017 (Asahi Shimbun 2017).

The snap election resulted in a landslide victory for the coalition of Shinzo Abe's *Jiyū-Minshutō* and *Kōmeitō;* he managed to secure a two-thirds majority, with 313 seats in the Lower House of the National Diet.

Our approach

To study bots on SNSs during the 2017 Japanese general election, we chose to conduct our research on Twitter, as it is the most widely used social networking service in Japan (Nussey – Ingram 2018). We base our research on collecting and analysing vast amounts of Twitter data related to the 2017 Japanese general election. In doing so, we build on research practices used to collect Twitter data in other countries during political events (Brachten et al. 2017; Bessi – Ferrara 2016). In this paper, we adopt a wider definition of bots as automated SNS accounts (Ferrara – Varol – Davis – Menczer – Flammini 2016; Brachten – Stieglitz – Hofeditz – Kloppenborg – Reimann 2017). To study bots, it is fundamental first to detect bots. Various approaches have been proposed in the academic literature to detect bots, ranging from defining a high level of automated accounts as accounts producing at least 50 tweets a day using pre-defined hashtags (Howard – Kollannyi 2016), corpus-linguistics approaches of detection (Schäfer – Evert – Heinrich 2017), to various approaches using machine learning (Yang – Harkreader – Gu 2013; Subrahmanian et al. 2016). Among the methods of bot detection on a mass scale, those utilizing machine learning are thought to be the most precise/cost-efficient. However, available methods using machine learning are usually volume-limited (Davis – Varol – Ferrara – Flammini – Menczer 2016) or publicly unavailable (Subrahmanian et al. 2016) for general users. This issue led us to build a custom model, which is, in terms of area under curve (AUC) for the test set, comparable to leading bot detection models based on user profile features. Our approach of detecting bots involved in the 2017 Japanese general election-related discussions on Twitter is based on using supervised machine learning algorithms to produce a custom ensemble classification model. Following the results on the volume of bots involved in the election-related discussion on Twitter, we provide in the discussion section of this article various possible explanations of our findings, which we base within a broader context of Japanese political behaviour, demography and foreign affairs.

Methods

Data collection

For the data collection of tweets, we chose a topic-based sampling method. The approach is based on the collection of tweets containing pre-identified hashtags[i] (Gerlitz – Rieder 2013). Hashtag identification was performed using a hybrid-

-snowball sampling method. The starting hashtags were manually selected based on trending election-related hashtags in Japan during the 2017 election. During the data collection period, we also monitored trending hashtags and the most retweeted posts that were based in Japan as well as written in Japanese. Hashtag identification and monitoring was performed using the Trendsmap Analytics platform (Trendsmap Pty Ltd, Chelsea, VIC, and Australia).

We collected the Twitter data between October 10, 2017, and October 23, 2017, using the Twitter Search API utilizing multiple credentials, and data collection was set to continuous auto-updating. We chose to use the Twitter Search API over the Twitter Stream API, as advised by Bessi and Ferrara (2016). After the collection period, we merged the individual datasets into one containing 905,215 tweets. We checked the data for incompleteness, incorrectness, inaccuracies, and irrelevance. Duplicate record detection by the *id_str* of tweets resulted in the identification of 239,815 duplicates that were removed from the dataset. The final dataset thus contained 665,400 unique tweets. From this dataset, we extracted a list of 96,917 unique Twitter accounts. The data were cleaned and analysed using IBM Watson Analytics and IBM SPSS Modeler v18.0 (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA). To obtain data on the identified Twitter accounts, we used a "Get a User's Info on Twitter" script on Blockspring (Grafly Inc., San Francisco, CA, USA). We were able to collect 126 data fields on 94,451 Twitter accounts. On the remaining 2,466 accounts, we obtained an error code, indicating that the accounts were either suspended or deleted.

Building the MVBDM bot detection model

For the bot detection model, we used a supervised machine learning approach to build an ensemble classification model. As the training data for our model, we used five separate datasets of annotated Twitter accounts provided to us under licence from Stefano Cresci and colleagues (Cresci – Pietro – Petrocchi – Spognardi – Tesconi 2017; Yang et al. 2013). The datasets used were (1) the *genuine accounts* dataset, containing 3,474 genuine Twitter users; (2) the *social spambots #1* dataset, containing 991 Twitter bots; (3) the *social spambots #2* dataset, containing 3,457 Twitter bots; (4) the *social spambots #3* dataset, containing 464 Twitter bots; and (5) the *traditional spambots #1*, containing 1,000 Twitter bots. We merged the five datasets into one final dataset containing 9,386 Twitter accounts and 53 data fields in total. Field storage types and data types for the data fields were set to be automatically determined. As the target data field for prediction, we chose the *bot* variable. We then checked the data for incompleteness, incorrectness, inaccuracies, and irrelevance. This resulted in the omission of 17 data fields due to their irrelevance as predictors. We partitioned the cleaned data into a training set and a testing set with a ratio of 80:20. In the training set, we executed an analysis of possible modelling methods. As

the target data field was binary, nine modelling methods were identified to be suitable. For building the ensemble model, namely, the MVBDM bot detection model,[ii] we used the three models with the highest overall accuracy based on the testing set, with the other models set to be discarded. Confidence-weighted voting for the whole ensemble model was set to the highest level of confidence. The final ensemble model was then analysed for overall accuracy. Data preparation and model building were performed using IBM SPSS Modeler v18.0 (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA).

Application of the MVBDM bot detection model

We prepared the dataset containing the collected Twitter accounts data. The data were checked for incompleteness, incorrectness, and inaccuracies. We then applied our MVBDM bot detection model, which classified the accounts as either 0 or 1, with 0 meaning that it did not forecast the account to be a bot and 1 meaning that it did forecast the account to be a bot. Every forecast was also assigned a confidence coefficient *($XFC-bot)*, representing the level of confidence the model had in its prediction. We then performed a basic descriptive statistical analysis to determine the volume of tweets in our dataset that were generated by accounts classified by our model as bots. We also performed an analysis of tweets generated by the 2,466 accounts in our dataset that were suspended or deleted and thus could not be categorized by our model.

Results

MVBDM bot detection model

The models with the highest overall accuracy based on the testing set were models using the C.5, CHAID, and decision list.[iii] The C.5 model worked by splitting the sample based on the field that provides the maximum information gain. The accuracy of this approach yielded 99.053% overall accuracy for the training set and 98.302% for the testing set. The area under the curve (AUC) for bot classification *($XF-bot* variable) was 0.992 for the training set and 0.986 for the testing set. AUC was calculated as the area under a receiver operator characteristic (ROC) curve. The second model, the CHAID model, worked by using chi-square statistics to identify optimal splits. The overall accuracy of this model was 98.44% (training set) and 97.454% (testing set). The AUC (training set) was 0.988, and the AUC (testing set) was 0.993. The last model, namely, the decision list, identified subgroups or segments that show a higher or lower likelihood of a given binary outcome relative to the overall sample. The overall accuracy of this model was 94.214% (training set) and 93.369% (testing set). The AUC (training set) was 0.955, and the AUC (testing set) was 0.945. These

three models were used together to produce the ensemble model. The accuracy analysis of the ensemble model showed that the prediction accuracy for the training set was 99%, and for the testing set, it was 98.14% (Table 1.). The area under the curve (AUC) for bot classification (*$XF-bot* variable) was 0.999 for the training set and 0.998 for the testing set. The Gini coefficient evaluation yielded a result of 0.997 for the training set and 0.996 for the testing set. Gini was calculated as Gini=2AUC-1. The confidence value report for bot classification *($XF-bot* variable) in the testing set is shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Ensemble model accuracy – comparing $XF-bot with bot

	Training set	Testing set
Correct	7,426 (99%)	1,850 (98.14%)
Wrong	75 (1%)	35 (1.86%)
Total	7,501 (100%)	1,885 (100%)

Table 2: Confidence Values Report for $XFC-bot

'Partition' = Testing set	Confidence
Range	0.473 – 1.0
Mean Correct	0.984
Mean Incorrect	0.828
Always Correct Above	0.993 (55.07% of cases)
Always Incorrect Below	0.474 (0.05% of cases)
98.14% Accuracy Above	0.0
2.0 Fold Correct Above	0.933 (99.33% of cases)

In total, 94,451 Twitter accounts were classified by our model. The model assigned 2,411 accounts for a *$XF-bot* score of 1. The remaining 92,040 accounts were assigned a *$XF-bot* score of 0, with 0 meaning that the model did not forecast the account to be a bot and 1 meaning that the model did forecast the account to be a bot. The confidence coefficient *($XFC-bot*) for all predictions in total yielded a mean of 0.944 and a range of 0.544, with 1 for absolute confidence and 0 for zero confidence in the model's prediction (Table 3.).

Table 3: Statistics of confidence coefficient- $XFC-bot

'Dataset – Japan Twitter accounts'	Confidence
Mean	0.944
Min	0.450
Max	0.994
Range	0.544
Median	0.943

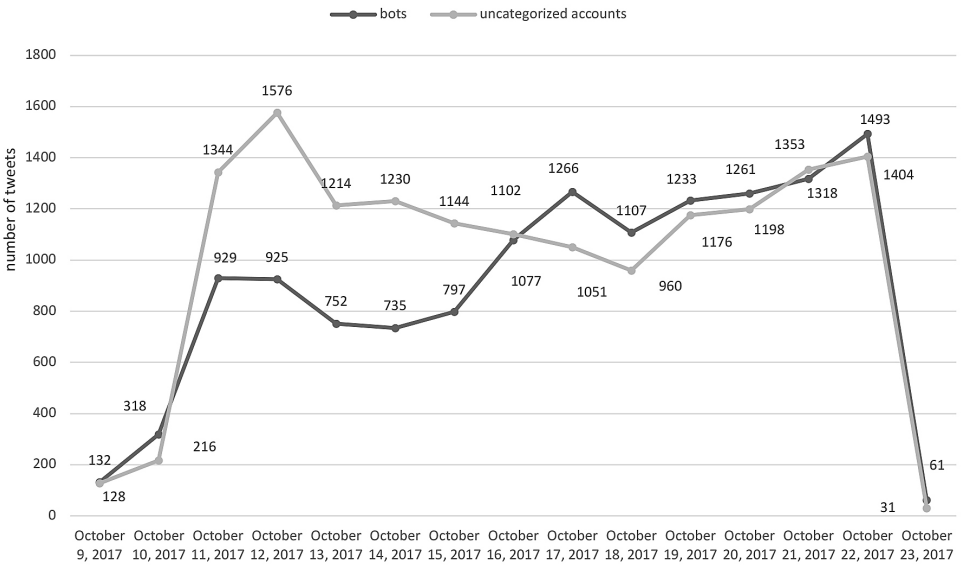
The analysis of tweets in our Japanese general election dataset resulted in the identification of 13,404 tweets generated by accounts classified by our model as bots (Table 4.). The overall tweeting volume of the identified bots increased from 318 tweets on October 10, 2017, to 1,493 tweets on October 22, 2017 (election day). After the election, the tweeting volume dropped to 61 tweets on October 23, 2017 (Figure 1). Due to time zone differences and the technical setup during the data collection phase, we also observed 132 tweets in the dataset from October 9, 2017.

Table 4: Twitter bot accounts – number of tweets

'Dataset – Bot accounts'	Tweets
Mean	5.590
Min	1
Max	336
Median	1

The second analysis of tweets in our Japanese general election dataset was set to identify tweets generated by the 2,466 uncategorized accounts. This analysis resulted in the identification of 15,127 tweets generated by such accounts. The tweeting volume of the uncategorized accounts increased from 216 tweets on October 10, 2017, to a maximum of 1,576 tweets on October 12, 2017. On election day, 1,404 tweets were generated. After the election, the volume dropped to 31 tweets on October 23, 2017 (Figure 1). Due to time zone differences and the technical setup during the data collection phase, we also observed 128 tweets in the dataset from October 9, 2017.

Figure 1: Time series of tweets generated by bots and uncategorized accounts



Trending hashtags and retweets

The analysis of trending Twitter hashtags and most retweeted statuses in Japan on the election day was automatically performed by Trendsmap Analytics (Trendsmap Pty Ltd, Chelsea, VIC, and Australia) on a dataset of 59,829,000 tweets. From this dataset, Trendsmap Analytics classified 19,391,000 tweets as retweets and 14,485,100 as replies. The most retweeted post on the election day was by *@McDonaldsJapan* with 166,450 retweets and 41,008 likes, followed by a tweet *by @Tekken_omachi* with 71,115 retweets and 72,058 likes. The third most-shared tweet on election day was by *@711SEJ* with 40,830 retweets and 3,861 likes. The top three hashtags shared on election day were #立憲民主党, *#tspook, and* #比例は共産党.[iv]

Discussion

The 2017 Japanese general election seemed to keep Japan out of the contemporary struggle of most of the Western democracies—Twitter bots trying to massively shape public opinion during critical political events. Our research showed a relatively low presence of bots during the 2017 Japanese general election, as only 2,411 of 94,451 accounts in our dataset were classified as bots by our model. This number of bots accounted for a relatively low number of bot-generated tweets—13,404 of the 665,400 collected tweets in total. Even if accounting for the 15,127 tweets generated by suspended or deleted accounts,

the total possible number of bot-generated tweets was roughly 4% of the entire collected conversation. In our results of tweet sharing in Japan, we documented a negligible interest in sharing or even creating election-related content on Twitter. The presented results are based on the collection and processing of vast amounts of Twitter data and the use of a supervised machine learning approach to build a custom bot classification ensemble model. The classification model was trained on 9,386 Twitter accounts and has an AUC (testing set) of 0.998.

However, the observed low number of Twitter bots involved in 2017 Japanese general election-related discussions on Twitter raises an interesting question. Why is Japan—the third-largest economy in the world, a country with a considerable defence capability, an influential global player, and one of the most important difference-makers in the East Asian regional order—not dragged into a complex bot battle on Twitter? At first sight, our results seem to be contradictory to those of other widely cited research on the presence of bots during elections in other countries. For example, Bessi and Ferrara (2016) have documented that approximately 400,000 bots were engaged in political discussions about the 2016 presidential election in the U.S., with approximately 3.8 million tweets generated by bots, representing approximately one-fifth of the entire conversation. Similar results in the range of 12.5% to 25% bot-generated tweets were also found by other studies examining this phenomenon in France, the US and the UK (Ferrara 2017; Kollanyi et al. 2016; Gallacher – Kaminska – Kollanyi – Howard 2017). However, the presence of bots during political events seems to be a rather complex issue influenced by various factors. Distinct methods of bot usage vary by country and political instance (Wolley 2016). In the case of Japan, we propose various inter-combinable explanations for the low number of bots involved in the discussions related to the Japanese election on Twitter. This account, however, should not be considered to be an explicit list of all possible explanations; instead, it should serve as a thought base for further research.

One of the explanations for the low number of observed Twitter bots during the election-related discussions in Japan might stem from the specific demography of the island nation. Demographic factors play an essential role in shaping the political campaign and shaping the means of communication and the media market (Sciubba 2012; Tepe – Vanhuysse 2009). The share of the population over 65 years is considerably high in Japan (26.6% in 2015), with the share of the Japanese population over 80 years reaching 8% in 2015 (He – Goodkind – Kowal 2016). According to projections made by the U.S. Census Bureau, the share of elderly citizens in Japan will grow even more significantly in the future. It is estimated that the share of Japanese citizens older than 65 years will reach 40.1% in 2050. Japan continuously ranks as having one of the highest life expectancies in the world. This trend will most likely continue, as the life expectancy projections for Japanese individuals born in 2050 are 91.6 years for both sexes (He et al. 2016). Japan also has the highest percentage of

centenarians globally. In September 2017, the number of centenarians rose to 4.8 per 10,000 citizens (Matsukawa 2017). Japanese demography might not only affect voting behaviour but also the behaviour of political institutions, the media environment, and the perception of new means of social media, as well as the will of politicians and campaign managers to accept and use such new means. Among other things, this notion seems to be apparent in the share of traditional media in Japan, as traditional media such as newspapers and TV broadcasts enjoy a sizable audience (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute 2016; NSK 2016).

The Japanese newspaper market has one of the highest circulations in the world, with 44 million daily newspapers (WAN-IFRA 2016). This amount of newspaper circulation is further backed by a robust delivery system, as 95% of newspapers bought in Japan are delivered (NSK 2016). For the Japanese television market, according to the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 85% of Japanese households watched TV in 2015, with the average time spent watching TV being 203 minutes per day (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute 2016). According to Ogashara (2018), the position of traditional forms of media is further solidified by the high level of trust that the Japanese have in newspapers and TV broadcasts, mostly due to the older population and a low level of media polarization. Since almost the entire post-war era in Japan has been ruled by *Jiyū-Minshutō*, the media lacks the motivation to be excessively critical. Being neutral helps the media attract a larger audience (Ogasahara 2018). However, the strong popularity of traditional forms of media in Japan might also be a reflection of the nation's cultural nature. The Japanese are considered to be naturally passive, slowly adapting to changes. This characteristic is noticeable, for example, in Japanese political debates, where Japanese politicians commonly address forces beyond their reach, such as *hitsuzen no ikioi* (inevitable momentum) (Pyle 2006; Benedict 2014; McFarlane 2009).

The high share of traditional media in Japan is, of course, reflected in the relatively low share of new media. According to the 2016 report by Poushter (2016), internet penetration in Japan was 69% among adults and 91% overall (Newman – Fletcher – Levy – Nielsen 2016). This figure is far behind the percentage of adults using the internet in advanced economies, such as the US, Canada, or South Korea. Statistics on the percentage of adults owning a smartphone show that Japan is 39% behind the global average of 43%. The share of Japanese citizens over 35 years of age owning a smartphone device was considerably low: 31% compared to 77% among millennials (Poushter 2016). These statistics seem to be reflected in the relatively low usage of social networking services in Japan. Twitter, the most popular social networking service in Japan, has more than 45 million users in Japan, which is approximately one-third of the country's entire population (Nussey – Ingram 2018). In the 20 to 29 age group, the usage rate of Twitter was 30.19%, followed by 22.14% in the 13 to 19 age group. Only 3.55%

of people older than 60 years use Twitter (MIC 2016). Statistics published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism document a lower number of interactions with news on social networking services in Japan than in the US or South Korea. In 2016, only 9% of the Japanese population shared a news story on a social networking service. In the US, this proportion was unambiguously higher at 25%; in Taiwan, it was 34%. A similar pattern emerges for commenting on news stories on social networking services. The Reuters study shows that only 6% of Japanese individuals commented on news stories via social networking services in 2016, compared with 22% of individuals in the US or 28% in Spain. These results, according to Newman et al. (2016), document the passivity of Japanese citizens as well as the specific state of the media environment.

A combination of the abovementioned factors seems to not only influence the media market but also political campaigns. Countless politicians in Japan run their campaigns in a more traditional manner, with the campaigns being based more on direct communication with citizens via public speaking in front of supermarkets or at subway stations. This approach to political marketing seems to further solidify the traditional, unattractive aura of political campaigns in the eyes of the younger generation of voters. Despite the significant support for Shinzo Abe and *Jiyū-Minshutō*, the percentage of the young Japanese population participating in elections seems to be inadequate. During the House of Councillors election in 2016, only 46.78% of young citizens turned out to vote, compared to the overall voter turnout of 54.70% (Nippon.com 2017). A possible explanation for this observed lack of interest, according to Shin (2016), seems to be precisely the "unattractiveness" of Japanese politicians to young audiences, mostly on social networking services. Traditional means of communication and political campaigns do not appear to be appealing to Japanese youth.

However, the distinctiveness of Japanese political campaigns might be the result of not only an ageing population but also strict laws. According to Plasser (2002), Japan has one of the most regulated campaigning practices in the world. The Public Offices Election Act from 1950 even determined details such as the dimensions of political posters. Regarding online campaigning, the Public Offices Election Act was amended only in 2013, allowing Japanese politicians for the first time in history to utilize the internet for political campaigning. Some commentators from the academic sphere expected an enormous change in the way campaigns were run. This optimism was transformed into the popular phrase *net senkyo* (net election). However, *net senkyo* optimism never met expectations that predicted a radical change in the means of political communication. In comparison with the U.S., South Korea, or Taiwan, Japan is the least developed country in terms of online campaign deployment (Kiyohara – Maeshima – Owen 2018). Politicians, among others, seem to lack experience in running online campaigns. Instead of broadening their potential electorate by using social networking services, they focus mostly on presenting

their activities via public speaking. Despite the relatively poor utilization of the online environment, Fahey (2017) argues that there is a noticeable increase in Japanese politicians engaging in social networking services. His observation is based on the increased number of tweets between 2013 and 2017 by the members of the Japanese Diet.

However, the low number of observed Twitter bots during election-related discussions in Japan could also be caused by factors other than a distinct manner of political campaigning coupled with a more traditional media market, legislative regulations, and older voter demography. The low presence of bots during the election campaign in Japan may also be the result of an apparent lack of interest of other states in changing the political scene in Japan. Japanese relations with China and Russia, two countries frequently accused of using Twitter bots to shape public opinion, are complex and have several friction points, mostly in the form of territorial disputes. However, it is likely that both China and Russia had no relevant interest in influencing the 2017 Japanese general election. Shinzo Abe and his cabinet are relatively predictable in terms of foreign policy and attitudes towards other regional players. The continuity of relations among leaders of the nations that neighbour Japan is crucial in the long-term evolution of the East Asian order. In light of recent political development in China, the stability of the Japanese political scene might be beneficial for both states. It has already been reported that the Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Shinzo Abe underwent a reconciliation of mutual relations. According to Abe, *a new start for Japan-China relations should* lead to high-level mutual visits (Abe 2017b). The same goes for Japan-Russia relations. Russian president Vladimir Putin and the Japanese Prime Minister are, among other things, working closely on a final solution to the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands dispute, as well as on potentially deepening the economic cooperation between the two states (The Japan Times 2018).

In discussing possible explanations for the low number of observed Twitter bots during the 2017 Japanese general election, we should not forget the relatively short time period between Abe's announcement of the snap election and election day, as well as the language issue. Any potential agent seeking an opportunity to influence the Japanese election campaign via Twitter bots might face time pressure in devising a comprehensible strategy. The language of the island nation might also play a role. In programming effective human-like bots, natural language processing (NLP) is fundamental. However, as Halpern (2006) notes, the complexity of the Japanese language presents particular challenges to developers of NLP, especially in the area of word segmentation, information retrieval, named entity extraction, and machine translation.

All the possible explanations presented for the relatively low presence of Twitter bots during the 2017 Japanese general election are interesting topics for future research. Future studies might also consider examining the real-world

impact of Twitter bots during political events in Japan. Despite the rigorous research methods implemented in this study, as with other research regarding the presence of Twitter bots during political events, some limitations apply. One of the most discussed limitations of studying bots during political events is whether the sample data downloaded through the Twitter API is a valid representation of the overall activity on Twitter (Morstatter – Pfeffer – Liu – Carley 2013). By using the Twitter Search API over the Twitter Stream API in our study set to perform continuous auto-updating, as advised by Bessi and Ferrara (2016), this approach should yield a complete sample of all the tweets containing a pre-defined hashtag and thus avoid the valid representation limitation. Another widely discussed limitation arises from using machine learning. Although bot detection mechanisms utilizing machine learning are considered to be the most precise en masse, they still face some restrictions. Bot detection solutions using supervised machine learning techniques are based on the underlying assumption that the difficulty and characteristics of the bots contained in the training dataset and those contained in the real--world environment at a specific time and space are generally alike. However, this assumption reduces the ability of bot detection models utilizing such techniques to correctly spot bots that are unlike the bots that the model was trained on. Therefore, to assure the maximum detection range of our model and to avoid the above limitation as much as possible, we trained our model on a pre-annotated dataset of traditional bots as well as on a new generation of bots. We also conducted exploratory data analyses of the datasets we were working with to detect anomalies between training and testing datasets, which could possibly decrease the accuracy of our model. This approach yielded a model with an AUC of 0.998. However, active deployment of our model in the future would require more testing and constant recalibration.

The power of Twitter bots attempting to shape or disrupt public opinion during defining social moments in Western countries should not be ignored. This activity has been used in massive attempts to influence various elections in the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, among others. However, given the results of this study, Japan seems to maintain its distance from this contemporary struggle in most Western democracies. Although this result is surprising at first glance, to adequately interpret it, one must consider the wider socio-political context of Japan discussed in this paper. In analysing these particularities and clarifying the issues presented in this study, future research might look deeper into the utilization rates of bots for Japanese political communication in general, cross platform coordination, as well as empirically test the links between the Japanese particularities mentioned and bot activity on social networking sites.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study, except the training data for the bot detection model, are available in the Zenodo repository: doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1413589 The training data for the bot detection model were used under license from Cresci et al. (2017), the data are available on request at mib.projects.iit.cnr.it/dataset.html.

Endnotes:

i The pre-identified hashtags were as follows: (1) 自民党 (Liberal Democratic Party); (2) このꟾを守りꟾく (Protect this country); (3) 安倍晋三 (Shinzo Abe); (4) 衆院選 (House of Representatives election); (5) 小池百合子 (Yuriko Koike); (6) 日本に希望を (Hope for Japan); (7) 希望の党 (Party of Hope); (8) 立憲民主党 (Constitutional Democratic Party); (9) 枝野幸男 (Edano Yukio); (10) 枝野出る (Edano Wake Up).

ii The complete technical build settings of the ensemble model (MVBDM.gm file) are available in the Zenodo repository: doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1413589

iii A detailed description of the algorithms used can be found at <ftp://public.dhe.ibm.com/software/analytics/spss/documentation/modeler/18.0/en/AlgorithmsGuide.pdf >.

iv The relevance of the top ten retweeted tweets and the top ten trending hashtags to the election was manually determined by two independent coders. Statistics for selected days prior to election day are available in the replication dataset for this study in the Zenodo repository: doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1413589

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