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The impact of closed and flexible candidate lists on the representation of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic[1]

PETR DVOŘÁK

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Abstract: *This article addresses the impact of closed and flexible candidate lists on the representativeness of the lower house of the Czech Parliament from 1996 to 2021. Specifically, the paper explores representativeness according to gender, profession, residence, education, age and political experience. The effectiveness of preferential votes has manifested only since the electoral reform in 2010, mainly in the representativeness of women. Other monitored variables had a more pronounced influence, mainly in 2010 and 2013, when various citizen initiatives called for a change in the existing political set, and the new political parties disrupted the party system. Or when the voters of the PirStan coalition preferred the candidates of the STAN at the expense of the candidates of the Pirates in 2021.*

Keywords: ***closed candidate list, flexible candidate list, the Czech Republic, Personalization***

I. Introduction

The voters in democratic countries choose their representatives through elections. How much the voters influence the election of their representatives mainly depends on the setting of the electoral system, which can be divided in its most

1 This publication was written at Masaryk University with the support of the Specific University Research Grant provided by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. The author would like to thank anonymous referees for their useful comments.

basic form into majority, proportional or mixed, and on the other hand by the setting of candidate lists. From the point of view of candidate lists, we can talk about closed candidate lists, where voters do not have the opportunity to influence the order on the candidate list. Furthermore, this are flexible candidate lists, where the voter can grant several preferential votes and thereby show his initiative in selecting candidates. The last type is open candidate lists, where voters choose from a list of candidates between candidates arranged alphabetically. In the presented text, I focus on the proportional electoral system with flexible candidate lists used in elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. I focus on the impact of closed and flexible candidate lists on the representativeness of the lower house of the Czech Parliament from 1996 to 2021. Within this comparison, I can determine the benefit of preferential voting for the represented interests (with regard to political representation) such as gender, residence, education, occupation or age (Atkeson 2003; Caul 1999; Dovi 2010; Goodin 2004; Krook – O'Brien 2010; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1998; Piktin 1972; Sapiro 1981; Squires 1996; Williams 1998; Young 1990).

The recent research analyses (see below) the characteristics that lead to greater preferential votes. However, it deals only to a limited extent (Kneblová 2010, 2014) with elected deputies who won a mandate thanks to preferential votes and their influence on the representativeness of the Chamber of Deputies. So, it is still unclear what characteristics (gender, education, age, place of residence, occupation) are typical for candidates who obtained enough preferential votes to get a parliamentary mandate. But why should this type of research be important? The reason is twofold. First, this is a missing part of the mosaic of previous research connected with preferential votes in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies. Additionally, the MP's performance (speech, interpellation and voting) is influenced by his age, gender, education, profession and by previous political experience mainly connected with the parliamentary mandate (Balík et al. 2019). It is, therefore, essential to determine which candidates obtain a mandate through preferential voting, as this fact directly affects the composition of the Chamber of Deputies and its activities.

In the same way, the selection of individual candidates can be linked to a potential increase in the representativeness (gender, profession, residence, education, age and political experience) of the Chamber of Deputies, as those elected receive the most preferential votes, and their voters can feel better represented. The concept of descriptive representation is closely related to this, described in more detail by Hana Pitkin (1972). Simply put, it is the representation of persons by representatives who resemble them in personal characteristics.

I examine these questions by comparing the composition of the Chamber of Deputies regarding the current situation where voters can use a few preferential votes in the situation where voters do not have this option. How would the composition of the Chamber of Deputies differ? Would more people with

a specific gender, place of residence or profession be elected? Does the possibility of granting preferential votes guarantee the representation of marginalised groups in society or persons with typical characteristics? The research presented contributes to the understanding of the influence of preferential votes on the composition of the representative body.

II. Theoretical background – personalisation of the electoral system

The authors Rahat and Shefaer (2007) make a distinction between institutional, media and behavioural types of political personalisation. To the initial trigger changes in institutional settings, mass media subsequently respond by giving more space and emphasis to individuals over parties. Subsequently, politicians change their behaviour and emphasise their person over the political party (see Rahat and Shefaer 2007). In this work, I deal more closely with the institutional setting, specifically the formal rules (closed/open candidate lists, rules for recounting votes, the number of preferential votes, the size of districts, etc.[2]) associated with preferential votes (Bräuninger 2013). The personalisation of the electoral system is mainly related to the openness of candidate lists and the size of districts (Carey – Shugart 1995), possibly the ratio of the number of candidates fielded to the number of seats a party is likely to win (Crisp et al. 2007). Personalisation is associated with the situation where the election campaign is between individual parties but also between candidates of one political party. Personalisation is also associated with a greater emphasis on individuals than on the party itself and other institutions and local than national interests (e.g., Karvonen 2010; Pedersen and Rahat 2021). In addition, candidates try to build their reputation for their election at the expense of their fellow party members and the party (Carey – Shugart 1995).

However, a greater emphasis on persons may not mean extreme intra-party competition, as candidates may come from different areas or emphasise shared characteristics/interests (Cheibub and Sin, 2020). Alternatively, the party can prevent this rivalry between candidates through its capital or strategy when compiling candidate lists (Crisp et al. 2013, Cheibub and Sin 2020). Parties also try to use the familiarity, local political experience or birthplace of specific candidates who can attract fickle voters (Crisp et al. 2013; Shugart et al. 2005), which can cause a greater individualism towards the party in Parliament (Cantor – Herrnson 1997; Sieberer 2010; Tavits 2009, 2010; Kam 2009; Heidar 2006). In the Czech Republic, the preferentially elected MPs support the party line (Smrek 2023), and parties demand responsibility towards the party from their MPs under the threat of not including the MPs in elective positions (Däu-

2 Carey and Shugart (1995) mention ballot control, vote pooling, types of votes and district magnitude.

bler et al. 2018). The parties have also used the ministers to maximise electoral gains in a specific constituency (Dvořák – Pink 2022). The leaders also got the most preferential votes in place of their residence in 2006 (Voda – Pink). Research also looks at the nomination process of political parties and the influence of preferential votes from past elections. These votes can push a candidate up to a better position (André et al. 2017) but still not to the realistic position (guaranteeing election) of the candidate list (Put et al. 2021).

In the same way, when choosing candidates voters can rely on the heuristics of individual candidates such as name, titles, sex, age, residence, political affiliation and profession or acquaintance of the candidate (Dodeigne and Pilet 2021, Lebeda 2009; Voda 2012). The research also focused on the number of preferential votes for women and minorities (Erzeel – Caluwaerts 2015; Fulton 2014; Holli – Wass 2010; Negri 2018; Marien et al. 2017; Peskowitz 2019). In the Czech Republic, women received more preferential votes in elections than men (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022). The main reason for the insufficient representation of women in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic is party factors (position on the list of candidates), the number of preferential votes and the too-high threshold for moving a female candidate through the candidate list (ibid.).

Voters can also vote according to the so-called 'donkey vote' and give preferential votes to the first or last candidates (Brockington 2003; King and Leight 2009; Reynolds – Steenbergen 2006). The first is the effect of satisfaction when the voter judges the candidate according to whether he meets his requirements. As the number of candidates increases, the voter is more willing to support the candidates in the leading positions (primacy effect). The second is the recency effect, where the voter judges the candidates based on whether they can be associated with something the voter does not require from the candidate. However, as the number of candidates increases, the voter becomes more benevolent and is more likely to choose candidates at the bottom of the candidate list (Miller – Krosnick 1998).

In the example of Slovakia, with an increasing number of persons on the candidate list, the primacy effect becomes more pronounced so that the first candidate will receive more preferential votes in a larger constituency than in a small one. Conversely, the recency effect is more noticeable in smaller constituencies, as voters tend to go through the entire list of candidates (Spáč 2016). Dodeigne and Pilet (2021) also talk about the elitisation of intra-party electoral competition when 5–10 candidates (defenders of the mandate, party chairman or minister) receive the majority of preferential votes on the candidate list.

III. What affects the impact of preferential votes?

The first parameter is the number of preferential votes. Simplistically, the more votes a voter has, the more noticeable the impact of preferential votes. At the

same time, the voluntariness of granting preferential votes and the fact whether the voter must use all or only a part of the possible preferential votes are essential (Spáč 2011). The second factor, the size of the constituency, is linked to the number of candidates on the candidate list. As the number of candidates on the candidate list increases, the possibility that the order of candidates determined by the party will change decreases. This is due to the fact that preferential votes are divided among more candidates (Lebeda 2004; Spáč 2011). The same conclusion was reached by Eva Kneblová (2010, 2014) when she found that the average number of preferential votes for individual candidates depended on the size of the constituency. The smaller the constituency (number of mandates), the more preferential votes the candidates receive. The third parameter is a threshold allowing a shift on the candidate list, expressed for all candidates by a specific number or share of votes, or a threshold defined between the candidate and the party. The principle of obtaining a percentage of the votes obtained by the nominating party or the quota is most often used. However, with the increase of this clause, the candidate's chance to move to higher positions guaranteeing election worsens (Spáč 2011). Eva Kneblová (2010, 2014) also mentions that with the smaller parties (gaining 1–2 mandates), preferential votes had a more substantial influence on the election of a specific person than for large parties, which gained a significantly higher number of mandates. In non-parliamentary parties, voters used preferential votes less often than in parliamentary parties (Kneblová 2010, 2014).

Merging parties into coalitions also increases the number of preferential votes because the candidates of coalition parties compete for mandates as part of the intra-coalition competition (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Marsh 1985; Millard – Popescu 2004; Spáč 2011; Vartazaryan and Škultéty 2022; Voda 2012; Wildgen 1985). This argument confirms the most recent work on the influence of preferential votes within the SPOLU and PIRSTAN electoral coalitions (Hruška – Balík 2022). Within the SPOLU coalition, the most fundamental factor for winning preferential votes was the different characteristics of the member basis of the coalition parties or individual characteristics (candidate familiarity). For the PirStan coalition, the candidate's characteristics, the candidate's occupation (mayor) and the size of the party, measured by party support, played a role. Voters also preferred the candidates of the STAN movement in the first four places of the candidate list in most constituencies (except Prague and the Ústí Region).

Petr Voda (2010, 2014) used regression analysis to determine important factors influencing support for individual candidates. Specifically, the number of preferential votes for the candidate was influenced by the ordinal number. That is, when the candidate's support decreased as the ordinal number increased, until the last four places, where this support was remained high. For most parties, it was also evident that a candidate with a higher education and defending a mandate receives a higher share of preferential votes. For other

characteristics, such as age, gender, place of residence or occupation, it was not possible to determine a uniform trend across all political parties (Voda 2010, 2014). Haase-Formánková et al. (2022) confirmed that candidates defending the mandate, the higher educated (docents and professors), and women obtained more preferential votes. Candidates over 70 got fewer preferential votes.

Leaders of candidate lists and persons in leading positions also receive the most votes (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Späč 2011). The year 2010 was different from the previous elections. In this year, more people were elected from the last four places on the candidate list, which could be related to citizen initiatives calling for a change in the current political set (Kneblová 2010). According to Kneblová, the possible influence of citizen initiatives is unclear (2014). On the other hand, candidates who signed up for the Reconstruction of States initiative in 2013 achieved approximately twice the number of preferential votes than those candidates who did not sign up for the initiative (Voda 2012).

The preferential voting in elections to the Chamber of Deputies 1996–2021

Research in the Czech Republic focuses on the use and impact of preferential votes at all levels, whether municipal (Kopřiva 2012; Lebeda 2009; Šedo 2009), regional (Voda 2012), or in elections to the Chamber of Deputies (André et al. 2017; Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Balík – Hruška 2022; Kneblová, 2010, 2014; Kudrna 2010; Kyloušek 2006; Morkes 2007; Smrek 2023; Späč 2011; Vartazaryan and Škultéty 2022; Voda 2010, 2013; Voda – Pink 2009). Changes in the electoral system[3] in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies are summarised in Table 1. However, the modification of the closing clause for coalitions also appears to be significant. The two-member coalitions had to achieve at least 7%, three-member coalitions 9% and four or more members 11% of the total number of votes in 1992. The legislative amendment from 2002 set the closing clause at 10% for two-member coalitions, 15% for three-member coalitions and 20% for four or more member coalitions. This legal amendment reduced the willingness of political parties to join coalitions, which could also affect the very use of preferential votes. The most recent legislation amendment from 2021 reduced this clause to 8% for two-member coalitions and 11% for three or more member coalitions (CZSO). More favourable conditions immediately manifested when two coalitions, SPOLU (ODS, KDU-ČSL and TOP 09) and PirStan, were created in 2021.

3 It was found that 'moderate increases in list flexibility lead to more preference voting, whereas strong increases cause a drop' (Däubler 2020).

Table 1: Preferential Voting in Czech Electoral Law

Election years	Threshold for PV	Preferential votes per voter	Constituencies	Ballot
1996–1998	10%	4	8	Flexible-party list
2002–2006	7%	2	14	
2010–2021	5%	4		

Source: Vartazaryan and Škultéty 2022

Peter Spáč (2011) considers the electoral rules from 2010 as the most effective for using preferential votes and electoral rules from 2002 and 2006 as the least effective. Jan Kudrna (2010) agreed with this when he called the 7% threshold for preferential votes so strict that it degraded preferential voting. Other authors also mention preferential votes' limited influence (Outlý, 2003; Outlý – Prouza, 2013). In the case of the latest legislation, which is more favourable to coalitions, we can assume a further increase in the effectiveness of using preferential votes. However, it depends on the political parties' willingness to create coalitions.

IV. Methodology and hypotheses

Based on data from the Volby.cz server, I determined the list of deputies who formed the Chamber of Deputies immediately after the elections from 1996 to 2021 (eight elections), both from the point of view of closed and flexible candidate lists. I analyse the composition of the Chamber of Deputies based on variables such as gender, occupation, place of residence, age, education, party affiliation, defense of mandate and previous political experience. I obtained data (gender, occupation, place of residence, age, education) about candidates and respectively in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies from 1996 to 2021 from the server Volby.cz or the website of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (CHDPCZ). I drew information related to the political experience of MPs from municipal, regional, senate, European or Czechoslovak elections (volby.cz), or the list of government members (vlada.cz). I determine the impact of closed candidate lists (N) as the difference between the current state (flexible candidate list (A)) and closed candidate lists (B). N = A – B. This calculation was applied to all investigated variables.

The number of women in the Chamber of Deputies has gradually increased since 1996, but it is still impossible to say that the individual gender is equally represented (Balík et al. 2019; Kouba et al. 2013; Rakušanová 2006). It is, therefore, necessary to find out whether preferential voting influences the increasing number of women, as claimed by Haase-Formánková et al. (2022). It is also essential to find out whether a higher number of preferential votes for more educated (docent, professor) and younger candidates (under 70) guarantees their

higher representation in the Chamber of Deputies (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Lebeda 2007; Voda 2010, 2014).

Regarding residence, voters identify best with a candidate living in the same area (Campbell-Cowley 2014; Cutler 2002; Key 1949). Voda and Pink (2009) found that the party leaders gain the most support near their residences. In contrast, leaders who run as candidates outside their region gain support across the entire region (constituency). Thus, a highly 'popular' person within a city or a municipality has a greater chance of succeeding and being elected, thanks to preferential votes. It is the place of residence that is important from the point of view of the potential influence of the elected member of Parliament on the development of their residence, whether in legislation or the so-called portioning of the bear (e.g., Grossman – Helpman 2005; Latner – McGann 2005; Hána 2013). I also assume that the number of deputies with residence in Prague will decrease over time; on the contrary, the number of deputies from district towns or smaller municipalities will increase, as evidenced by Mikešová and Kostelecký (2016) or in the example of government members by Dvořák et al. (2021). On the other hand, in the case of a strong position in the regional capital, a smaller number of places on the list of candidates, or a weak position of district and local cells of political parties, candidates from the capital of the region, i.e. the constituency, may be promoted to the top places on the list of candidates (Put 2016), which would subsequently lead to an increase in the number of deputies from regional towns in the case of candidate lists.

Within the profession of individual candidates, there is an evident predominance of people who make a living from politics, that is, people for whom politics has become the primary source of livelihood (Balík et al. 2019; Poláková – Kostelecký 2016). Because in the Czech Republic (Bernard – Čermák 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016) and other countries (Navaro 2009; Sandberg, 2013) politicians choose a gradual path in their political paths (from the municipal, through the regional, to the Chamber of Deputies), it can be expected that even persons elected thanks to preferential votes will fulfill this path. Most deputies also cumulate their parliamentary mandate with regional or municipal mandates (Bernard – Čermák, 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016). In addition, according to Ryšavý, the chance of being elected as a member of Parliament increases if the person holds a higher position at the regional level, as he is better known to the public (Ryšavý 2016). The chance also increases with the holding of multiple mandates, as the person gets more space in the media and is better known to voters (Smolková – Balík 2018). Likewise, the candidates who defend their seats in the Chamber of Deputies are most often elected (Balík et al. 2019). These candidates also get the most preferential votes (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Voda 2010, 2012, 2014) because they are nominated at the top of the candidate list (Ceyhan 2018; Gherghina – Chiru 2010; Chiru – Popescu 2017; Meserve et al. 2020; Put – Maddens 2013). Therefore, it can be assumed that

the persons who obtained the parliamentary mandate thanks to preferential votes will have municipal and regional experience. At the same time, they will be mayors, deputy mayors at the municipal level, and governors or deputies at the regional level. Many MPs in the Chamber of Deputies have prestigious professions (Poláková – Kostelecký 2016); Voda (2014) mentions the advantage in the number of preferential votes doctors obtain.

Individual variables are understood as follows. Gender is important in the number of women and men. In the case of occupation, other variables include whether the person held a higher public elected office (mayor and governor or their deputies, deputy, senator, member of the government, member of the European Parliament), lower public elected office (deputy mayor and municipal representative, regional representative), party/politician staff, self-employed, prestigious professions (doctor, lawyer, teacher, scientist, judge, policeman, firefighter, designer, private farmer, nurse and programmer (Tuček 2019), non-manual job, manual job, economically non-active and manager. In the case of multiple listed professions, the candidate's profile information is listed first on the list of candidates unless the person provides information related to a higher public position or a position associated with a political party/politician. In this case, the person is included in the appropriate category. For age, I classify people into categories: under 30 years, 31–40 years, 41–50 years, 51–60 years, and 61 and over. In terms of education, I monitor whether the person has a university education (through a degree), specifically a bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral or higher degree. From the point of view of residence, I am interested in whether the candidate came from Prague, a regional or district town, or other smaller municipalities.

Furthermore, it is important to determine whether the person was a member of a political party or a non-party member, whether he defended a parliamentary mandate, or what political experience ((elected or candidate at the level of the municipal, regional, European Parliament, Chamber of Deputies, Senate, or government, multiple office holding (MP, municipal and regional mandate)) they had before the election. At the municipal and regional level, I distinguish between the number of mayors/regional governors and deputy of mayors/deputy and representatives. In contrast, persons who were deputy mayors and then became mayors/regional governors are included only in the mayor/regional governor group. A similar logic is used for representatives in connection with the deputy mayor/deputy or mayor/governor categories. From the data collected in this way, it will be possible to determine which persons are elected using preferential votes and which would be elected exclusively based on the nomination of political parties.

As part of our research investigating the composition of the Chamber of Deputies according to closed and flexible candidate lists, I establish the following hypotheses based on the information mentioned above:

H1: The number of women in the Chamber of Deputies will be higher in the flexible candidate list, as women receive more preferential votes than men (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022). At the same time, men are more often placed in a realistic position within the candidate list (Ceyhan 2018; Put – Maddens 2013; Put et al. 2019; Put et al. 2021), and the only possibility of disrupting the order determined by the party is preferential votes.

H2: In terms of residence, it is possible to expect that the current flexible setting of candidate lists can help persons with considerable popularity in district towns or other municipalities with high electoral support for the given party. Due to smaller constituencies, the strong position of regional cities or the centralised leadership of some parties (ANO, SPD, VV), it can be expected that in the case of closed candidate lists, more people from regional cities would be elected.

H3: It is evident that people with more political experience often run in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies; they often defend their parliamentary mandate, which they declare by their profession on the list of candidates. Currently, among the MPs, defenders of the mandate with political experience from other levels of the political system, whether at the municipal or regional level, predominate. However, I also know from previous research that the persons at the top of the candidate list are often defenders of the mandate with political experience (Ceyhan 2018; Gherghina – Chiru 2010; Chiru – Popescu 2017; Meserve et al. 2020; Put – Maddens 2013). So, the closed candidate lists would guarantee the election of more persons defending the parliamentary mandate.

H4: The political parties nominate people under 60 to top positions on their candidate lists (Put – Maddens 2013; Put et al. 2019; Put et al. 2021). In addition, preferential votes are obtained by persons under 70 (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022). So, the preferential votes can increase the number of people over 61+.

H5: It is evident that candidates with a higher education get a larger number of preferential votes (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022; Lebeda 2007; Voda 2010, 2014), and the candidates with a university degree are nominated to the top positions on the candidate lists (Ceyhan 2018; Gherghina et al. 2010). So, the representativeness of the Chamber of Deputies would not change significantly if closed candidate lists were to apply.

H6: In larger constituencies (22 to 26 seats), the effectiveness of preferential votes is lower, so more candidates will be elected due to preferential votes in the middle (10–14 seats) and small (5 to 8 seats) constituencies.

V. Results

In total, 159 members of parliament won a mandate thanks to preferential votes.[4] The twelve MPs won the mandate in this way more than once, but despite their electoral success in the last elections, they were not placed in such a position that would 'guarantee' them to be nominated to the top of the candidate list. This situation partly confirms the conclusions of Put et. al (2019). The impact of individual changes associated with preferential voting was already slightly apparent in 2002, when, thanks to the formation of the KDU-ČSL and US-DEU coalition and increased constituencies, the number of candidates elected by preferential votes was slightly increased. However, reducing the number of preferential votes also prevented an increase in the effectiveness of preferential voting.

Efficiency only increased in 2010, when the number of preferential votes again increased to four, and at the same time, the threshold for preferential votes was reduced from 7% to 5%. At the same time, citizens' initiatives calling for a change in the government set also started to work. Similar repercussions can also be observed in 2013. The year 2017, on the other hand, was associated with a higher number of parties that succeeded in the elections. Since these parties obtained a minimum number of mandates in individual constituencies, preferential votes could significantly change the selection of specific candidates (Kneblová 2010

Table 2: Number of MPs elected by preferential votes by political party (the number of non-party members is shown in the bracket)

	1996	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013	2017	2021
KDU-ČSL	0	1 (1)	9	0	0	3	2	7 (2)
US-DEU	0	1	2 (1)	0	0	0	0	0
ODS	0	0	1	1	17	4	9 (1)	1 (1)
ČSSD	0	0	0	1	10	9 (2)	3	0
KSČM	0	0	0	3 (1)	5 (2)	6	3	0
VV (2x SNK ED)	0	0	0	0	4 (1)	0	0	0
TOP 09 (2010 1x SLK)	0	0	0	0	11 (6)	2 (1)	3 (1)	2
ANO 2011	0	0	0	0	0	5 (2)	5 (1)	3
SPD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
STAN (2021 (1x SLK)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	22
Czech Pirate Party	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (1)	0
Total number of MPS	0	2	12	5	47	29	28	36
Non-partisans	0	1	1	1	9	5	4	3

Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

4 Contrary to Kneblová's claim (2010), however, I claim that in 2006 only five people were elected thanks to preferential votes (Ladislav Skopal was elected in the South Moravian Region for the ČSSD due to one person dropping out of the candidate list) and in 2010 Josef Novotný was elected by preferential votes for ČSSD in the Karlovy Vary Region out of 13 places on the candidate list (volby.cz).

and 2014). The elections in 2021, on the other hand, were marked by the creation of two coalitions (SPOLU and the Pirates and the STAN), when mainly within the latter coalition there was a significant preference for the STAN's candidates.

As can be seen from Table number 3, most MPs were elected in smaller constituencies thanks to preferential votes. Medium and large constituencies have not differed in the monitored phenomenon since 2017, which may be due to the increase in the number of parties in the Chamber of Deputies and the gradual loss of the position of the two largest parties, ODS and ČSSD. The increase in the number of parties meant that political parties began to win only a few mandates within the electoral district, which could cause an increase in the effectiveness of preferential voting, as mentioned by Kneblová (2010, 2014). In 2021, this was mainly due to the success of the STAN within the coalition in all constituencies.

Table 3: Number of MPs elected by preferential votes by constituency

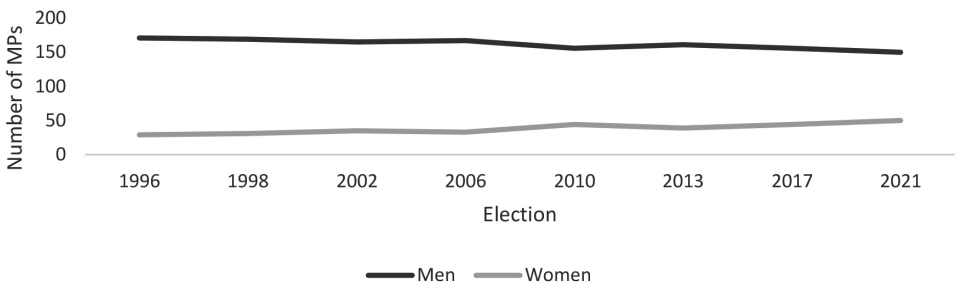
	2002	2006	2010	2013	2017	2021
Small constituency (13 seats)	1 (7.7%)	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)
Middle constituency (93 seats, 92 seats since 2017)	7 (7.5%)	1 (1.1%)	30 (19.4%)	18 (19.4%)	12 (13.0%)	16 (17.4%)
Large constituency (94 seats, 95 since 2017)	4 (4.3%)	3 (3.2%)	10 (7.4%)	7 (7.4%)	13 (13.7%)	16 (16.8%)
Total number of MPS	12 (6.0%)	5 (2.5%)	47 (23.5%)	29 (14.5%)	28 (14.0%)	36 (18%)

Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Gender

From 1996 to the last election in 2021, the number of women increased from 29 to 50, corresponding to a quarter of the total MPs. However, it can be argued that the number of women does not correspond to representation in society.

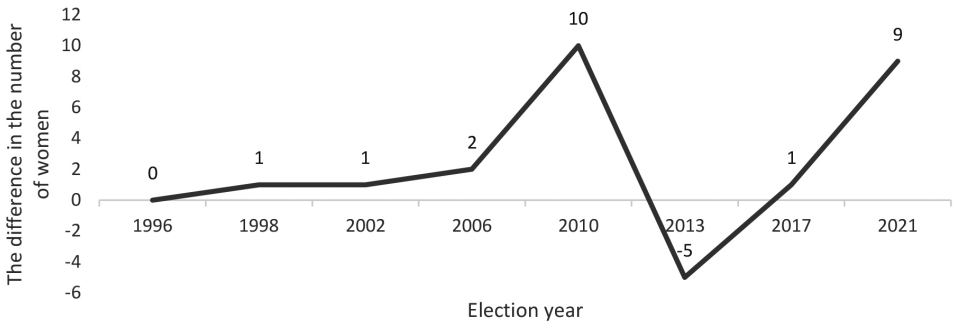
Graph 1: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by gender from 1996–2020



Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

As can be seen from Graph 2, preferential votes positively affect the number of women represented in the Chamber of Deputies except for the year 2013. If voters did not have the opportunity to grant preferential votes, the number of women in 2010 or 2021 would be smaller by a quarter or a fifth, which would have a real impact on the functioning of the Chamber of Deputies. Women speak less than men, but to a greater extent they deal with social and healthcare topics in the Chamber of Deputies (Balík et al. 2019). Worth noting is the year 2010 and the result of the KSČM, when five women were elected thanks to preferential votes, the total number of preferentially elected party persons in these elections. Similarly, in 2021, ten women were elected out of 22 people elected through preferential votes for the STAN movement, which was in coalition with the Pirates at the time. A significant number of women were also elected in 2010 in ODS (4 out of 17) and Public Affairs (2 out of 4).

Graph 2: Impact of closed candidate lists – gender



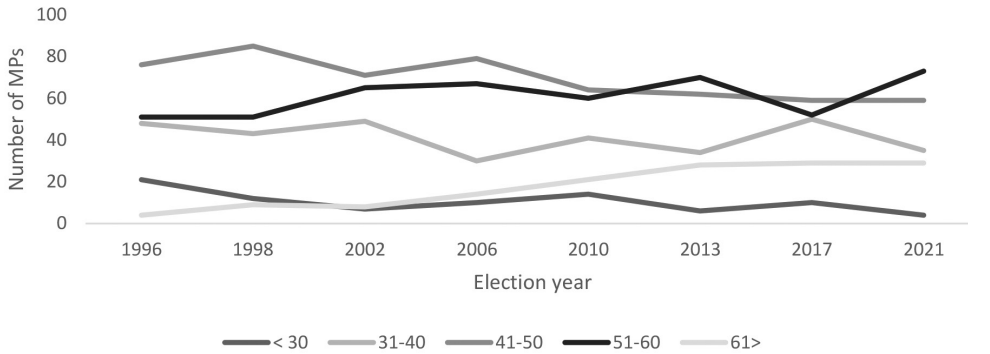
Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Age

Graph 3 approximates the age composition of the Chamber of Deputies, while until 2013 there was a gradual aging of male and female deputies.[5] The number of people up to 30, from 31 to 40 and from 41 to 50 years old decreased at the expense of the other two categories. This trend was partly mitigated by the arrival of new political parties in 2010 and 2017, while it is interesting that the onset of the ANO movement in 2013 did not have a significant effect on the 'rejuvenation' of the Chamber of Deputies, as most of their deputies were over 51 years old. On the other hand, the MPs elected for the SPD, Pirates, STAN or KDU-ČSL parties (after returning to the Chamber of Deputies in 2013) mostly belonged to the categories of under 30, 31–40 or 41–50 years old.

5 Age average 1996 (43.8), 1998 (45.2), 2002 (46.9), 2006 (47.9), 2010 (47.2), 2013 (49.9), 2017 (47.4), 2021 (49.8).

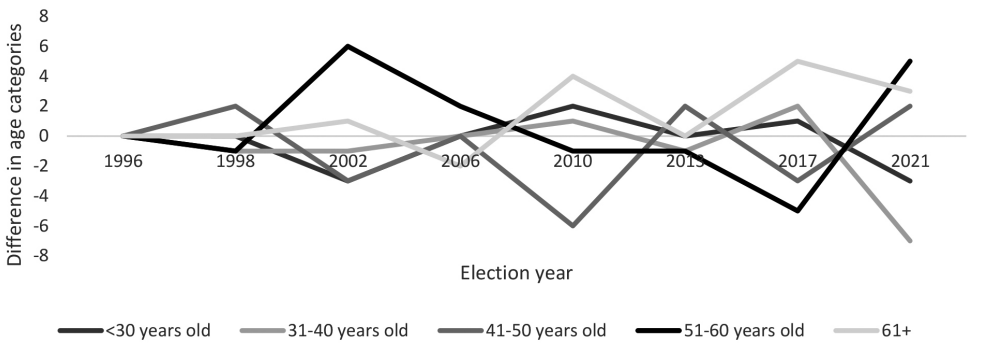
Graph 3: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by age from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

The success of the KDU-ČSL, respectively STAN at the expense of the coalition partner, reduced the number of MPs in the 30, 31–40 year old (in 2002 also 41–50 year old) categories who would be elected in case of a closed candidate list in 2002, respectively 2021. Thanks to preferential votes, a higher number of MPs from the age category of 61 and over was elected in 2010 (mainly TOP 09) and 2017 (across parties) at the expense of the age category of 41–50 years old (in 2017, also 51–60 years old). As it turned out, only one MP at70 and one at 72 was elected by the preferential votes, which confirms the conclusions of Haase-Formánková et al. (2022) on the greater preference of candidates under 70 years of age.

Graph 4: Impact of closed candidate lists – age

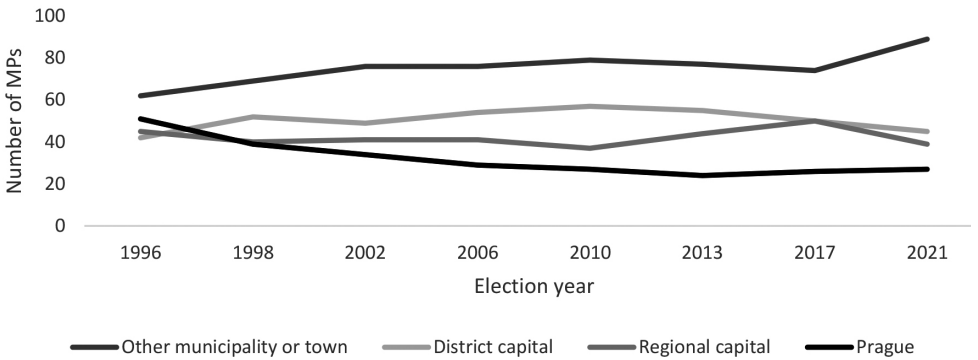


Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Residence

The largest number of MPs residing in Prague was seen after the elections in 1996. In the following years, the number of MPs from Prague gradually decreased to one-eighth of the total number of deputies, which confirms the claims of the authors (Mikešová – Kostelecký 2016; Dvořák et al. 2021). As for deputies from regional towns, we see a constant value of one-fifth of all MPs and one-quarter for district towns up to 2017. Only the category of other municipalities has an increasing tendency, which reached 89 out of 200 MPs in the last electoral period.

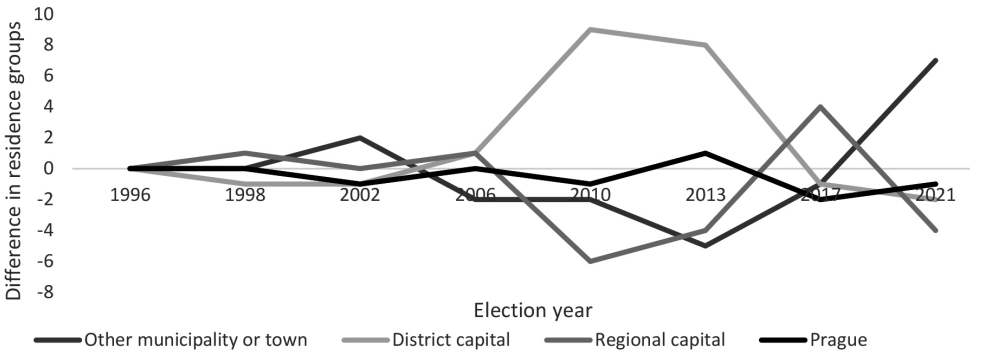
Graph 5: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by place of residence from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

The real impact of preferential votes is most pronounced for district towns in 2010 and 2013, i.e. the period when, under the influence of various civic initiatives, there was an announced change in the existing political set (graph 6). The activity of civic initiatives could have resulted in more candidates from smaller district towns being elected thanks to preferential votes at the expense of candidates from regional towns or Prague, which are more typical for people at the top of the candidate lists (Put 2016). A similar trend could be observed in 2021 when the electoral success of STAN at the expense of the Pirates within the joint coalition enabled mayors of municipalities that cannot be classified as regional or district towns to enter the Chamber of Deputies.

Graph 6: Impact of closed candidate lists – residence

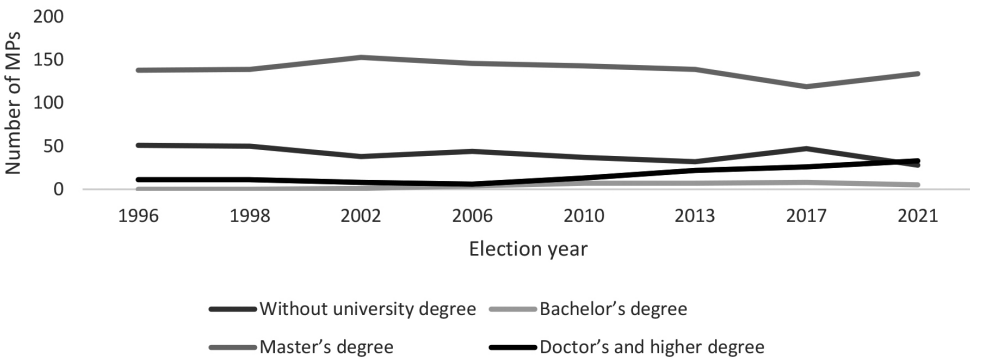


Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Education

As regards education it's proven that most speeches and interpellations (except for doctoral and higher) are delivered by people with higher education (Balík et al. 2019). Graph 7 shows that most MPs in the Chamber of Deputies have a master's degree (over 3/5) or have no degree (more than 1/8 to 1/4). Since 2013, more than 1/10 of MPs with a doctorate or higher education have been part of the Chamber of Deputies.

Graph 7: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by education from 1996 to 2021

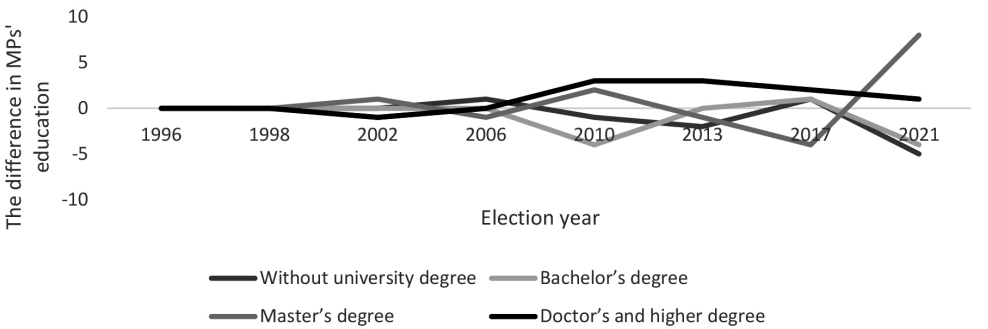


Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Preferential votes influenced the composition of the Chamber of Deputies in several cases (Graph 8). In 2010, four fewer MPs with a bachelor's degree were elected, and four more MPs with a master's degree were elected in 2017 than

corresponded to the original nomination of the political parties. Preferential votes most significantly influenced the composition of the Chamber of Deputies in 2021, when five MPs without a degree and four MPs with a bachelor's degree were elected compared with the original nomination of the political parties. In their place, eight persons with a master's degree and one with a doctoral and higher degree were elected, which may impact the number of speeches and interpellations in the ongoing election period of the lower house of the Parliament. However, the increase in the number of people with a higher university degree could be because Pirate candidates, who often have not completed their studies, were overtaken by STAN candidates with completed studies.

Graph 8: Impact of closed candidate lists – education



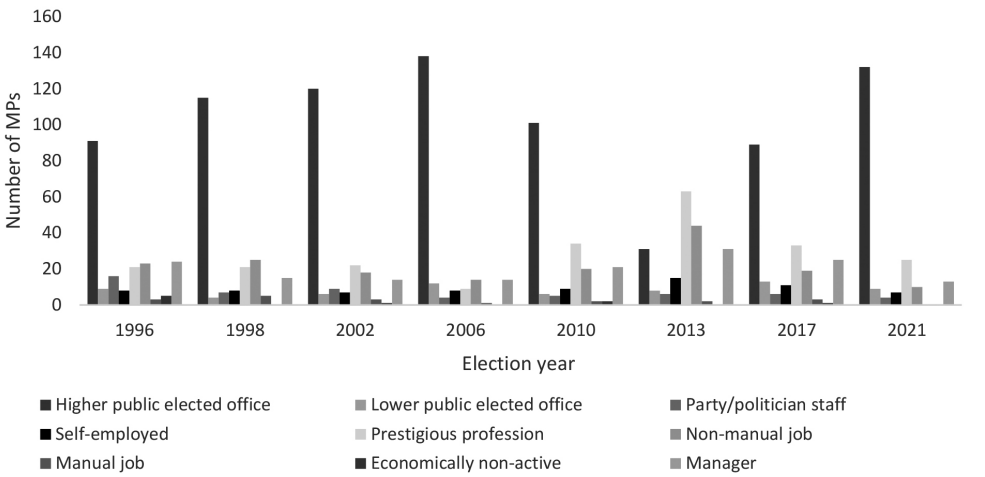
Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Occupation

The occupations of elected MPs have been constant since 1996, and most MPs were associated with the professional career of a politician (Balík et al. 2019). The Chamber of Deputies was composed mainly of persons with a higher public elected office. The only exception was 2013, when candidates on the candidate list did not indicate to a greater extent their political experience (even though they had it), which may be connected to the previous activities (2010 and 2013) of civic initiatives calling for a change in political representation, as well as the entry of new political parties to the Chamber of Deputies. I can observe the opposite trend in the 2006 and 2021 elections when MPs often pointed to their experience in the Chamber of Deputies, the government or regional and municipal leadership. The second most represented category is prestigious professions, mainly teachers, doctors and lawyers. Here again it is important to focus on 2013, when candidates pointed to their prestigious professions to a greater extent than their political experience. The categories of non-manual work (office work) or managers (various leadership positions) were compa-

rable. One of the few categories that grew significantly in 2013/2017 was the entrepreneur category, which was caused by the significant success of the ANO movement in these elections. On the other hand, the categories of manual work, i.e. the unemployed (students and seniors), had a marginal representation.

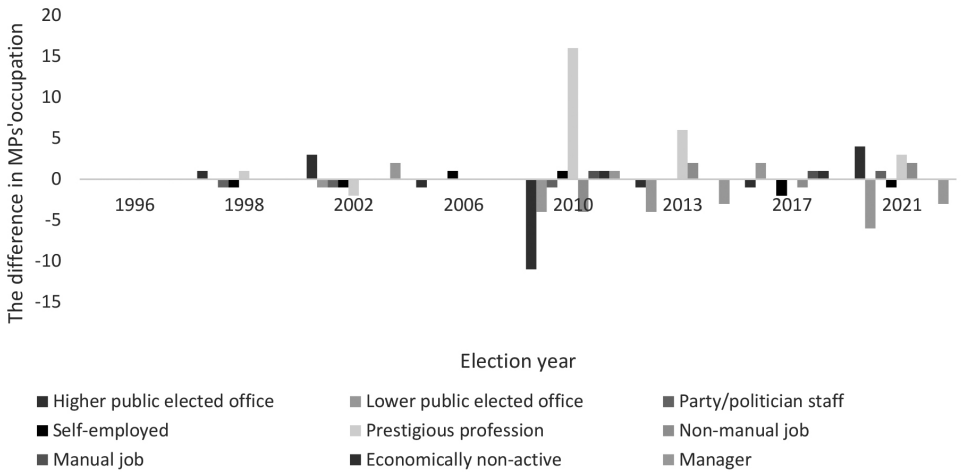
Graph 9: Composition of the Chamber of Deputies by occupation from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

From the results (Graph 10), the minimal impact of preferential votes on the composition of the Chamber of Deputies in most election years is evident. The only exception is 2010, when 11 fewer people with higher public positions were elected and, on the contrary, 16 more people with prestigious professions than would correspond to nominations by political parties. This decline of politicians with the highest public positions and their replacement by persons with prestigious professions could result from several civic initiatives calling for a change of the existing political set. A similar trend, when candidates with prestigious professions were elected instead of politicians thanks to preferential votes, can also be seen in 2013. Or in 2021, when candidates with a higher public function and prestigious profession were elected at the expense of six candidates with a lower public position and three managers. The increase in persons with a higher public position in 2021 thus occurred despite the non-election of most MPs of the Pirates, who were replaced by mayors from the STAN movement.

Graph 10: Impact of closed candidate lists – profession

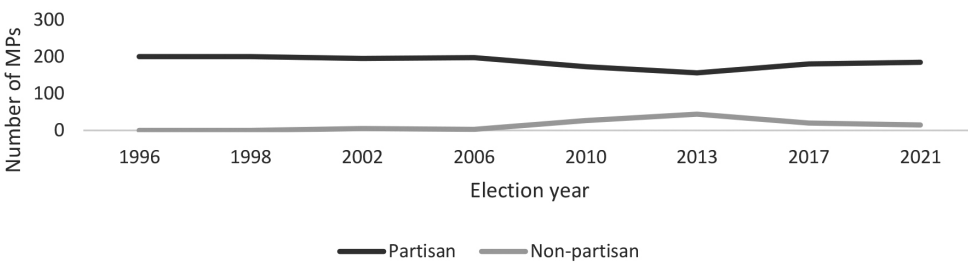


Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Member of a political party

As can be seen from Graph 11, most elected MPs are party members. Most non-party members were elected in 2013 due to the entry of new political parties, ANO 2011 and Dawn – National Coalition, which used non-party members extensively on their candidate lists.

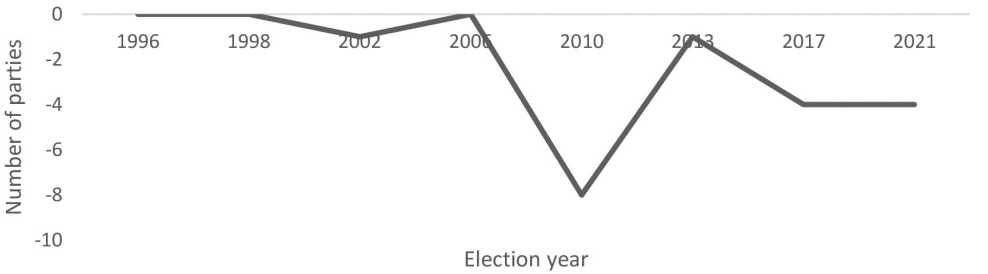
Graph 11: Party affiliation of elected MPs from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz, author's own calculations

Thanks to preferential votes, more non-party members were elected than would correspond to the composition of candidate lists by political parties. This fact became most evident in 2010, i.e. when civic initiatives called for a change in the existing political elites.

Graph 12: Impact of closed candidate lists – partisanship



Source: Volby.cz, own calculations

Political experience

In 2010 and 2021, thanks to preferential votes, significantly fewer incumbents in the earlier election period were elected. In 2010, this significant drop in incumbents may have been caused by initiatives calling for the replacement of existing politicians. Most incumbents listed MP as their occupation on the candidate list, which led to selecting candidates with a different occupation (see above). Voters thus preferred to give a preferential vote to another person on the candidate list, often with a prestigious profession. The reason was different in 2021. The incumbents of Pirates were replaced by the candidates of STAN thanks to preferential votes.

Table 4: Number of MPs defending the parliamentary mandate 1996–2021

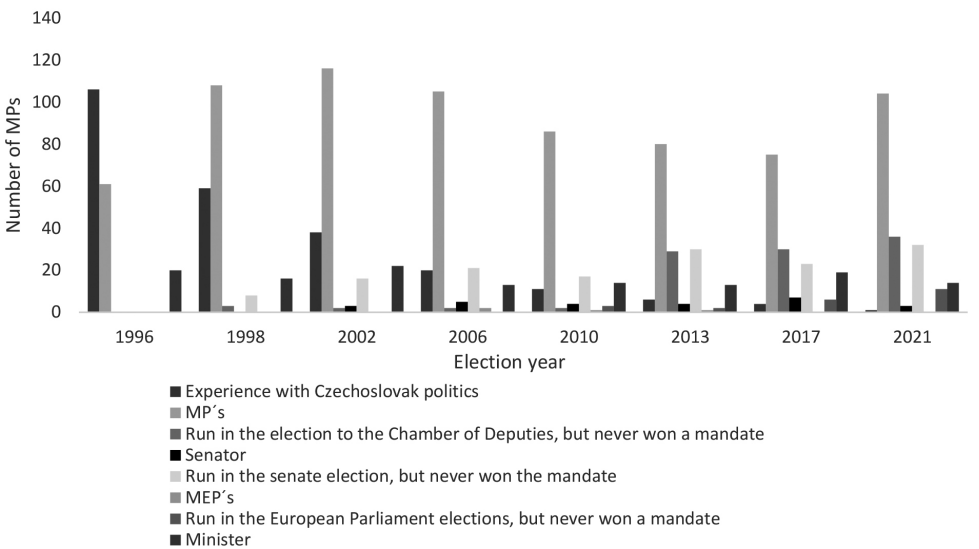
	1996	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013	2017	2021
Flexible candidate list	60	106	113	104	81	76	70	99
Closed candidate list	60	104	112	105	96	76	72	113
Difference	0	2	1	-1	-15	0	-2	-14

Source: Volby.cz; CHDPCZ, author's own calculations

Graph 13 shows the composition of the Chamber of Deputies through the political experience of its members. It is not surprising that, over time, the number of members of the Chamber of Deputies who had experience with the politics of the Czechoslovak Republic decreased. The success of new political parties and movements (2010) also affected the number of incumbents. The number of MPs who tried unsuccessfully to obtain a parliamentary mandate in past elections has also increased since 2013. In 2013, there were nine cases of KSČM nominees and eight cases of ANO 2011 candidates who ran for other political entities in

earlier elections. In 2017, 12 MPs of the ANO movement and eight MPs of the Pirates had failed in the previous parliamentary elections. In 2021, there were previously unsuccessful candidates for STAN (11 MPs), KDU-ČSL (8 MPs) and ANO 2011 (7 Mps). A minimum of MPs held a senator's mandate in the past; on the other hand, approximately a tenth of MPs had experience running for senator since 2002. So, these MPs wanted to continue their political career in the position of senator. Only a few MPs had experience with a mandate or candidacy for the European Parliament, even though 11 MPs with experience in an election campaign for the European Parliament succeeded in the last elections in 2021. More frequent political experience among MPs is their previous work in the government, which is unsurprising since many parties use ministers for the top positions on the candidate list, which is associated with a high chance of being elected (Dvořák – Pink 2022).

Graph 13: Political experience of MPs from 1996 to 2021

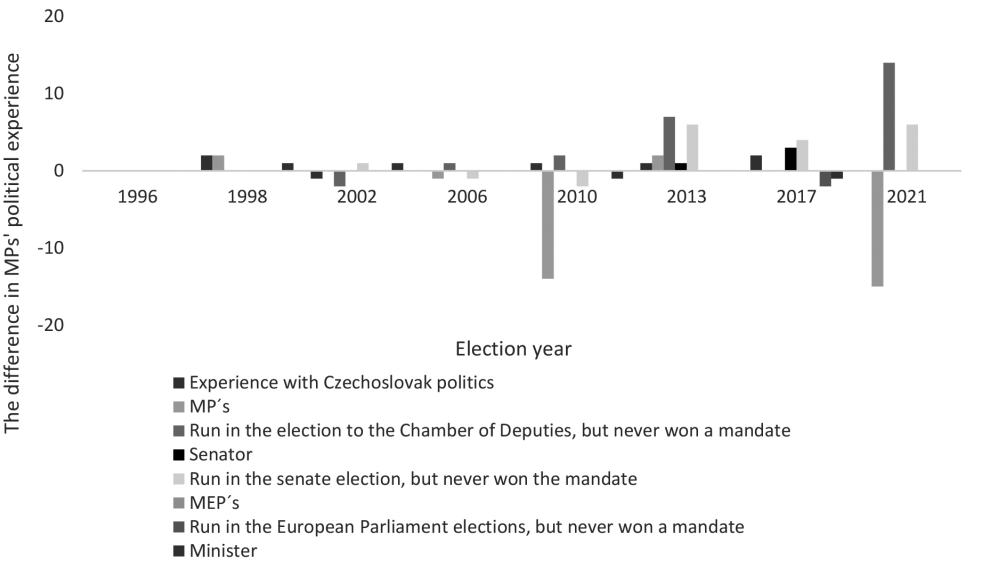


Source: Volby.cz; vláda.cz, author's own calculations

The influence of preferential votes is not so important for the political experience of MPs (graph 14). The number of MPs with parliamentary experience declined in 2010 and 2021. This is related to activities of civic initiatives calling for the replacement of existing politicians in 2010 and the success of STAN against the Pirates in 2021. Also, the persons who ran in the senate elections but did not win the mandate more often have become MPs by the preferential votes since 2013. It could mean that the campaign associated with the senate elections increases the candidate's familiarity among voters to such a level

that voters give him preferential votes more often, which helps him win the parliamentary mandate. Experience with a political campaign to the Chamber of Deputies was manifested in 2013 and 2021 for candidates who obtained a parliamentary mandate mainly by preferential votes. A possible explanation is greater awareness among voters or the candidate's effective use of experience from past elections.

Graph 14: Impact of closed candidate lists – political experience

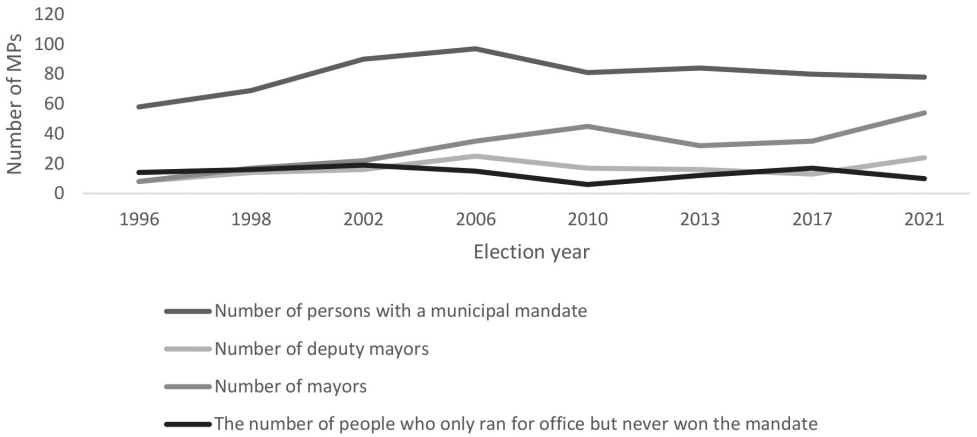


Source: Volby.cz; vláda.cz, author's own calculations

Municipal level

An increase in mayors among MPs is evident (Graph 15), mostly in 2021 when the STAN movement won many mandates at the expense of the Pirates. The fact that politicians choose a gradual path in their political paths (Bernard – Čermák, 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016) is also evidenced by the low number of deputies who have never succeeded at the municipal level. In the first election years, in almost half of the cases, these were active at the parliamentary level, and the communal level was no longer 'attractive' for them. On the contrary, in 2013 and 2017, unsuccessful MPs at the municipal level came from new political parties (ANO, SPD, Pirates). There may be several reasons why these future deputies were not elected at the municipal level. One of them can be the weak position of the party in the given municipality or the mere symbolic candidacy of a person at the bottom of the candidate list.

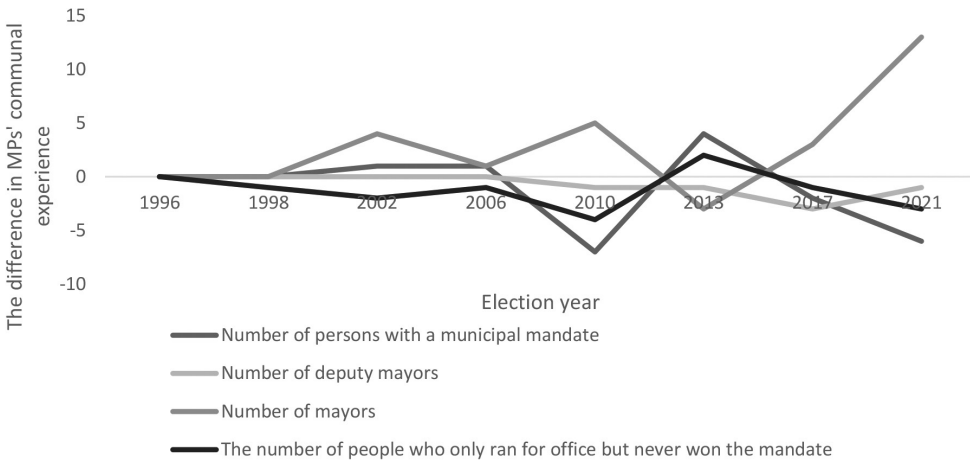
Graph 15: Experience of deputies from the municipal level from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

The influence of preferential votes was not pronounced until 2006, as seen in Graph 16. On the contrary, 2010 can be characterised as ground-breaking not only in terms of new political parties and the generational change of existing politicians but the effectiveness of preferential votes. Thanks to them, five more mayors and seven fewer municipal representatives were elected than would correspond to party nominations. Four candidates who were never successful at the municipal election were also elected in this election. A similar trend was also evident in 2017 and more significantly in 2021, when thanks to the success

Graph 16: Impact of closed candidate lists – experience from the municipal level



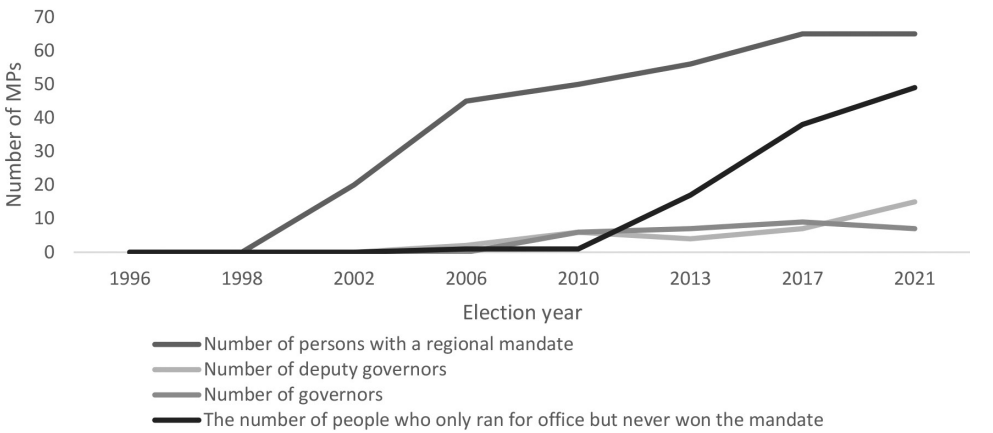
Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

of the STAN movement, 13 mayors who would not have made it to the Chamber of Deputies in the event of party nominations were elected using preferential votes. The six representatives failed due to preferential votes in 2006. It can therefore be concluded that the voters consider the position held by the candidate at the municipal level, and if he decides to give a preferential vote, the mayor has a good chance of getting it. That is, at least compared to the deputy mayor or representative.

Regional level

Just as at the municipal level, it is clear (graph 17) that the number of MPs who held the regional mandate before being elected to the Chamber of Deputies increased over time. Specifically, compared to 2002, the number of MPs with experience with a regional mandate almost triple in 2021. The number of governors and deputy governors is also increasing in a similar way, which confirms the conclusions about the permitted path of the political careers of politicians (Bernard – Čermák 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016). The number of MPs who have never succeeded in the regional elections has also increased since 2017. In 2017, there were 23 MPs from ANO, SPD and Pirates. In 2021, there were mainly MPs of the STAN.

Graph 17: Experience of deputies from the regional level from 1996 to 2021

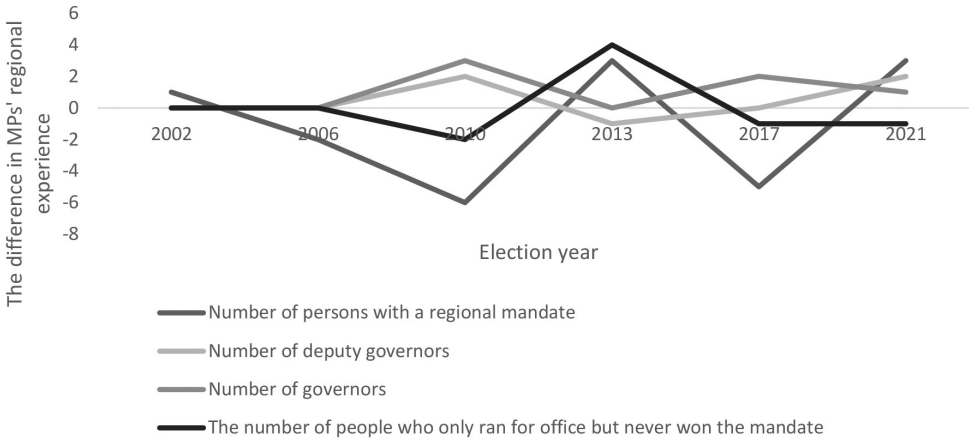


Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

The influence of preferential votes was insignificant within the examined period, as shown in Graph 18. The differences between the types of regional functions changed minimally; often, due to preferential votes, it was a slight (4 MPs) increase or decrease in the number of regional representatives or persons who

never succeeded in the regional elections. The influence of preferential votes on the three governors elected in 2010, two in 2017 and one in 2021, who otherwise would not have reached the Chamber of Deputies, appears to be important. Again, their success can be linked to greater familiarity among voters.

Graph 18: Impact of closed candidate lists – experience from the regional level



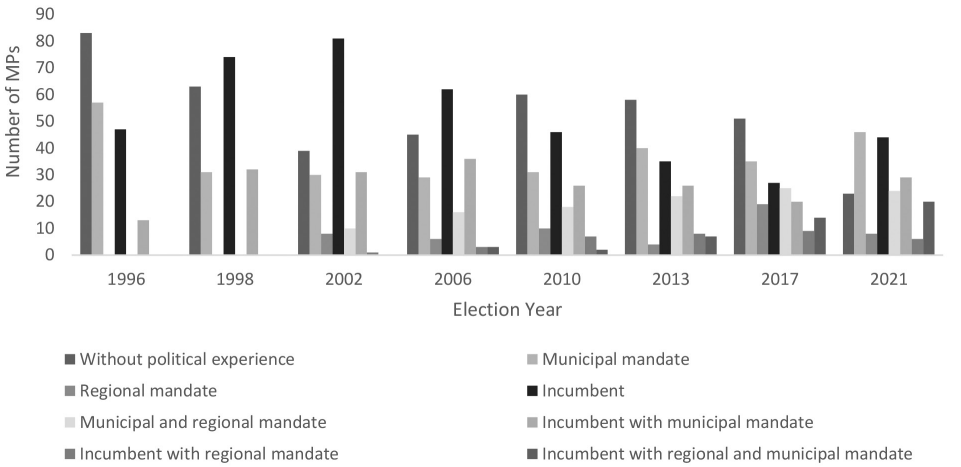
Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

The multiple-office holding

Around a quarter of all elected MPs did not hold any other political (elected) office at the time of their election. The only exception is 2021, when the number of MPs with no other mandate was 10%. Future MPs were most likely to hold only a local mandate, or they cumulated it with a parliamentary mandate. A tenth of MPs also combined a municipal and a regional mandate. To a limited extent, the MPs cumulated the regional and deputy mandate. Conversely, since 2017 there has been an increase in MPs across political parties holding all three municipal, regional and parliamentary seats. The same year, ANO and SPD MPs frequently held a regional mandate before their election. The data confirms that MPs are choosing a gradual path in their political paths (Bernard – Čermák 2021; Hájek 2016, 2017; Ryšavý 2016)), but at the same time they accumulate these mandates further.

The influence of the preferential vote was most pronounced in the 2010 elections when more candidates who did not hold any mandate were elected. It was probably due to civic initiatives calling for a change of politicians, as evidenced by the fact that if closed candidate lists had been in place, 14 more incumbents would have been elected. Similarly, seven MPs with a municipal mandate were

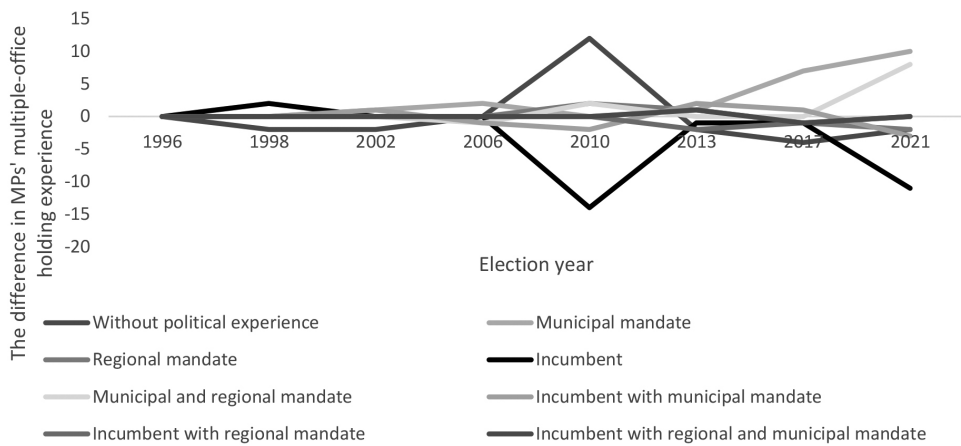
Graph 19: The multiple-office holding of deputies from the regional level from 1996 to 2021



Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

elected in 2017 due to preferential votes. In 2021, preferential votes influenced the composition of the Chamber of Deputies when candidates from the STAN, with the municipal mandate, were successful at the expense of the incumbents of Pirates. Candidates of STAN, KDU-ČSL and other parties who held municipal and regional mandates were equally successful. Thus, preference votes can play a role in the preference of persons having a particular political office.

Graph 20: Impact of closed candidate lists – the multiple-office holding



Source: Volby.cz; author's own calculations

VI. Conclusion

The preferential votes are more likely to be obtained by persons placed at the top of the candidate list with specific personal characteristics, i.e. gender, education, place of residence, occupation and age (Haase-Formánková et al. 2022, Balík – Hruška 2022; Voda 2010, 2014). The elections in 2010, 2013 and 2021 proved key in influencing the composition of the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, the electoral change associated with preferential votes in 2010 and 2021 increased the effectiveness of preferential votes. As it has been proven, the influence of several citizen initiatives calling for the change of the existing political set, the emergence of new political parties in 2010 and 2013 or the apparent dominance of one of the coalition partners can also be a trigger for the substantial use of preferential votes. In the first case, it may be an expression of dissatisfaction with the political situation in the country, and in the second case, dissatisfaction with one of the coalition partners. The effects of preferential votes on the composition of the Chamber of Deputies can be significant whether it is a larger number of elected women, a smaller number of deputies under the age of 40 (significantly in 2021 after the fiasco of the Pirates) or the preference for local elites (mayors, governors). The composition of the Chamber of Deputies by profession was significantly affected in 2010 when several defending MPs did not defend their mandate, and MPs with prestigious professions (doctor, lawyer, etc.) were elected instead. Alternatively, in 2021, several mayors succeeded at the expense of municipal representatives, managers and MPs advocating for the Pirates. Preferential votes also significantly impacted the failure of incumbents; this effect was particularly evident in 2010 and 2021. The influence of preferential votes was also clearly visible in the larger number of non-party MPs elected. Also, the MPs with experience with elections to the Senate has increased since 2013. The decline of MPs with parliamentary experience was related to the activities of citizen initiatives calling for the change of politicians in 2010 and with the success of STAN against the Pirates in 2021. The number of MPs who listed the position of mayor as their occupation and at the same time succeeded thanks to preferential votes since 2010 also raised. Experience from the regional level was not so important, but even so, those candidates who were deputy governors or governors were more often elected thanks to preferential votes. Regarding the multiple-office holding, it is clear that MPs hold a mandate at the local level at the same time, and since 2017 they have been accumulating their mandate at the local and regional level. A mandate at the municipal or regional level played a significant role in 2013 and 2021, when candidates with a cumulative mandate, either a parliamentary and municipal mandate or a municipal and regional mandate, were preferred over incumbents.

In summary, the preferential votes positively affected the number of women in the Chamber of Deputies. Also, persons from smaller municipalities or

district towns can, in the event of a favourable situation (2010, 2013, 2021), address several voters who will give them their vote and thus skip candidates from regional towns or Prague, which the party nominated for the front of the list of candidates. This is also related to the fact that they are often the mayors of the mentioned municipalities. It is not so surprising that in the case of efforts to change the political set, mainly in 2010, there was a drop in defending politicians at the expense of mayors or persons with prestigious professions, thanks to preferential votes.

Similarly, in 2021, thanks to preferential votes, several mayors were elected at the expense of existing politicians running for the Pirates. It was also confirmed that closed candidate lists would reduce the number of MPs who are over 61 years old. On the other hand, more MPs over 51 were elected at the expense of younger age groups due to preferential votes. Results also confirmed our assumption that preferential votes would not significantly influence the composition of the Chamber of Deputies regarding education. The only exception is 2021 when more master's degree holders were elected at the expense of bachelor's degree holders and people without a degree, which is often related to the fact that several MPs for the Pirates have not yet completed their studies.

Overall, I can say that in situations that record the use of preferential votes (destabilisation of the party system and the influence of citizens' initiatives, multi-party coalitions), preferential votes can play a significant role in the composition of the Chamber of Deputies. As was said above, for a better understanding of who receives preferential votes, it would be necessary to focus on other election years not associated with the specific situation of 2010, 2013 or 2021. Similarly, one could focus in more detail on the individual parties and the profile of the candidates who won the mandate thanks to the will of the voters. Another possibility is to focus on the specific position of some MPs who defend the mandate and of their own free will use preferential voting as a referendum on their activities, as Marek Benda did, for example, in 2010, 2013 and 2017.

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Linking European Integration with Illiberalism: 'Laboratory' of Central-Eastern Europe[1]

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Abstract: *The essay discusses Central Eastern Europe as a 'laboratory' of existing, emerging as well as contained elements of illiberal backlash. The Central European countries show both challenges and resilience mechanisms in more 'extreme' conditions than the cases from Western Europe. The paper offers the connection between the domestic development of Central European states and the 'polycrisis' of European integration by linking the issue of politicisation of European integration with the emergence of illiberal politics in contemporary Europe. The goal and main argument of the paper are that there exists a nexus between illiberal Central Eastern European politicians and rising Euroscepticism in the region. The empirical research of Central Eastern European cases will help us better understand general trends of European integration politicisation.*

Keywords: ***Central-Eastern Europe; democratization; illiberal democracy; European integration; politicisation***

I. Introduction

Before 1989, the politics of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) resembled a museum of unresolved issues of liberalisation and democratisation.[2] The revolution

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2 In the paper, the concept of CEE includes the member states of the EU (MS) from the region and states with candidate status. It therefore excludes most of the post-Soviet republics. Almost the same approach was used by Cianetti et al. (2018: 243–244) with less emphasis put on the role of the relation to the EU as a 'qualifier' for inclusion into the analytical group of CEE states. In this paper, Western Europe includes both EU MS and non-EU countries.

of 1989 (re-)triggered the process of liberalisation and democratisation very quickly, following the Western European institutional blueprints, although often superficially. In general, the consolidation of liberal democratic institutions often remained shallow.

Eastern Enlargement of the EU constituted another challenge reopening the questions related to the quality of democracy, democratic political culture and democratic institutions. After the economic crisis in 2008, the Europeanisation of CEE politics was rather quickly replaced with the politicisation of European integration fuelled mainly by nationalist and Eurosceptic politicians. The multiple EU crises interlinked the domestic disputes about the nature of democracy and the level of its liberal background with the politicisation of European integration.

The first argument of this paper follows the assumption of Tim Haughton and Kevin Deegan-Krause (2015, 2020) that CEE can serve as a laboratory for understanding trends that are emerging in Western Europe and other democracies. For us, CEE is a lab in which the expectations concerning EU integration are higher, the disappointment of citizens with politicians comes quicker and various populist Eurosceptic voices are louder than in Western Europe. The second main argument of the paper is that there is a connection between the regional decline of democratic standards and the specific form of politicisation of European integration in the context of multiple crises of the European Union after 2004, the year of the first wave of 'Eastern enlargement'. Derived from and based on these two arguments is a plea for more systematic comparative research going beyond the East–West divide. The paper's original contribution to the existing literature is in linking the issue of politicisation of European integration with the emergence of illiberal politics in contemporary Europe.

Therefore, the paper will first discuss the impact of 1989 and 2004 on CEE politics. An analysis of the decline of democracy will follow. Further, we will examine the relationship between illiberal democracy and European integration. The fourth part will show how the EU polycrisis exacerbated the problem. The fifth part will elaborate on the idea of CEE as a laboratory of challenges as well as resilience vis-à-vis illiberal democracy and Eurosceptic politics.

II. The emergence of a lab in the post-1989 development

The transition to democracy in 1989 represents a turning point in CEE politics. After the breakup of communist regimes, rapid institutional changes and new impulses for Europeanisation and Westernisation set into motion the processes of democratic transition and consolidation (Beyme 1999). The 'Central European paradox' (Rupnik 1988) applied, however: the ideas, especially political ones, flow into CEE from the West, but CEE implements them under considerably different societal and economic conditions. Therefore, the legacy

of democratisation is vast but not always profoundly embedded in the fabric of society and patterns of civil political culture, both at the level of the political elite and the masses. Liberal democratic institutions are more fragile. Political parties sometimes mock the function of representation of citizens' interests and focus on patronage instead (Kopecký – Spirova 2011). Specific political culture, prone to nationalism and parochialism, is still widely shared by vast parts of the population. Politicians can quickly mobilise civil society to support un-civil policies (Navrátil – Kluknavská 2020).

As Ekiert and Ziblatt (2013: 92) summarised, even after the completion of a democratic transition, we can find many patterns of societal, economic and political life that correlate with those present before the communist coups d'état in the region. Yet, especially in the sphere of political institutions and party politics, rapid westernisation has functioned as a challenge turning CEE into a laboratory of political changes and a tester of the resilience of liberal democratic institutions in an environment where societal values are changing rapidly but in a shallow way.

The 2004/2007/2013 EU accessions represent another turning point in CEE. The high level of external pressure towards Europeanisation was treated almost automatically as democratisation (Grabbe 2006), connected to the prevalence of external incentives and logic of consequences rather than a logic of appropriateness (Schimmelfening – Sedelmeyer 2005). Adaptational pressures decreased after the CEE states reached the milestone of full EU membership. The pressure to comply with EU standards provoked opposition and adverse reactions from the outset: Euroscepticism (public and party), shallow Europeanisation, and illiberal democracy. For the stakeholders from candidate countries as well as for EU scholars, it might be interesting to examine this 'de-Europeanisation' in CEE more closely.

We can interpret the impact of European integration on the CEE countries as a 'shock' exposing the problem of shallow and contested Europeanisation in the context of somewhat superficial democratisation. A contest between proponents and opponents of liberal democratic institutions thus overlaps with the conflict between pro-integration and Eurosceptic political actors. Euroscepticism is rising significantly, which corresponds with the turn of pro-EU 'romanticism' to pragmatic cost-benefit calculations related (not only) to the EU budget 2021–2027 (Szczerbiak 2021). We will show that the rising Euroscepticism and illiberalism in CEE work together as a reaction to the EU polycrisis.[3] The polycrisis itself represents a trigger and a context of domestic changes at the same time.

3 The word 'polycrisis' was originally employed by Jean-Claud Juncker in 2016 to describe a situation of multiple crises which intersect with each other, starting with global financial crisis, crisis in the Eurozone, migration and the refugee crisis. While using the term, we follow Zeitlin et al. (2019). See Zachová (2022) for a survey of literature on crisis in Europe.

We assume that a relative lack of democratic experience still has effects in CEE and that the imperfection of truly internalised democratic values and institutions makes the barrier protecting democratic institutions more vulnerable than in Western Europe. Even in cases of belated or challenged democratisation (Italy, Portugal, Spain or Greece), the democratic tradition is more profound than in CEE. It does not automatically mean that Western European democracies are perfectly resilient and CEE democracies are inevitably doomed to backslide. It only helps us to understand why some CEE populist leaders screwed liberal democratic institutions more than in-many-ways-similar populist leaders did in Western Europe. Let us mention Orbán and Salvini to grasp the difference. Salvini de-liberalised migration policy, for example, but Orbán changed not only policies but also the entire institutional setting.

Moreover, nationalism and traditionalism have been mitigated by the longer EC/EU membership in the West. In CEE, nationalism and traditionalism are more assertive as strategies accompanying the CEE populism, as the success of parties like Poland's Law and Justice, Hungary's Fidesz or Estonia's EKRE shows compared to Spanish Vox, Greek Golden Dawn or *Fratelli d'Italia*. The substance of dangers for democracy and the nature of its challengers are similar both in CEE and in Western Europe. Central Eastern Europe can serve as a laboratory where the challengers are stronger, as are the dangers testing institutions of liberal democracy and the mechanisms of liberal-democratic resilience in more extreme conditions.

According to Sergio Fabbrini (2015), the Eurozone economic crisis opened a new critical juncture in the process of European integration, which had the potential to reshape the institutional architecture of the European Union as well as its policy features. In CEE, the polycrisis layering the economic crisis, the migration crisis as well as the crisis of values has created a specific 'window of opportunity' to reverse the legacies of Westernisation and Europeanisation set after the fall of communist regimes at the end of the 1980s. Thus, the polycrisis of European integration overlaps in time and in terms of value and institutional clash, with the most recent challenges to CEE politics related to EU membership. The rejection of some of the basic principles of the EU liberal democratic order in some CEE countries can no longer be explained purely by the inchoate democratic institutions and communist past. Therefore, we have to establish the relationship between the decline of democracy and politicised issues of European integration. Let us have a look at the decline of democracy first.

III. The decline of democracy

Doubts about the quality of democracy and trends towards the de-democratisation of CEE are not new (Bustikova – Guasti 2017: 170–171). Jacques Rupnik (2007) summarised the most critical challenges, such as the non-linear paths towards

democratic consolidation, populist backlashes, an incomplete transformation of civic culture, lack of genuinely independent media, inchoate institutions of liberal checks and balances as well as emerging nationalist Eurosceptic strategies related to the shrinking influence of the enlarged EU on the domestic politics of new members. Rupnik and Zielonka (2013) showed that the economic crisis exacerbated the problems of CEE democracies, turning 'democratic fatigue' into a severe danger of authoritarian turn, however, in quite diverse ways and to quite various extents in different CEE countries. Democratic backsliding has been one of the hottest issues discussed among area specialists dealing with the politics of the region (Bakke – Sitter 2022; Cianetti et al. 2018; Enyedy 2020; Hanley – Vachudova 2018; Lorenz – Anders 2021; Rupnik 2017; Vachudova 2020). To make a broad term of democratic backsliding (Bermeo 2016: 5) more precise, we work with the concept of illiberal democracy (Zakaria 2003) in this paper. The reason is that there is not a democratic procedure at stake in the region. Examples in CEE show that the liberal component that is necessary to prevent the perversion of democracy into a purely plebiscitary machine serving as a façade for soft dictators is even more in danger.

No matter what we call it, the problem with democracies that once looked fairly consolidated and now are challenged by different sorts of strong-hand governance remains to be treated seriously both by the academic community and citizens and politicians in the region. Vast literature covers particular case studies, typically Poland (Sadurski 2019) and Hungary (Körösényi et al. 2020; Kovács – Trencsényi 2020; Magyar 2016; Pap 2018). Comparative texts have been on the rise in the last couple of years. They cover the entire region (Cianetti et al. 2018) or at least the Visegrád Group's states (Bakke – Sitter 2022; Guasti and Bustikova 2023). Attila Ágh's (2019) book places the CEE challenge of illiberal democracy into global and European economic and political processes. Most of the authors show quite a wide scope of these processes, as well as patterns of emergence and stabilisation of illiberal elements, politicians, ideologies and institutions.

Nancy Bermeo (2016) recognised the illiberal and anti-democratic turn as a global phenomenon. As Jan Zielonka (2018) showed, the current set of crises (to which we can add the coronavirus pandemic crisis – Guasti 2020) has a destructive potential vis-à-vis liberal democratic values and institutions on the European scale. The mechanisms and the particular combination of independent variables on which the deterioration of the liberal component depends might be different, of course. The CEE lab can serve as a regional microcosm of existing, emerging and contained elements of illiberal backlash. Jacques Rupnik (2017: 70) concluded that 'although we face the rise of populist nationalist parties elsewhere in Europe, only in East-Central Europe are they in power'. But this no longer holds true. Let us mention the brief but intensive intermezzo of Salvini's *Lega* in Conte's first government or the participation of FPÖ in the

Austrian governments of 2000–2005 and 2017–2019. Rupnik (2017: 83) is, of course, correct in that the nationalist–populist parties are more successful in CEE. It is, however, no longer an 'East-Central European aberration'.

The CEE lab offers a sample of variations broad enough to show not only macro-trends (role of rising inequities, nationalism, populism, etc.) but also the subtler mechanisms through which illiberal politicians are gaining momentum. András Körösényi et al. (2020) explained the nature of Orbán's regime through the lens of the concept of Plebiscitary Leader Democracy, based on Max Weber's *Führerdemokratie*. It represents a specific mixture that 'is democratic in *form* but authoritarian in *substance*' (Körösényi et al. 2020: 148, emphasis in original). Orbán reached the level and scope of political leadership comparable with strong authoritarian leaders of the contemporary world, such as Putin, Erdoğan or Bolsonaro. It might be, however, interesting to compare his leadership style with some historical leaders in CEE (Miklos Horthy) and Western Europe (Charles de Gaulle), or with some other global leaders tending to plebiscitary modes of governance without necessarily showing authoritarian features, such as Boris Johnson, Matteo Salvini, Alexis Tsipras, Marine Le Pen, Pablo Iglesias or even Emmanuel Macron. Studying Jarosław Kaczyński, Andrej Babiš, Robert Fico or Janez Janša can help us to understand institutions and mechanisms preventing Orbán's 'quality' of authoritarian leadership. It shows that the CEE lab is essential for scholars of leadership as well as comparatively oriented historians of politics.

Zsolt Enyedi (2020) showed convincingly that important particularities of ideological and discursive frames accompany the authoritarian turn in CEE politics. First, a unique strain of memory politics manifests as a combination of victimhood and self-confidence. Conservatives and populists blame the West for abandoning the alleged values of its civilisation and replacing them with the values of gender, migrants and sexual minorities, which are forcefully imposed on the CEE region. In the same vein, CEE is allegedly the saviour of Europe, carrying on the traditions left behind by the West. Second, old-fashioned mutual regional nationalist hatreds were transformed into 'cross-nationalism' and a general CEE hatred against the West.[4] Third, there is a massive attack against migrants.[5] Fourth, the 'good' state is pitted against 'bad' civil society, subverting allegedly traditional values of local culture and serving foreign interests. Fifth, radical right discourse is incorporated into the political mainstream. And finally, although it might be surprising for all who consider Europe a vanguard of secularisation, Christianity is misused politically, again typically with anti-Western resentments. Enyedi (2020: 374) stressed that because of these 'authoritarian

4 Rise of nationalist tendencies, however, is a global phenomenon, albeit neither uniform nor universal (Bieber 2018).

5 Anti-migrant rhetoric could be found in the West too (Fennema 1997); the difference is in scope and contamination of mainstream discourse with anti-migrant rhetoric.

innovations', the divide between East and West is widening compared to the situation just a decade ago. More important is his discussion of the possibility of Easternisation of the West. If we look at the ideological repertoire of Western radical right parties and (streams within) conservative parties, we can find all these 'innovations' to some extent safe from the anti-western resentments, of course. Sometimes we can find all this framed in anti-Eastern resentments, as the successful Leave campaign showed in the Brexit referendum, despite the pro-British stances of CEE politicians (Brusenbauch Meislova 2019: 1265–1267).

The value of the CEE Lab for academic (as well as policy-relevant) research in helping to maintain the resilience of liberal democracy via the understanding of illiberal discourses might prove of crucial importance and one of the main contributions of area specialists on CEE to the general debate about the state of contemporary European democracy.

Assessment of CEE can help us to understand the patterns of emergence and persistence of illiberal politicians, parties and governments, the crucial role of ethnopopulism as a successful electoral strategy, as well as the tactic of power concentration allowing control of the polity beyond the limits of liberal checks and balances (Vachudova 2020). The study of CEE helps us to understand the seductive combination of radical right ideological innovations (Enyedi 2020) often manifested as the 'problems' with minority accommodation (Buštíková 2020). We must mention the role of the specific implementation of neo-liberal economic reforms in CEE (Ther 2014), together with the role played by particular relations between the economic power of local oligarchs and the sphere of politics (Cianetti et al. 2018: 248–250).

Such issues of domestic politics have, however, another dimension stemming from the membership of CEE countries in the EU. For the study of EU politics, it is essential to understand the general decline of the EU's 'transformative power' executed through the mechanism of conditionality (Bochsler – Juon 2020) as well as the 'subversive' role of the intergovernmental character of the EU that compromises the agency of the European Commission against democratic backsliding (Kelemen 2020). Therefore, we have to examine the role of the EU in the process of decline of democracy in CEE.

IV. When the decline of democracy hits the EU

Let us start with an example of how we can connect area specialisation on CEE with general issues of comparative politics. Peter Mair (2013: 17–44) discussed the dramatic decline of traditional forms of political involvement in Western democracies, such as higher net and gross volatility or the weakening of party membership. The point here is not to demonstrate that the level of party membership is lower in CEE (Biezen et al. 2011) or that the volatility is higher (Gherghina 2015), although both arguments hold. Mair's (2013) central idea

is that the space and scope of traditional party-driven democratic politics are hollowing out in Western democracies due to the increasing stress on expert rule and decision-making procedures beyond the range of popular democratic monitoring. Party government is waning; de-politicisation is the prevailing trend, as is the increasing detachment of elites from the masses. The role of the EU, according to Mair, is crucial here, although it is mainly negative because the specific features of European governance exacerbate the trends summarised above: In the EU, 'decisions can be taken by political elites with more or less a free hand' (Mair 2013: 108–109) and 'a political system… cannot adequately be reached or accessed by means of elections and parties, that is, by means of traditional representative organs and channels' (Mair 2013: 125).

Later developments counterproved Mair's initial assumptions, mainly because he was able to detect an increased level of politicisation of the EU issues only to a limited extent. Vivien Schmidt (2020) described the national political arena as 'politics without policy' because of the hollowing out of political options by increasing the communitarisation of policies. However, CEE shows that we can quite easily replace policy-based politics with symbolic and identity-based politics. Dufek and Holzer (2016: 20–22) explained how the harmonisation with the EU standards led first to de-politicisation and soon after to anti-liberal political mobilisation by the nationalist and Eurosceptic forces. Vivien Schmidt aptly calls this Europe-wide phenomenon 'politics *against* policy'. The CEE laboratory takes the lead in this respect, especially in the states where illiberal politicians started to provide reforms and implement policies that consequently hamper the smooth implementation of the *acquis communautaire*. We might mention the ongoing debate on the new financial framework of the EU or the financial aid related to the coronavirus pandemic and the stubborn defiance of Hungary and Poland against any relationship between money and the assessment of democratic standards. However, CEE is not alone in these trends; it's just faster.

In general, CEE turned more swiftly from permissive consensus to constraining dissensus (Hooghe – Marks 2009) or even destructive dissensus (Hodson – Puetter 2019). 'European disunion' (Palier et al. 2017) does not apply only to economic and social disparities among the MS but *within* the particular MS too. European integration did not reduce enough the gap between the losers and the winners of the democratic transition. As we will see, it instead contributed to reframing this gap and its political consequences into the discourse of winners and losers of integration and globalisation.

The problem is, of course, not only in the rhetoric of populist and nationalist politicians. Akalyiski and Welzel (2020: 18–19) suggest explaining Hungarian and Polish democratic backlash with the fact that these two countries experienced a sharp increase in emancipative values in Europe after 1989, which might have provoked the nationalist-conservative reaction. The losers and 'their' political parties reinforced the critique of the establishment by adding the EU

dimension into domestic critique. We can add the acceptance or rejection of the mainstream economic paradigm as another factor in the dispute between the winners' and losers' perspectives. Bluhm and Varga (2018: 4–5) explain the rise of CEE illiberal politics as a force opposing the dominant neo-liberal paradigm since the beginning of the transition from communism in CEE. Of course, this is not the only reason or explanation. Still, it is vital and well connected with the role of the EU membership as a factor of polarisation of CEE politics. Massively illiberal discourse in the region was fed by accusations that neoliberal economic principles inspired the austerity measures implemented by the EU to fight the crisis, had an allegedly devastating impact on the local population, and fostered 'foreign' instead of national economic interests (Ágh 2019).

The depth of the economic crisis and its political impact vary widely in the region. As Palier et al. (2017) demonstrated, the financial crisis increased the level of social and economic disparity between the core and periphery of the EU MS. It is surprising that after the crisis, the centre-periphery divide goes across, rather than along, the East–West divide. Some CEE countries (Estonia, Czechia, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) coped relatively well after the crisis and became part of the centre. Although the crisis in the Eurozone had a profoundly negative impact on most of the CEE countries, there is no direct link between the level of economic decline and the level of illiberal backlash.

The Baltic States were damaged dramatically (Kattel – Ringa 2013), yet their populist parties did not take an illiberal turn. Poland was the only EU country with ongoing economic growth, yet the elections of 2015 established a government of the national populist Law and Justice Party. The long-term coexistence of socioeconomic and nationalistic cleavages in CEE, specifically the dominance of the nationalistic cleavages in many countries of the region (Hloušek – Kopeček 2008), provides the explanation. Besides the politics of socioeconomic interests, the cultural and value-defined axis of party competition and voter alignments defines the regional political discourses and concerns. The inability to cope with the economic decline led some political elites to change the discourse from catching up with the West to blaming it for austerity measures.

The heated cultural wars and debates of the 1990s were reframed in the 2010s due to the polycrisis of European integration. While economic problems alone were not enough to stir up the once calm waters of tacit pro-EU consensus in the region, the migration crisis, unfortunately, added fresh winds to the Eurosceptic sails.

V. When polycrisis exacerbates the problem

Migration issues stimulated increasing support of far-right and extremist political parties in CEE (Minkenberg 2017). The impact of the migration crisis on party politics in Europe has included a very rapid politicisation of the migra-

tion issues in CEE, where there was almost no politicisation of migration at all before 2015 (Taggart – Szczerbiak 2018). In CEE, migration issues did not only affect the far-right parties on the fringes or national conservative mainstream parties like PiS or Fidesz. They increased soft Eurosceptic stances among historically rather pro-integration parties like the Czech Social Democratic Party and Slovak Smer. The migration crisis exacerbated trends towards a sinister mixture of populism, Euroscepticism and sovereigntist discourses among CEE parties. Traditional discourses that centred on the Roma minority, for example, were reinforced with negative images of Muslim hordes flooding European countries, who are allegedly supported by the EU migration policies (Stojarová 2018). Hungarian Fidesz, ruling since 2010 and radicalising its populist appeals despite all expectations that incumbency pushes populists to the mainstream, is a *pars pro toto* (Hegedüs 2019).

As if in a Petri dish, the CEE mainstream discourse was affected and radicalised more quickly and broadly than in Western Europe, as a comparison of Fico, Orbán, Babiš with Sebastian Kurz, Salvini or Mark Rutte would show. The CEE lab can be used here to understand why mainstream politicians were so vulnerable to far-right discourses and policies and, in general, the relationship between the supply and demand sides in the process of securitisation of migration and the radicalisation of popular and elite stances.

In CEE, the economic and migration crises (but not Brexit) reinforced the supply side with new populist parties. They also affected the demand side profoundly by deepening the realignment of voters and restructuring cleavages. Empirical examinations of Western European cases have thus far received the most attention. Kriesi et al. (2008) found that the traditional left–right divide, based mainly on different socioeconomic policies and preferences, was complemented in Western Europe with the cultural axis dividing inclusion from demarcation. Once firmly socially rooted, political choices are now more fluid, and cleavages are not only products of the winner–loser societal divide but are actively constructed by political parties.

Is this a purely Western phenomenon? When reading, after almost three decades, Herbert Kitschelt's famous paper (1992), a reader might have a feeling of *déjà-vu*. Early in the period of democratic transition, Kitschelt (1992: 17) had already identified the axis dividing liberal and cosmopolitan parties from their authoritarian and particularist counterparts. In the CEE lab, social cleavages can be seen to have been replaced by the harsh and rapid modernisation that took place during the communist regimes. After 1989, the increasing importance of 'politically constructed' cleavages accompanied a further decline in firm social divisions (Hloušek – Kopeček 2008). After the Eastern Enlargement, the CEE winners and losers' cleavage of economic transformation more closely resembles that of Western Europe, with people feeling either that they benefit or suffer from Europeanisation and globalisation.

The CEE lab can help understand how the populist parties reframed the losers' part of the story using more and more socio-cultural narratives of demarcation against the 'others' rather than a traditional class approach. This has been the case with populist parties in Western Europe, too, so comparative research can benefit from a larger sample of cases. Even more meticulous analyses of the CEE cases are needed to understand the patterns and dynamics of politicisation of the EU by fringe as well as mainstream parties. Here, the CEE countries offer a model where the permissive consensus of the masses and the active enthusiasm of the elites transitioned into markedly diverse and contested stances of both, and this has seemingly happened overnight and with clear traces. Therefore, in the next part, let us discuss the politicisation of European integration and the importance of adding the CEE context.

VI. How CEE can help to understand the politicisation of the EU

Scholars of the EU have used politicisation as a buzzword covering many different issues and manifestations since the late 1990s (de Wilde 2011). Politicisation as a combination of diverging public opinion, strategies of political parties and increasing the importance of identity-based politics that has been leading to the end of permissive consensus was theoretically rooted in Hooghe and Marks's (2009) postfunctionalism. The empirical rise of anti-EU resentments and Eurosceptic political actors in many countries of the EU have fuelled the latest debates. The idea that politicisation stems from the transfer of political authority matched explanations of politicisation as a product of strategic choice, economic interests or re-construction of cleavages (de Wilde et al. 2016: 10–12). In all of the cases, the attention was shifted to the space of the national political arena and competition of political actors within the MS, where politicisation can be conceptualised as a rising salience, expansion of actors involved in the debate as well as the polarisation of a particular topic (Grande – Hutter 2016: 25–26).

Hutter and Kriesi (2019) argued that the polycrisis did not lead to the same degree of politicisation of EU issues in CEE as it did in North-western and Southern Europe. As Havlík and Smekal (2022) showed, this is not necessarily so. While a sample including Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania confirms Hutter and Kriesi's findings, a selection including Czechia, Slovakia and Estonia would show a rising trend of politicisation. The same applies when we look at the level of 'Europeanisation' of electoral campaigns in CEE, which means the degree to which the CEE EP elections are dealing with EU-related issues. Analysis of the 2019 EP elections shows quite different degrees and various sources of Europeanisation. In Hungary and Romania, the campaigns dealt almost purely with domestic topics. The campaign was moderately Europeanised in the Czech Republic and highly Europeanised in Estonia (Hloušek – Kaniok 2020: 286–287). It confirms the research of Emanuelle et al. (2020), who

analysed the emerging integration-demarcation cleavage in the results of the EP elections. They demonstrated that variations of the salience of this cleavage cut clearly across any East–West divide. There is no specific CEE pattern. In Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania or Slovenia, they did not find even the emergence of a 'demarcation bloc' (i.e. parties fighting against globalisation and Europeanisation). In Hungary, they detected this cleavage in the embryonic phase, while Czechia, Estonia, Poland and Slovakia were in the stage of full political mobilisation. No CEE country reached the maturity level of integration and demarcation cleavage, but only three MS did so at all: Austria, Finland and Greece (Emanuele et al. 2020: 11–13).

Central Eastern Europe can thus serve as a lab where we can set aside many external factors, such as length of membership, and focus on how domestic actors foster or subdue politicisation of the EU issues. Comparative research covering the CEE countries would contribute to expanding the debate on the sources of politicisation of the EU in party politics on the genuinely European level. The lab can serve to test the different conditions for politicisation, such as cleavages and partisan divides cutting across (Hutter – Kriesi 2019) or replacing (Hooghe – Marks 2018) existing cleavages, level of public Euroscepticism (Green-Pedersen 2012), the role of those who oppose the EU as agents of politicisation (de Wilde et al. 2016) or the triggering role of the Eurozone and migration crises (Grande – Hutter 2016, Zeitlin et al. 2019). After a period of idyllic expectation of a sort of civilisational leap forward after reaching EU membership, some CEE MS display rapid processes of turning remote international conflicts (de Wilde – Lord 2016) over the EU-related issues into domestic ones involving the masses, parties, media, and public discourses and increasing the salience of the EU topic. The CEE lab is also a proper place to test the Eurosceptic challenges caused by the pandemic and the Ukrainian war.

Hutter and Kriesi's (2016: 1001) remark that we have to see 'conflicts over Europe as being embedded in the broader long-term restructuring of conflict structures' is essential here. The 'polycleavage' triggered by the EU polycrisis (Zeitlin et al. 2019: 966) matches strange bedfellows and undermines the ability of the actors to seek necessary compromises, no less in CEE than in Western Europe. The 'politics trap' (Zeitlin et al. 2019: 967–968) producing integration deadlocks is fuelled no less from CEE than it is fuelled from Western or Southern European MS.

Zürn (2016: 177) discussed the impact of politicisation on the further institutionalisation of the EU. While looking at how the EU is politicised in CEE politics, which is typically driven by the negative framing of the EU by Eurosceptic nationalist politicians, we can add a concern about the institutionalisation of a liberal democratic polity in the member states. The danger of destabilisation of the liberal democratic institutions is less at stake in 'old' member states than in the 'new' ones. On the other hand, the CEE can work as a lab for scholars who

want to examine the most probable agents of democratic backsliding since there are the same suspects all around Europe. The difference between CEE and WE is in scope, virulence and success more than in illiberal agents' mechanisms, manifestations and rhetoric. In CEE, the virulence of illiberal policies is more robust, as is the scope of illiberal political actors and their political success. As Ekaterina Rashkova (2021: 239) put it: CEE 'can be said to be the catalyst to a debate on the EU governance model and its democratic legitimacy'.

The EU's polycrisis blends with the illiberal challenges of CEE politics emerging with the full EU membership of the vast majority of countries in the region. Study of these interlocked processes can therefore help us to understand how the national dynamics of politicisation have an impact on the EU level (de Wilde et al. 2015) and, of course, how they work the other way around (Ares et al. 2017) in the more and more complex system of EU multilevel governance. Increasing politicisation makes us think in terms of multilevel politics, both in the West and CEE.

VII. Instead of a conclusion: What is the CEE lab good for?

Hanspeter Kriesi (2020) assessed the general trends of democracy in Europe, showing that democracy is still on the rise. Citizens are supporting liberal democratic politics, although they tend to be dissatisfied with the performance of democratically elected political leaders, especially during the period when Europe faced an economic crisis. Left and right challenger parties attacking the incumbent political elites are on the rise. However, at the same time, they can function as a democratic corrective, increasing the long-run responsiveness of the elites to the citizens. Moreover, trapped in governmental responsibility, populist challengers typically face many constraints.

We can remain optimistic and subscribe to Kriesi's point of view. This, however, does not mean that we shan't care about the more or less deteriorating quality of policies, politics and sometimes even polities (like in Hungary and Poland) in the region. Dissatisfaction produced by the feelings of the 'losers' is on the rise, fuelled most recently by diverging opinions on European integration and fears drawn from the real or alleged implications of the migration crisis. Rising Euroscepticism is one of the typical responses since there are many losers of globalisation and Europeanisation too. The constraints and limits imposed on the left and right populist challengers might be insufficient to stop such parties from breaking through or preventing the implementation of an illiberal programme.

Many scholars say that the problem of political science is the lack of a lab to use for experiments. On the other hand, we do have history, and we do have comparisons that might compensate for this 'insufficiency'. Is this not a call for a real pan-European comparative political science in which, sometimes, CEE

can serve as a kind of lab even for those researchers whose interests have never crossed the Elbe river?

The main takeaway from this paper is that the CEE lab can serve as a regional microcosm of existing, emerging as well as contained elements of illiberal backlash. Central Eastern Europe is neither doomed to de-democratise nor is Western Europe perfectly resilient against illiberal political trends. The CEE lab is testing challenges and resilience mechanisms in more 'extreme' conditions. The CEE lab offers a sample of variations broad enough to show macro-trends and analyse the subtler mechanisms through which illiberal politicians are gaining momentum.

The unique configuration of the polycrisis of European integration and the illiberal challenges mitigated only partially by the EU membership in CEE allows us to study the intersection of socioeconomic and cultural-identity cleavages. As the CEE lab shows, the role of the EU's politicisation under the conditions of the recent polycrisis is a vital part of such study. In the CEE lab, we can disregard many external factors, such as length of membership, and focus on how domestic actors foster or subdue the politicisation of EU issues.

As far as the mechanisms are concerned, we can use the CEE lab to understand the affection of mainstream politicians for radical discourses on the European Union in general or migration, minority rights and liberal democratic institutions in particular. We can use the lab to understand the methods used by populist politicians to reframe discourses that appeal to the 'losers' of Europeanisation from socioeconomic to identity-based narratives of demarcation from 'the others'. The CEE lab explains the varieties of democratic swerve as well as resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic (Guasti – Bustikova 2022). The CEE lab shows the role of a specific type of leadership in the promotion of illiberal values as well as the defence mechanisms employed by liberal politicians, civil society or media.

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How to make the EU affairs more attractive? Case study teaching at Czech universities

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Abstract: *The article examines the case study (CS) method of teaching the studies focusing on the European Union (i.e. EU studies) through the lenses of the current debates on the EU's future which stress the growing cleavage and diversity inside and outside the EU. It is then difficult to present these topics to university students via traditional means, or via existing CS on international relations or EU affairs which are often of Western origin, and thus not always easily transferred to other environments. Its aim is to explore how the CS may be enriched by bringing local narratives. The article investigates the Czech Republic, a relatively newer member of the Union, where the EU studies has suffered from declining interest from students over the last few years. Particularly by employing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with Czech university teachers, we examine the type of CS, the extent to which they are and may be applied as a learning method and what their benefits are towards students, teachers and EU studies as a discipline. Our findings suggest that CS are used by the majority of respondents, but confusion prevails over the way CS should be employed. Moreover, the broader context of the CS learning method is rather neglected. Hence, there is space for greater systematic preparation and possibly for CS templates and samples that can be shared by instructors.*

Key words: ***Czech Republic, case studies methods, learning, EU studies***

I. Introduction

The article examines the case study (hereinafter also CS) method of teaching the studies focusing on the European Union (i.e. EU studies – EUS)[1]. The permanent

1 The term EU studies refers to the study programmes at universities which focus on the EU affairs and the diverse aspects of the European Union (EU policies, institutions, EU current affairs, EU actorness, etc.) (Diez 2001; Becker et al. 2021).

crisis mode of the EU has witnessed new dimensions of internal differentiation and growing cleavages. Such a development may potentially have a negative impact on the way EU studies are managed in the member states, especially those that entered after 2004. It has become very demanding and often ineffective with traditional tools, such as group discussions or textbook reading, which only reproduce the core narrative. Multiple innovative tools, including internships, blended learning, project-based learning, peer-tutoring, simulations, problem-based learning and case studies have been developed over the years to promote student learning of concepts and principles, as opposed to the direct presentation of facts (Duch – Groh, 2001). Many students learn better from real situations and examples than from logical development starting with basic principles. Case study learning thus depends on inductive reasoning, making content the very foundation of a case course. It sharpens communication and critical thinking skills, as students apply knowledge and evaluate options to solve the problem at hand. The case assignments require students to answer an open-ended question or develop a solution to an open-ended problem with multiple potential solutions (e.g., Golich et al., 2000).

While the current research confirms the great potential of using case studies as a didactical method to explore specific cases. It remains ambiguous about how to use this method for topics that do not provide clear cases anymore or cases where we may encounter various biases. There are publications (including online materials and textbooks) on CS in the IR field (e.g. Georgetown University; Carter 2010; Golich et al., 2000; Holsti, 1994; Ortmayer, 1994; Boehrer – Linsky, 1990) and a few related to EU studies (Snow 2015; Georgetown University). However, most of the CS are from the Western (meaning American or Western European) environment and their application to the Czech context is thus quite problematic. There is also a developed method of problem-based learning which has several similar characteristics (as CS learning), but it again is of Western origin, mainly related to Maastricht University (Lightfoot – Maurer 2014; Maurer – Neuhold 2014; Maurer et al. 2020; Tonra, 2020). On the other hand, there are no publications on CS teaching from the Czech Republic helping to strengthen the analytical skills and critical thinking of students at universities. This may lead to significant setbacks as the usage of CS designed by Western authors may portray the issues from specific angles (stemming from different size, historical path, interests, etc.) or with certain hidden bias and narratives (e.g., the socialisation narrative) which may be inconceivable to instructors and students coming from different environments.

Therefore, in the article we investigate whether and what kind of case studies are actually used in the Czech Republic and whether they have the potential to somehow bridge or at least provide a comprehensive insight into the cleavages between the centre and the semi/periphery. We conduct a deeper examination of the Czech university environment in particular.

The case of the Czech Republic was selected as it represents a relatively new member state within the European structure where, however, the attractiveness of EU studies has decreased over the last few years, as well as the number of students applying for the EU study programmes at Czech universities (see/cf. below). Employing an online survey and semi-structured interviews with Czech academics and university teachers, we examine the type of CS and the extent to which they are applied as a teaching method. As the impact of the method is in general perceived positively, we want to find out what the limitations are of CS being employed more systematically and rigorously, how to persuade instructors to use them more frequently and how to facilitate their inclusion in teaching to realise their full potential. Finally, we present an example of a case study including a lesson plan in the appendix of the article which draws on our main findings.

In the first part of the article, the case study method is examined with a special focus on teaching, discussing mainly its positive and negative aspects. The second part illustrates how EU affairs are taught in the Czech Republic. Finally, the method of case studies is more thoroughly investigated at Czech universities.

II. Case study teaching in EU studies – state of the art

The pioneering of case study teaching is linked to Harvard Business School in the 1920s, when several authors began to write cases on its use for teaching management courses (Charan 1976: 116–123). In more recent decades there has been renewed interest in developing and using cases for teacher education (Silverman et al. 1992; Sykes – Bird 1992; Shulman – Mesa-Bains 1992; Shulman 1992; LaBoskey 1992; Merseth 1991a, 1991b; Richert 1990, 1992; Richardson 1991; Florio-Ruane – Clark 1990; Kowalski et al. 1990; Carter – Doyle 1989; Kleinfeld 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992; Shulman – Colbert 1988, 1989), and numerous claims about the benefits of the case method for teacher education have been posited. Teaching cases as a didactic and pedagogical alternative in the classroom was later explored in the case of management courses by Gil (2009); Martins (2008) or Roberts (2001). Moreover, as Bonney (2015: 21) suggests, the CS teaching method has also gained popularity in recent years among an array of scientific disciplines, such as biology, chemistry and psychology.

However, IR and EUS were for a long time left behind. There are only a few publications that deal with them (Snow 2015; Georgetown University; Carter 2010; Golich et al. 2000, Holsti 1994; Ortmayer 1994; Paquette – Boehrer – Linsky 1990). Moreover, the majority of these publications and textbooks do not show CS as such, but rather show the strategies of how to work with CS in IR. Boehrer and Linsky (1990: 42) focus on case discussion. Golich et al. (2000) introduce a manual on case teaching, where they not only describe the basic definition but also explain step by step how such a method should be prepared

and later executed. The manual is based on workshop experience provided by Boehrer. Ortmayer and Holsti (1994) both contribute with an article to the special issue of *International Studies Notes*. While Ortmayer (1990) mainly concentrates on the benefits of using case studies in IR, and he also sets several criteria for writing a good CS, Holsti (1994) shares some of his experience in using cases in teaching courses and seminars on American foreign policy and describes various ways in which this approach has transformed his courses. Finally, it is Carter (2010) who stresses the role of instructors and discusses the steps that they should take to ensure success with a case-based approach.

Nevertheless, the case method designed namely for EUS is practically non-existent. Only in some monographs which focus on IR as such, can we find several cases on the EU. There is one chapter in Snow's (2015) publication where he studies the EU as an example of regional cooperation and he also concentrates on the debt crisis in Europe. At the end of the case, he also suggests a sample of questions for discussion, activities for students in class as well as further readings and resources. The CS from Georgetown University's website also focus on concrete EU affairs examples, including the internal issues of EU member states (e.g. Estonia, Spain, Austria) or periods in EU historical development (e.g. negotiations of the Maastricht treaty). These cases are often in the format of simulation which seeks to transport students back to when the situation or the decisions were taken, but the newest ones are more than ten years old. The rapid development of the EU, however, requires closer and more updated attention.

Last but not least, it must be noted that the majority of the existing CS are of Anglo-American provenance (e.g. Georgetown University), and thus their application to the Czech context is quite difficult as they mirror the stances and position of these authors. In other words, each case may be explained from the perspective of the instructors who provide the information to students and lead the discussions. It may happen that some of the aspects of the case being solved may be neglected while others may be stressed. In Snow's case on the Eurozone crisis, it mainly focuses on the main actors involved (Germany, France and Greece), but insufficiently reflects the position of the others and completely disregards the situation of the states outside the Eurozone. A simplification of the problem also appears in the case on Maastricht Treaty negotiations where explanation of historical factors or linkages between integration processes and sovereignty of states is rather limited (Snow 2015). In these cases, the instructions of the authors as well as the guidance of the instructors are key and thus every case solved in the class may differ. Hence, the context matters, and the Western-centric understanding often neglects the historical background and complexity of the issue (e.g. Georgetown University; Snow 2015). Furthermore, the growing insecurity of the EU and the multiple crises the EU and the Central European (CE) countries have faced recently have made the topic ambiguous,

strengthening the voices which question the dominant narrative. This critical tendency is also reflected in EU studies (Diez 2001; Becker et al. 2021). The room has opened for local contexts which could uncover different narratives related to EUS, including these coming from the CE region. In these areas and from the perspective of these actors, the problems can be studied. We may either enrich the existing cases with local contexts or create new cases offering more complex views (cf. the Appendix).

Moreover, the timeframe may pose another obstacle. This is valid for the problem-based learning associated with Maastricht University (e.g. Lightfoot – Maurer 2014; Maurer – Neuhold 2014; Maurer – Niemann – Plank 2020; Tonra 2020). This format of class engagement has several similar elements with the case-study method, as it is student-centred, collaborative and involves an active process of knowledge construction (Lightfoot – Maurer 2014). At the same time, however, several issues may occur, especially in the context of the organisation of the semester, which is module-based at Maastricht University and students thus focus only on one course in the two-month period. Moreover, the assignment concentrates more on the self-study of individual students in between the seminars than on group discussions in class.

Therefore, contrary to traditional teaching methods, including textbooks, readings or group discussions, which may reduce this complexity into a limited set of information, the CS teaching enriches views, perceptions and stances, as they embed the phenomenon in diverse contexts, not exclusively in the mainstream one. Furthermore, CS help to study in detail concrete cases of EU processes and to spread awareness that the EU is not a distant or estranged institution, but rather a complex and vivid body. The idea is that neither teachers nor students themselves reproduce these simplistic discourses, but unpack their own thoughts based on their own research and in the interaction with each other in the class (supported by the instructor). These challenges and opportunities will be analysed below.

III. Case study as a teaching method

While the basic definition of the CS has already been given in the introduction, this chapter serves to develop it in more detail. First, a thick line should be drawn between case study as research method and a case study as teaching method. Whereas, in the research, the CS are well documented (Flyvbjerg 2006; George – Bennett 2005; Gerring 2004; Eckstein 1975), the latter remain underexplored.

Based on the multiple definitions of CS employed by universities and associations offering guidance regarding CS in teaching (e.g. Case studies, n.d.; Using Case Studies to Teach, n.d.; Schwartz, n.d.) the following aspects seem to be prominent: The method of CS is quite flexible, as it can be defined as ‘simply

an interesting problem with many correct answers' and 'learning by doing' or an elaborated interactive activity or even a field trip, etc. Formally, they can be in the form of decision-forcing or retrospective cases. Decision-forcing CS are cherished as more useful than descriptive. Case studies in teaching often draw on real-word events. However, even if invented, cases should simulate complex realities and be closely linked to practice. Case studies promote critical thinking, as they are usually open-ended and offer more solutions, which are supposed to be analysed and assessed by students. The teacher (or instructor) merely plays the role of a guide. Successful CS should be based on good stories, ideally contemporary and rich so that the students get engaged easily. Another aspect is the necessity for the students to prepare in advance, and the possibility of working individually or in teams. Last but not least, teachers can employ their own CS or prepared templates. This is how we understand the definition of CS in teaching later in this article.

Contrary to the natural sciences, which are often based on explanatory and verification processes, fields of social sciences, including IR and EUS, require a deeper understanding of a concrete phenomenon. This enables the observation of diverse angles, raising new questions and evaluating different conclusions. It thus reflects the complexity of the phenomenon, such as the EU, be it the discussion around its future, migration challenges or others. Hence, it enables the experience of data collection and its systematisation, placing the student in the context where the analysed phenomenon happens (Minniti et al. 2016: 374). It also means that the same problem situation can be evaluated from different perspectives, which always makes them specific cases. Such broader analysis enables us to study the EU through different lenses, adding various narratives. It helps students to explore in more detail current debates on the EU's future, its development and potential challenges.

There are at least two types of cases: (1) the retrospective CS, which provides a complete description of the events in question and where students analyse past decisions with the aid of hindsight; (2) a decision-forcing case which is based upon an 'interrupted narrative', where the protagonist finds himself faced with an important decision (Harvard Business School). In other words, decision-forcing cases ask students to engage with problems prospectively. The selected case thus puts students in the role of the person (the emphasis on role play varies) faced with a problem (often called the 'protagonist') and asks them to devise, defend, discuss and refine solutions to that problem. In both cases, the students' input are based entirely upon reliable descriptions of real events. After discussing student solutions to the problem at the heart of a decision-forcing case, a case teacher will often provide a description of the historical solution, that is, the decision made by the protagonist of the case. For the purpose of CS in EUS, it seems that decision-forcing cases are more suitable, as they often represent a rather current phenomenon.

Case discussions help them to acquire important skills such as problem solving, decision making in complex situations and coping with ambiguities. They teach students to listen carefully to each other, to respect opinions of others and to work collectively to solve a problem. The students learn to value the contributions of others while strengthening their own ability to think creatively and communicate effectively (Levin 1995). The teacher presents the description of the situations, defining the limits. The student is also limited to the review of documents submitted, guided by questions or points established by the teacher (Minniti et al. 2016: 375). The cases can be evaluated by different points of view in a separate group or in a whole class. Case teaching is learner-centred, characterised by intense interaction between instructor and student as well as among students in a group (Boehrer 1990, 1994). Several educators have argued that case methods are useful for promoting critical reflection and better understanding of theory (Shulman 1992; Kowalski et al., 1990; Greenwood – Parkay, 1989). It favours the development of cognitive skills in students, through analysis, synthesis and judgment, encouraging them to be active protagonists in the learning process (Minniti et al. 2015: 373). Students thus study real situations and problems in concrete areas (including EUS) by themselves. They are encouraged to discuss issues including migration, the eurozone crisis, energy security or conflicts in the EU neighbourhood from different angles and perspectives, to observe the nuances of local contexts and to cope with ambiguities, such as the political environment, media outlets, public opinions, historical contexts, etc.

There are also benefits for producing teachers/instructors who may enhance their ability to be problem solvers and critical thinkers (Shulman 1992; Kowalski et al. 1990; Greenwood – Parkay 1989). While the role of teachers is limited during the case assignment at the expense of students' engagement, their role is fundamental in the case preparation and in the moderation of the final discussion. In this regard, Levin (1995) also examines how teachers with different amounts of experience think about cases or how groups of teachers interact and influence each other during a case discussion. Given the growing interest in the use of case methods, it is important to investigate the role of discussion and experience.

Case teaching enhances learning by engaging students in several ways. Krain (2010), for instance, examines student engagement in IR courses in response to four different types of case learning: case studies with texts designed for the case method, those using written non-traditional case materials, those incorporating documentary films as case materials, and problem-based learning approaches. Results suggest that the types of case learning that engaged students' senses in multiple ways – problem-based learning and case studies using films as texts – enhanced their perceptions of the exercises' effectiveness. Case studies that relied on written texts alone were not rated as highly, although they were still seen as extremely valuable (Krain 2010). There are also findings

from analysis of this type of teaching in natural sciences classes which may prove to be useful. Finney and Pyke (2008) discuss the implication of content relevance in teaching and provide an account of a Canadian university's efforts to introduce alumni cases in its undergraduate programme. The findings reveal a positive correlation between student perceptions of case relevance and student motivation. Other research on the use of published case studies was conducted among university students in biology courses by Bonney (2015). Although it concerns the natural sciences again, some findings could be easily applied to IR and EUS as well. Indeed, several conclusions are reflected in Krain (2010) as well as in our empirical analysis of the Czech Republic case, and they are also supported by the survey carried out by the Faculty of International Relations at Prague University of Economics and Business among its alumni from 2016–2017 (Prague University of Economics and Business, internal source of data 2020).

Bonney (2015: 23) first showed that the CS teaching method is more effective at promoting learning, or student performance on examination questions related to material covered by CS. They were particularly useful for promoting the perceived development of written and oral communication skills and for demonstrating connections between scientific topics and real-world issues and applications. He also confirmed another hypothesis which suggested that case study learning increases student perception of learning gains related to core course objectives, as 82 percent of students responded that case studies helped a 'good' or 'great' amount with learning. Finally, the results in the article (2015: 23) also pointed out that the CS published by unaffiliated instructors are just as effective as those produced by the instructor of a course. This is a particularly interesting finding which tells us that instructors can reasonably rely on the use of pre-published case studies relevant to their classes, rather than investing the considerable time and effort required to produce a novel CS. Therefore, it leaves space for the sharing of practical examples or templates, which could help clarify how CS for EU topics should be designed. However, at the same time, the content needs to be cautiously prepared. As we have stressed above, in IR or EUS, CS tend to be embedded in a specific environment. In other words, cultural, historical, political or social contexts matter more than for CS in biology courses. The instructors/teachers must be more careful about the topic and its meaning for students. This is where the debates on the EU and its challenges become most prominent and where the dialogue may take place if the CS is well prepared and implemented by students (supported by the instructors), who explore the case with their own research and in the interaction with each other in the class.

Moreover, the actors involved in the process of employing CS should be investigated, as the role of instructors is key and adaptation to a particular class is necessary. In order to be able to tackle these unclear issues, we examined the Czech academic environment and conducted a survey among academics and instructors at universities in the Czech Republic. The research should serve

not only to reveal how to teach with the case method, but mainly to grasp the specificities, benefits and limitations of the CS method for EU courses. These characteristics may help us draft a possible case sample applicable for EUS, which may serve as a lesson plan for those teachers who would be willing to try it as an innovative tool in order to improve students' motivation as well as pedagogical skills. The set of CS examples may be particularly important in countries where EUS as a discipline has only been established recently.

IV. EU studies at Czech universities

To understand the relevance of EU studies in the Czech context, this part of the article introduces the various forms of EU studies present at Czech universities. The analysis is based on existing documents, data sources and roundtable discussion with study programme guarantors in the field of the European Union at Czech universities. Both (the desktop research and the roundtable) were conducted as part of the Czech presidency project in 2022 (Research report 2022).

Overall, there are 40 study programmes accredited at universities which includes EU studies in variations of formats. There are 15 programmes for bachelor students and 25 for master students. A majority of them are in Czech language (26) and 14 programmes are taught in English (Research report 2022). At the bachelor's level, teaching about the European Union is concentrated at universities located mainly in large cities. Also, the courses for bachelor students do not focus exclusively on European affairs. This is primarily due to the given degree of study – students are often prepared in more generally-oriented programmes, and only later enrich their knowledge within master's study programmes. It is only at the master's degree level that courses become specialised in various aspects of the European Union. Within programmes accredited in the field of political science (or international relations, territorial studies) the focus remains often on institutional aspects of the EU. Some universities, however, also offer more varied courses specialised in EU economic integration or law (EU politics and law). Again, these master's degree programmes are only offered at universities in major Czech cities. At smaller universities, EU studies is provided in more general programmes, usually as part of international relations or international economic relations.

Although Czech universities have accredited a total of 40 study programmes with a focus on the European Union, the data shows that the interest of applicants in such specialised programmes has rather decreased in the medium term (Research report 2022). In addition to it, a majority of EU study programmes, especially in the field of political science, are smaller in size. Hence, it seems that often they are maintained by universities because of their symbolic importance and subsequent opportunities in scientific and international cooperation. Furthermore, it seems that attractiveness of the study programmes is not

supported even by the content of programmes or individual courses. This may be demonstrated by the fact that even the learning outcomes defined for study programmes and courses (knowledge and skills that the graduates acquire during their studies) which were the most frequently mentioned in the roundtable discussion remain rather traditional:

Knowledge:

- acquiring knowledge about the historical context of the European Union, orientation in individual EU institutions and understanding of Europeanisation processes
- ability to describe and explain EU policies, processes and main actors
- understanding the EU institutional framework
- acquiring advanced theoretical knowledge in the field of international economics
- obtaining an excellent orientation in the field of international relations with a territorial focus on the EU

Skills:

- ability to use foreign languages (exceptional emphasis on excellent acquisition of at least two foreign languages)
- ability to analyse social events
- acquisition of presentation and analytical skills
- ability to make strategic decisions in the context of the legal and business environment of the EU
- ability to analyse foreign policy (Research report, 2022).

Therefore, it seems that EU studies in the Czech academic environment remains structured as mostly general and rigid study programmes where the focus on abilities and knowledge reflecting the current EU problems has not yet gained enough space nor attention. In terms of skills, in particular, the ability to quickly be well versed in the current EU affairs, the ability to think critically and be innovative seems to be often neglected. Moreover, the lack of flexibility of current study programmes lies in the layout of the courses where the time and space for new activities including the CS is rather limited and the way and structure of teaching is often an afterthought in terms of relevance. The difference is only at the level of individual courses where the instructors may use time in the seminar (as opposed to lectures) to reflect on current events in the EU and discuss the contemporary EU issues in the smaller groups (up to 30 students). This, however, happens circumstantially without any larger framework or guidelines provided by the study programmes. The analysis of EUS in the Czech environment is further complemented by the surveys and interviews with academics at Czech universities.

V. Research design

The research design is based on primary data collected from a survey and interviews with academics and university professors teaching the EU in the Czech Republic. The data is contrasted with the current literature on case studies in general and in EUS specifically. Employing this kind of triangulation ensures a representative perspective on how CS are used in teaching the EU at Czech universities. At first, professors giving classes on the EU at Czech universities were identified by exploring online available course contents. Altogether, almost 40 professors were approached with a questionnaire (17 questions, both multiple-choice and open) and 20 anonymously completed questionnaires were returned. The survey drew upon desktop research into employing CS in university teaching as well as upon the specifics of EUS. Specifically, the questions referred to the main dis/advantages of CS, the reasons behind (not) using CS, feedback from students, practicalities (i.e. the number of students in the classes, differences among Czech and exchange students and among undergraduate and graduate students, professional career, support from department concerning teaching CS, willingness to include more CS if templates were available). Questions also dealt with the broader context, e.g. whether CS contribute to the development of EUS, to the growth of the teacher or to a better understanding of the EU among the general public, and whether CS are used often in the Czech Republic and abroad, and if EUS are specific regarding the use of CS.

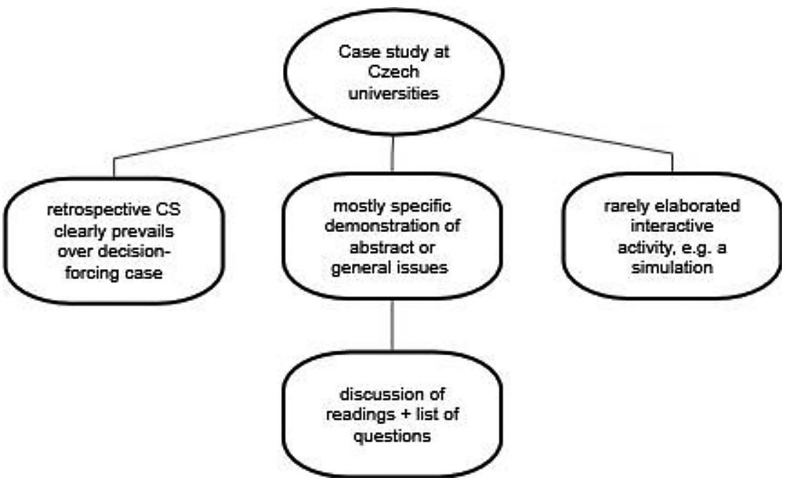
Based on the results, questions for semi-structured interviews were prepared to clarify the outstanding issues arising from the questionnaires, such as how professors actually understood what an exact execution of a case study was, what happens when CS are used repeatedly, whether students tend to be rather sceptical towards CS, etc. Altogether, nine interviews with professors affiliated to universities across the Czech Republic were carried out. Each interview took 30–60 minutes and was recorded. Both questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Czech (in the period 2019–2020) to allow a more in-depth inquiry. The quotations used in the empirical part were translated into English by the authors of this study. Both questionnaires and interviews are quoted anonymously and referred to as Q1, Q2, I3, I4, etc. All data was coded in the NVivo programme and analysed in an open-coding procedure, i.e. the coding was led by data (Gibbs 2008: 61–62).

VI. Findings – case studies as an unequivocally positive instrument, but wait, how to systematically employ them really?

Most of the respondents (16) that completed the questionnaire had 6–20 years professional experience (as well as all interviewees), three more than 20 years and one less than five years. Sixteen respondents (and all interviewees) use CS

regularly, only four do not use them at all. Importantly, two respondents raised the objection that it was unclear to them how to understand what a case study actually was. This issue appeared to be of utmost relevance and hence was addressed during the interviews in more detail. It follows from the answers that all respondents tend to understand CS quite broadly as a specific or practical demonstration of an abstract or general issue which is embedded in a particular context and which can be used to draw broader conclusions and to point to similar issues (Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q12, Q17). Only exceptionally were CS understood as an elaborated interactive activity, e.g. a simulation (I4). Interviewee 1 in particular saw a difference between scholarly literature, where CS are perceived as a systematic and rigorous method, and teaching, where CS are used in a more flexible way as an example to demonstrate an issue (e.g. an EU policy) in detail and then to show how it fits into a broader context. In such a CS, a discussion of a reading and/or a list of questions can be employed (I1, I5, I7). However, there is agreement that a CS demands more than reading a text. As I9 suggests, CS are about analysing, finding possible solutions, proposing practical political decisions, writing policy papers, presenting ideas, getting feedback from the lecturer, etc. All in all, drawing on the typology by Harvard Business School mentioned above, the retrospective CS clearly prevails over the decision-forcing case. Moreover, employing Krain's (2010) typology of case learning, readings and texts designed for the case method are mostly used by Czech instructors, not other non-traditional and potentially more innovative tools.

Figure 1: Understanding of CS by Czech instructors



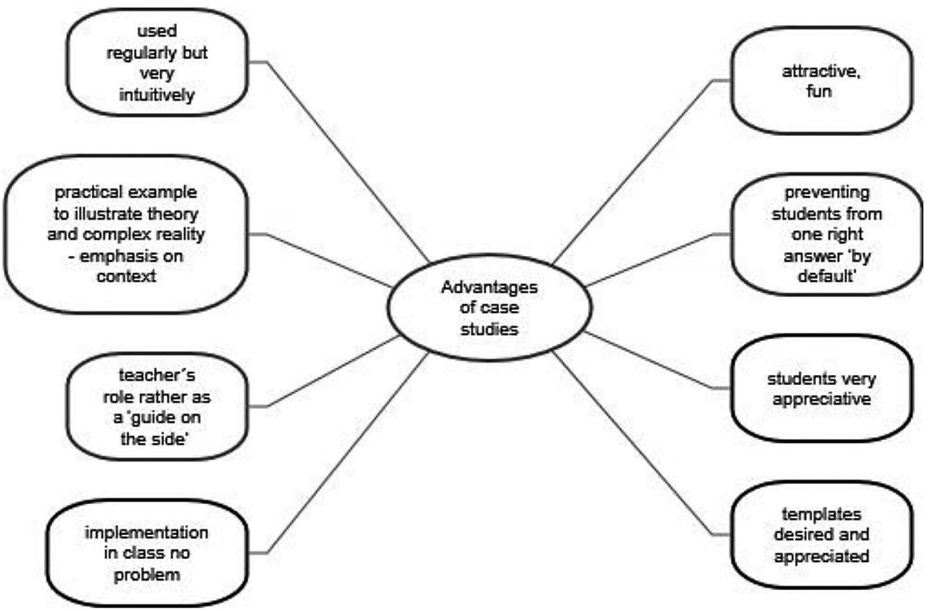
Source: Authors' own visualisation

Overall, there was agreement among the interviewees that they use CS regularly but very intuitively as a practical example to illustrate theory and reality (I2, I3, I6) with the emphasis on its context. This is crucial in the case of the EU, which is unique and complex (I3, I6). Such employment of CS was seen as useful or even necessary by all interviewees, as they acknowledged struggling with the dilemma that students are not willing to learn facts and tend to find the EU boring (I1, I8). The main aim of using CS seems to be to liven up the lectures and seminars; CS are perceived as attractive and fun, and they enable teachers to demonstrate how the EU works by using practical examples the students are familiar with, e.g. thanks to media coverage. As I5 suggested, it is easier for the students to digest a few examples first and to understand theoretical paradigms later, based on these. Thus, she proceeds inductively from practical working papers towards paradigms and conceptualisations. Last but not least, it was appreciated as the main advantage of CS that they prevent giving the students one right answer 'by default' but rather allow and motivate the students to search and find the right answers for themselves (I2, I4), which is also stressed extensively in the literature (Minniti et al. 2015: 373; Shulman 1992; Kowalski et al. 1990; Boehrer 1990, 1994; Greenwood – Parkay 1989). The teacher's role is seen rather as a 'guide on the side', as Golich et al. (2000) claim. This aspect, which was called 'peer instruction' by I2, seems to be a prominent characteristic of CS, as it makes them distinct from lectures and allows students to formulate their own attitudes and opinions, analyse multiple perspectives and overall, see a bigger picture (I2, I5). As I4 argued, students are often struck by the fact that the process of analysing CS might be more important than finding one right solution. This is supported by I6, who claims that students are often surprised that they are expected to create something on their own and to be inventive, as they are used to having a 'cookbook' for all potential cases. Also, I4 added that this was precisely what makes CS hard to evaluate, which might put off some lecturers from using them, as it is much easier to assess a 'standard' written test than how strong an argument is.

While the respondents not employing CS stated as the reason the demanding preparation and insufficient time in class during the semester, nobody indicated difficult implementation in class or the lack of interest of students. This is quite promising, particularly when taking into account that all but one respondent and interviewee were willing to implement more CS in their teaching if templates were available, since there is now a shortage of such templates. Most respondents state they would use them only when available for free. However, quite a few say they would also use them if they were subject to a charge. In line with Bonney (2015), no problem is seen if CS are prepared by unaffiliated instructors. However, drawing on the prevalence of Western-oriented materials available online, it may be useful to create CS representing European issues. If such templates for short and concise CS were prepared and made available,

their implementation in EU classes could be enhanced, even though it might be very difficult to keep them updated, as many interviewees observed (I2, I3, I8). Interestingly, the need to update lectures and particularly CS on the EU (e.g. as opposed to microeconomics) was accepted or even welcome by the lecturers, as it makes them follow the news and be constantly up to date (I1, I2, I5, I6, I7). Only sporadically was this perceived as a reason for dissatisfaction (I8).

Figure 2: Main advantages of CS in teaching



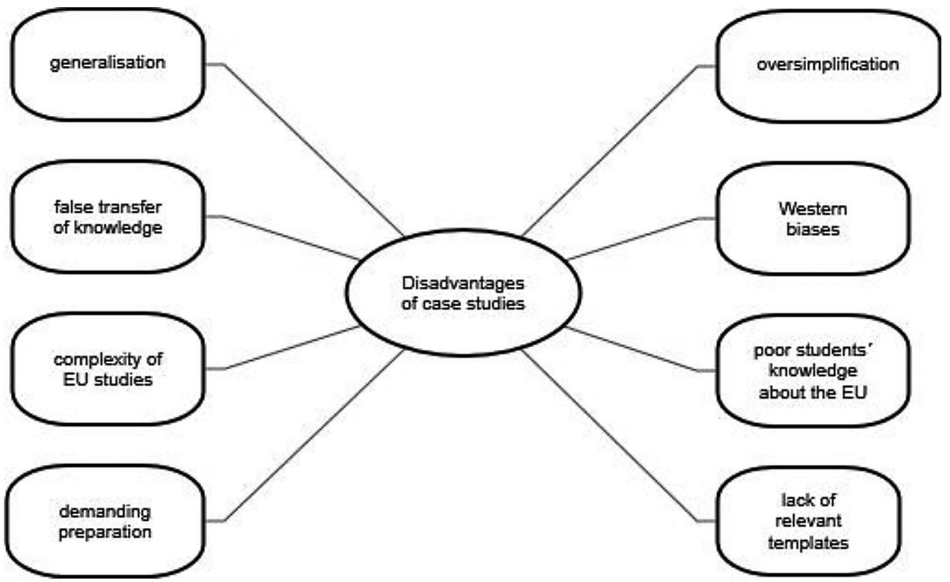
Source: Authors' own visualisation

Further inconveniences pertaining to CS seem to be their generalisation, possible oversimplification and false transfer of knowledge (Q5, Q10, Q12, Q17), which is fully in line with the risk of the omnipresent Western biases mentioned above. Moreover, many respondents and interviewees mentioned that EUS are very complex and interconnected with other disciplines, which makes them quite specific, e.g. when compared to marketing or management (Q1, Q2, Q7, I1).[2] This goes hand in hand with the fact that students' knowledge about the EU is often inadequately low in order for them to employ CS successfully and, hence, CS are more suitable for master students (Q10, Q11, I1, I3, I7). Also, there is an

2 Contrarily, about a half of respondents cannot see any specifics of EU studies regarding the implementation of CS (Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6).

agreement that students are not willing to spend much time preparing for the CS, so the preparation must be as simple and straightforward as possible (I1, I5, I6). Most interviewees send some readings and sources in advance but simultaneously try to spare some time to go through them during class to make sure all students are prepared for and able to participate in discussion (I2, I3, I5, I6).

Figure 3: Main disadvantages of CS in teaching



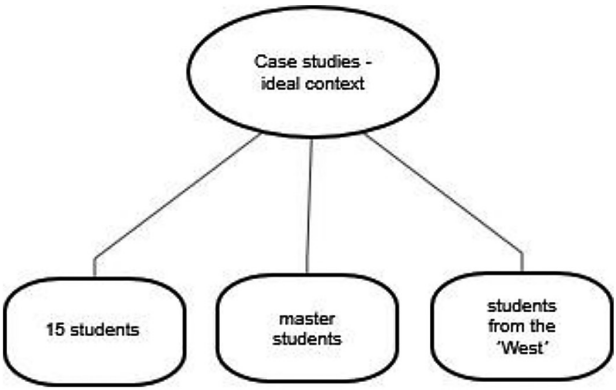
Source: Authors' own visualisation

Despite the unwillingness of students to devote time to preparing for CS, no respondents or interviewees noticed their lack of interest in and after the actual participation (if so, only as a general description of students' approach, not a specific of CS, as in Q5). According to the vast majority of respondents (13) and all interviewees, students perceive CS as positive and useful. This is in line with the fact that students tend to prefer inductive learning, using practical examples (see also I5 above) rather than logical reasoning starting from basic principles. It was also supported by the questionnaire disseminated by the Faculty of International Relations at Prague University of Economics and Business to all its alumni from 2016–2017. The 260 respondents highly appreciated CS as a teaching method and, simultaneously, demanded they were employed more in the curriculum (Prague University of Economics and Business, internal source of data 2020.

Apart from being beneficial to students, there is broad agreement that CS contribute to the growth of teachers themselves. Only a few respondents complained about the demanding preparation and employment of CS in class (Q15, I2), the need for them to be regularly updated and often unavailable literature (Q7, Q18, I8). Contrarily, a few respondents explicitly stated they could not see any disadvantages and could not imagine their teaching without CS (Q3, Q19, I7, I8). According to Levin (1995: 76), case discussions appear to be especially valuable for student teachers and beginning teachers because they can lead to clearer, more elaborated understandings about the issues in cases. However, it follows from our research that CS are also appreciated by more seasoned lecturers and their benefit seems to be even more universal. By and large, it follows from the answers that CS have many benefits for both students and teachers. Hence, promoting and strengthening their implementation seems to be desirable, which is also emphasised in the literature (Bonney 2015; Levin 1995; Shulman 1992). While CS are used effectively to teach students critical thinking and quantitative reasoning, teachers' gains are similarly important and CS can even increase their motivation for learning (Bonney 2015; Shulman 1992).

Regarding the size and composition of classes, most respondents and interviewees use CS in small classes of around 15 students, which also seems to be the ideal number, as it enables a face-to-face discussion but also prevents situations with no students willing to talk (I1, I2, I5, I6, I7, I8). Interestingly, a seminar-sized class does not seem to be a precondition, since a few respondents also employ CS in lectures (40–60 students). Most respondents agree that there are differences between undergraduate and graduate students as well as between Czech and exchange students. Specifically, master students' more advanced knowledge makes employing CS easier than at the bachelor's level of studies (Q3, I1). Exchange students especially from countries to the West of the Czech Republic tend to be more familiar with CS and sometimes even demand that they are used (Q3, Q19, I5, I7, I6, I8). Contrastingly, non-EU students tend not to be used to CS and might even struggle with basic knowledge about the EU (I6, I7). Also, Czech students, especially in bachelor's studies, must get used to them. Even though this usually happens very quickly (Q17, I6), it further stresses the fact that CS are especially employed (and produced) in 'the West' and that a more systematic employment of CS in the Czech Republic may help to overcome the division lines between the East and the West. In this vein, the Blended Intensive Programmes supported by the EU seem to be of utmost relevance as they combine students from at least three universities across Europe and enable interaction between students from different backgrounds (BIP Europe, n.d.).

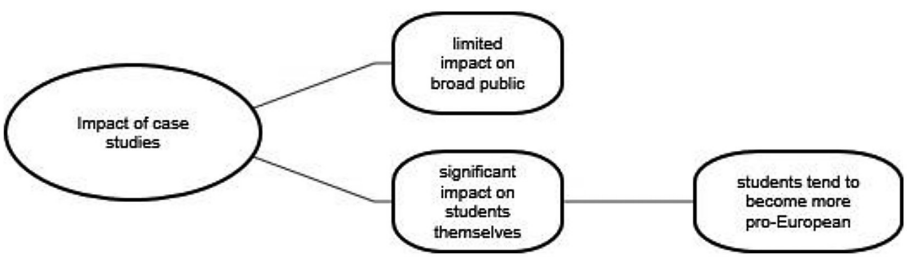
Figure 4: Ideal pre-conditions for CS teaching



Source: Authors' own visualisation

When asked about the consequences of teaching CS in EUS, most respondents are rather sceptical about their potential influence on the broader public (11 responses). However, about a third of respondents are optimistic and persuaded that if students understand the EU better thanks to the CS, they will be able to mediate the knowledge, and in the end, the awareness of the EU might improve (Q5, Q19). In the same vein, all interviewees are confident that after having completed a course on the EU, students tend to develop from rather euro-sceptic to more euro-realist or even pro-European. The reason is that they understand EU processes better and can see that the picture media and politicians offer is often very simplified and that it is not so easy to blame the EU for everything (I5, I6, I7). Although the respondents are cautious about claiming to what degree this can actually be attributed to CS as such, the method seems to be promising in terms of increasing the level of attractiveness of EU studies in the Czech Republic.

Figure 5: Impact of teaching CS in EUS



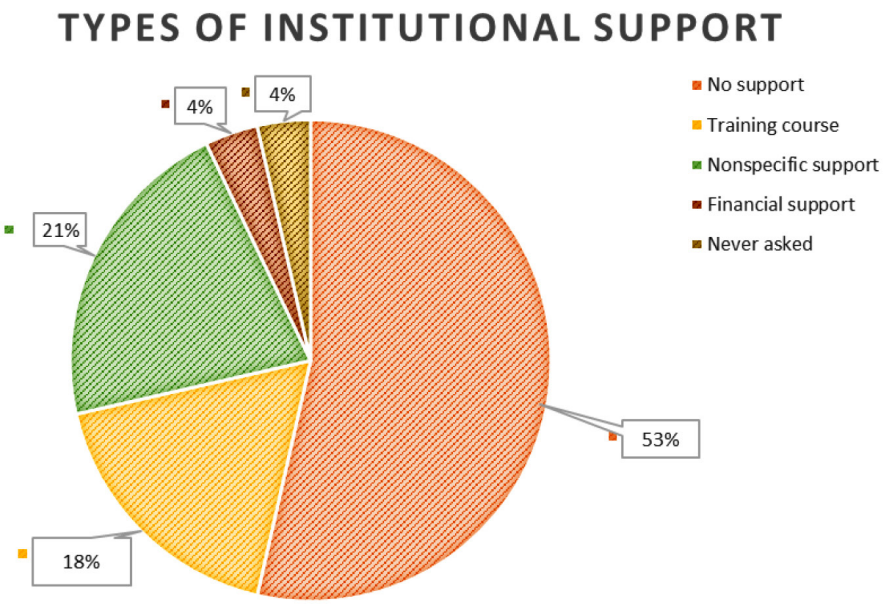
Source: Authors' own visualisation

The altogether positive perception of CS is quite interesting in light of the answers to questions pertaining to a broader context of implementing CS in teaching, as almost no respondents know whether CS are used at other Czech universities or whether they are popular abroad. Some respondents were downright surprised that they had never wondered about such questions (I4, I5, I6). Only exceptionally did respondents confirm the popularly held belief that teaching in the Czech Republic is rigid (OECD 2020) and not innovative enough to embrace CS (Q19), and that CS are most frequently used in the old six or nine EU member states (Q10). Also, many interviewees acknowledged that they had familiarised themselves with teaching CS in Western countries, not in the Czech Republic (I3, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8). By and large, the respondents are convinced that CS are useful, both for the students and for themselves as teachers. However, they do not see the bigger picture, which makes it difficult to say whether they can contribute to the positive development of EUS as a discipline and to balancing out the Western biases.

To sum up, the positive feedback from both students and teachers suggests an evident potential for using and promoting CS in EUS more intensely in the Czech Republic. While it is still perceived rather as a Western teaching method, its application to EUS in the member states may question the dominant narrative and show the complexity of studied cases in the classroom. Although serious risks have been mentioned if CS are not explained and justified sufficiently (leading to incorrect generalisations or simplifications), technical problems (a lack of time in class, time consuming preparation) do not seem to be a burden. Hence, we conclude that a more systematic introduction into the method is essential, both regarding teachers who already employ CS and those who do not. It follows from the questionnaires that about half of university departments already support the employment of CS. Five respondents were offered a training course (Q1, Q8, Q15, Q19, Q20), one was supported financially (Q13), in four cases the support was informal or within a broader framework of a development programme (Q5, Q7, Q17, Q3), one respondent admitted she never asked (Q4), and in eight cases no support was stated (Q2, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q14, Q16, Q18).[3] The interviewees were even more sceptical, as all of them agreed that they only employ CS intuitively and on their own without any systematic support, which would otherwise be very appreciated. This suggests that the possibilities for further support for teaching CS are abundant.

3 Q9 did not answer the question.

Figure 6: Forms of supporting CS teaching



Source: Authors' own visualisation

VII. Teaching with the case study method in EU studies – main remarks

Based on the research analysis, one of the most important steps is to clarify how the case study should look and what the expectations of students and teachers are while it is used. This step seems to be essential, as many of the respondents from the survey had quite a vague understanding of CS design. An assumption shared by all was that 'it is not a "case study" of the type used in academic research'. This being said, there are several outcomes of the research analysis that help us to draft the key elements of CS design.

First, the structure should be simple and clear. The teaching cases provide information, but neither analysis nor conclusions. Therefore, this leads us to the assumption that a CS combines two basic elements: the case itself and the discussion of that case. The case as such is prepared by a teacher/instructor. The analytical work of explaining the relationships among events in the case, identifying options, evaluating choices and predicting the effects of actions is the work done by students during the classroom discussion (SERC, n.d.; results of the survey).

Second, the content matters. Case studies are narratives that contain information and invite analysis. They are usually based on real events but can be drawn from both the present and the past. Cases require students to make choices about what theory or concepts to apply in conducting the analysis. They provide a rich contextual way to introduce new material and create opportunities for students to apply the material they have just learnt. In classroom discussion, students analyse the information in the case and use it to solve the problem set up by the case (SERC, n.d.). According to respondents, the content of an EU CS should concentrate on current events, which seems to be more interesting to students. Such cases are often suitable for discussion, but the facilitation of these discussions may be difficult, as these events have an open end or do not lead to clear solutions. Many topics in EUS also tend to be multidimensional or require knowledge from different fields: political science, law, economics, etc. All these limitations should be considered while preparing a CS. At the same time, they should be seen as a value added of the CS teaching method specifically designed for the EU, as it enables students to grasp the phenomenon in its complexity.

Third, the role of the teacher is key in the preparation of cases and the facilitation of discussion. The instructor prepares the case. The preparation phase is particularly important, but also requires the instructor's time and skills. This part may be very demanding, but as Bonney (2015) showed in his study, this option should not be a fundamental obstacle for instructors who do not have enough time or skills to prepare it. The option to download a prepared CS from a website or to use a template may be equally suitable. Currently, a few of them are already published online or in textbooks (Georgetown University). However, they are mostly tailor-made for the US environment, and thus difficult to be transferred elsewhere. But this is exactly where the CS prepared by teachers from the region may be beneficial and help to overcome these barriers, as it forces its applicants to search for different perceptions and understandings. The role of the instructor is later diminished, as s/he plays the role of a guide, conductor or facilitator, drawing attention to their role in setting up discussion in which students are the primary participants.

Fourth, the adaptation of the case to the particular class is essential. Very small classes can pose particular challenges in generating sufficient participation, focusing attention or producing the diverse viewpoints that make discussion rich. According to respondents' answers, the ideal number would be 15–20 students, but some of the CS may also be organised during lectures. It seems that the case method is more suitable for master students, as their level of knowledge is often higher than in the case of students of bachelor's programmes. A mixture of students from different countries can also be an added value. Students must also be motivated to prepare the case in advance. This phase is crucial for further analysis and discussion during the class and should be encouraged

by the instructor/teacher (points or other evaluation tools could be used). An example of an EU case study and a possible scenario of its implementation is placed in the appendix of this article.

VIII. Conclusion

The article explored the way in which CS are used as a teaching method in courses focused on EU topics. The literature on the use of CS in general is rather widespread, but it focuses more on CS implemented in research, and much less on CS used as a teaching tool. The CS as a didactical method has been implemented slowly into teaching since the 1920s, but has concentrated rather on specific cases in IR, natural sciences or management, marketing and psychology.

In general, the authors who evaluate the usage of the CS teaching method refer to several positive advantages. The findings reveal a positive correlation between student perceptions of case relevance and student motivation. It favours the development of the cognitive skills of instructors as well as of students through analysis, synthesis and judgment, encouraging them to be active protagonists in the learning process. It also shows that the case study teaching method is more effective at promoting the perception of learning gains. It is particularly useful for promoting the perceived development of written and oral communication skills and for demonstrating connections between theoretical topics and real-world issues and their applications.

While taking these positive aspects into consideration, it must be noted that even more recent publications often do not include EUS and if they do, they are primarily published by Western authors and designed for American or Western audiences. The topics linked to EUS may be of ambiguous nature due to their constant evolvement as well as their complexity. Despite these limitations, or possibly because of the challenges, the usage of CS in teaching EUS may be of great value if we use the method carefully respecting the perceptions from diverse environments. Primarily, learning about Europe by providing local perspectives and thus avoiding the spread of dominant narratives can enable us to develop dialogue between different contexts. Such case assignments enable students to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon of the EU by themselves and in the interaction with each other. It is thus a significant feature that could be valuable in countries where the EU as a discipline has been established only recently or is struggling due to the lack of interest from the students.

The general findings from surveys (i.e. Bonney) and literature were confirmed by Czech instructors who use CS in their classes. Their promotion thus seems to be reasonable, particularly due to the positive feedback both from students (Prague University survey) and teachers themselves. While students particularly appreciate the practical value added of CS, teachers employ them to demonstrate the EU in its complexity, which is otherwise very difficult and potentially tedious.

Of course, the disadvantages of CS must be taken into account, but the Czech lecturers seemed to be aware of them. This being said, the survey also showed how little the respondents know and think about CS in a broader context. Indeed, it seems that the majority of Czech instructors employ CS only intuitively. Hence, there is space for greater systematic preparation and possibly for case study templates and samples that can be shared by instructors, as each teaching tool is only as good as its implementation and adaptation to a particular class. Sharing and spreading more knowledge on how to employ, adjust and fully use the potential of CS in a specific institutional setting seems to be key at Czech universities. That is why we focus on these steps in the last section of our article, with a sample CS including a lesson plan in the Appendix. Overall, we do believe that CS have great potential to enrich the current state of EUS as a discipline in the Czech Republic as well as to help increase the fading attractiveness of EU studies, particularly if the Western bias is addressed carefully.

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Appendix

Template lesson plan including a CS: a potential reform of the Dublin regulation

Teachers' instructions

Drawing on our findings, the following case study was prepared. It represents an open-ended real-world problem-solving case, including role-play in teams to make it more attractive to students. The topic of asylum policy in the EU was selected, as it is both relevant and controversial and hence, suitable for discussion. Also, it clearly shows the difference in perceiving the EU and particularly the issue of burden-sharing in the central and in the peripheral member states. Specifically, it could contribute to a better understanding of the EU asylum system, which is often reduced to the quota/relocation system in Central European countries, including the Czech Republic. On the other hand, it could shed light on the concept of flexible solidarity, which is preferred to sharing the refugees in the peripheral countries but heavily criticised by the centre. Identifying the pros and cons of the system and demonstrating its complexity could help reconcile its perception both in the 'centre' and in the 'periphery'.

In particular, it is assumed both students and teachers are familiar with the basic information about the asylum system in the EU and with the events following the peak of incoming refugees to the EU in 2015. Hence, it should be relatively easy for the teachers to lead the discussion and for the students to prepare for it. To make the debate as specific as possible, the reform of the Dublin system will be analysed.* The teacher will either provide basic information about the principles of the Dublin regulation, particularly about the 'first country of entry' and 'one asylum request only' principles, during the lecture preceding the discussion of the case study. Alternatively, the students can read about this on their own as homework. This part is essential, especially if the course is dedicated to undergraduates and non-EU students, who are expected to have less knowledge about the EU.

The main task in class is to discuss the potential reform of the Dublin system which has been frequently debated both at the EU and national levels since 2015. The document 'Alternatives to Dublin' (pp. 53–68) can be used as a starting point in which various options for the future of the Dublin system are introduced. Students are supposed to argue which option is most acceptable for the member state they represent. The arguments must include economic, legal, political and socio-cultural aspects to demonstrate that the issue at stake is very complex and not black-and-white, as it might seem from how national governments argue. The students can choose whether they want to represent the current government or opposition in the respective countries.

The selected case is based on real events and is open-ended, which allows for a lively discussion in which students can both employ their knowledge and engage their personal opinions. Also, the discussion will enable them to follow the current

* Alternatively, the Dublin system can be replaced by another reform if the students' sheet and readings are amended accordingly.

negotiations more closely and actively. When interpreting the stances of the country they represent, they can assess which IR and integration theories they are most compatible with and compare across cases – what arguments of the countries are repeated most often, what countries represent a rather mainstream position, which needs might be difficult to accommodate, etc.

Time demands:
- readings: 60–90 minutes (depending on how much the students know about the topic; it could also be done in class);
- preparing positions in groups: ca. 90 minutes (using the questions in the sheet);
- CS in class: 90 minutes/one seminar (60 minutes for answering the questions from the sheet + 30 minutes for a wrap up).

As the adaptation of the case to the particular class is essential and the structure should be simple and clear, we suggest the following tips:
- depending on how big the group of students is:

Number of students in class	Groups	Tasks
Fewer than 8	2 groups – one in favour of the quota/relocation system (e.g. Germany), one in favour of flexible solidarity (e.g. Slovakia)	Discuss specifics about each of the systems, argue how and why it is better for the country you represent, see whether there are different stances and opinions among the political actors in each country
9–12	3 groups – see above + one group representing the EU (e.g. Ursula von der Leyen)	Discuss specifics about each of the systems, argue how and why it is better for the country you represent, the EU representatives should try to accommodate the needs of both countries and find a compromise
More than 13	Groups representing member states with differing interests, at least 3 students in each group (e.g. Germany, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Sweden, France, the Czech Republic, Spain) + one group representing the EU (e.g. Ursula von der Leyen)	Discuss specifics about each of the systems, argue how and why it is better for the country you represent, the EU representatives should try to accommodate the needs of both countries and find a compromise

- if possible, take advantage of the students' nationalities, it might be easier for them to speak for their own country;
- if possible, at least 2–3 students per group to eliminate the students who are too shy to speak;
- allow students to form their own groups to facilitate their feeling comfortable;
- if there is a representative of the EU, this group introduces the main possible reform approaches to the Dublin regulation, if not, the teacher does this instead; the 'host' manages the discussion, i.e. makes sure nobody talks for too long and gives floor to those who are supposed to speak, additional/clarification questions can be asked if needed.

If there is time left, it is possible to add one group representing an NGO protecting the human rights of refugees and/or discuss how the issue has been presented by the media in all respective countries. Does the media coverage do justice to the complexity of the topic? Is it well-balanced or rather one-sided and subjective? What aspects are mostly paid attention to? Why do you think this is the case?

The teacher should remind the students not to talk for too long so that it is easier to stay focused. The students should get the questions in their sheet (below) in advance and use them to prepare for discussion (60 minutes).

As a wrap up (30 minutes) to make sure the 'aha-effect' takes place, the teacher should:

- thank all students for participating in the case study
- summarise the positions of all selected member states (and the EU) as presented by the students: What are the main disagreements? Are they to be found rather between 'the North' and 'the South' or between 'the West' and 'the East'?
- evaluate how students managed to introduce and justify their positions
- ask students what new/surprising issues they have learnt
- ask students whether they personally agree with the position of 'their' member state
- ask students which of the potential Dublin reforms they prefer and why
- ask students what group did the best job at justifying their opinion and why, and how were the arguments presented and what made them convincing.

The goal is both to sum up the main (empirical and theoretical) points discussed during class so that the students are familiar with them and to emphasise what argumentation strategies are most convincing and effective and why, which is also an important added value of the case study, i.e. both content and form are essential to pay attention to.

Last but not least, it is possible to reflect on the case study in the final assessment, e.g. by suggesting the issue as an essay topic in the final test or asking the students to elaborate on it as a short policy paper or a poster (also to motivate all students to participate in the CS actively and take notes). Alternatively, at the beginning of the semester, the students can select a member state (or an EU representative) which they will use in all case studies throughout the classes and/or share information on this actor regarding all discussed topics with other students. As a final requirement, a short policy paper or poster can be submitted explaining/justifying the overall position of this actor in the EU or focusing on one of the debated case studies in more detail.

Students' sheet

1) **Homework before the seminar:**
   - if you are not familiar with the Dublin system, search for basic information about it (e.g. using the links in the list of references)
   - find the EC webpage and search for the most up-to-date information about the Dublin system reform (e.g. using the links in the list of references)
   - create groups, each group is to represent one member state according to the table below:
     - *a suitable row from the table above to be inserted here by the teacher, e.g. if there are 8 students, as follows:*

Groups	Tasks
2 groups – one in favour of the quota/relocation system (e.g. Germany), one in favour of flexible solidarity (e.g. Slovakia)	Discuss specifics about each of the systems, argue how and why it is better for the country you represent, see whether there are different stances and opinions among the political actors in each country

2) **In class:**

The following aspects will be discussed, each question is answered by all member states separately and then, the next one is approached. Prepare your answers in advance, by taking notes, creating a short power point presentation or a simple poster.

1. Is the reform of the Dublin regulation necessary or is your member state content with the status quo – why?
2. How should the reform look (or why not if your country is opposed to any reform):
   a) asylum seekers free to choose the country of asylum application;
   b) first country of entry principle remains but when a country is overburdened, the asylum seekers are to be relocated
      i. if so, how does the relocation proceed? see the document Parusel and Schneider (2017, p. 53ff);
   c) first country of entry principle remains but when a country is overburdened, flexible solidarity principle is applied, i.e. a member state decides whether it will accept asylum seekers or pay instead? see the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (link below).
3. What are the main political/legal/economic/socio-cultural pros and cons (such as public opinion regarding migration and asylum, upcoming elections vs the topic of refugees, public security vs human rights, border protection, refugees of each approach and how are they reflected in your respective member state?

List of references

Reports and papers

- Alternatives to Dublin (p. 53–68)
  - https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519234/IPOL_STU(2015)519234_EN.pdf
- Briefing of the European Parliament (overview)
  - https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586639/EPRS_BRI(2016)586639_EN.pdf
- How to calculate the relocation system (p. 53–58)
  - Bernd Parusel and Jan Schneider (2017): Reforming the Common European Asylum System: Responsibility-sharing and the harmonisation of asylum outcomes. Delmi rapport 2017:9 ISBN 978-91-88021-25-0
- New Pact on Migration and Asylum
  - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1601287338054&uri=COM%3A2020%3A609%3AFIN

(sheet continue on the next page)

EC websites

- basic information
  - https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en
  - https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-jd-revision-of-the-dublin-regulation
  - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_1620
  - https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586639/EPRS_BRI(2016)586639_EN.pdf
- broader context
  - https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/ceas-reform/
- current developments
  - https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/opinion/why-are-we-not-reforming-the-dublin-regulation-yet/; https://euobserver.com/migration/147511)**

** The links are to be updated by the teacher regularly.

Long torn by ill fate? Wounded collective identity in light of a survey in Hungary[1]

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Abstract: *The primary aim of the paper is to explore the relationship between the trauma-focused self-description of Hungarian history and other factors such as sense of regional betweenness, memory, well-being or even the respondent's personality (sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, political orientation, religiosity). In the current study, network analysis is used to explore the elective affinities between the above-mentioned variables. This method – rather than focusing on linear relationships – concentrates on interactions and feedback loops to better understand this social phenomenon. Our results show that the outlined factors form a coherent and highly stable belief system that can only be changed by significant influences.*

Keywords: ***historical trauma, collective identity, narrative, network analysis***

I. Introduction

There have been countless attempts to understand the specificities of the Hungarian culture and society. These approaches can be divided into two main (ideal)types. The first type includes those that explain the specificities of the Hungarian society in terms of various structural factors. Some argue (cf. György 2019; Human Development Report 2020) that national specificities can be best

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2 Dávid Kollár's work was supported by the ÚNKP-21-3 New National Excellence program of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation fund.

described in terms of various macroeconomic indicators (GDP, income, inequality), while others suggest that it is geography and closely related geopolitical characteristics that are the most definitive (cf. Szűcs – Parti 1983). Still others believe that the characteristics of the institutional structure are decisive (cf. Győrffy 2018), and there are also those who consider the 'modus operandi' of political leadership to be the most dominant (cf. Bibó 2012; Karácsony 2019; Győrffy 2020). In contrast, the other strand of approaches dealing with the 'characteristics' of the Hungarian society tries to capture the specificities of the Hungarian society through cultural factors. In this case, some argue that the socialist past is the most significant factor (cf. Kollár 2014; Magyar – Madlovics 2020; László – Bauer 2021; Bozóki 2022), others emphasise the lack of civic culture (cf. Bódy – Kovács 2006; Tölgyessy 2016), while some have seen or see the characteristics of Hungarian society in general national character traits (cf. Szekfű 2007; Hunyady 2003; Ladányi 2015). In addition to these, although intrinsically linked to the national character approach, there are also scholars who see collective traumas 'built on' historical contingencies (e.g. the 1848 and 1956 revolutions, Trianon) as the most defining (Csepeli 2013; Mészáros – Vámos – Szabó 2017; Máté-Tóth – Nagy – Szilárdi 2020). The most recent and most systematically implemented 'manifestation' of this – last – approach is András Máté-Tóth's theory of *Wounded Collective Identity* (Máté-Tóth 2019, 2020; Balassa – Máté-Tóth 2022), according to which one of the primary characteristics of Hungary (and the CEE region in general) is a self-description focused on traumas (Balassa – Máté-Tóth 2022).

This model, as we have just suggested, interprets the processes in Hungary in the broader context of the specificities of the Central and Eastern European region, and builds primarily on the insight that 'many authors describe the collective social identity of the region as a whole by emphasizing threat and traumatization, and shows their presence and regional significance in the different societies of the region, in historical events and in their interpretation specific to the region' (Máté-Tóth – Szilárdi 2022: 30). This sense of collective threat, according to the theory of wounded collective identity, is at least partly due to the geocultural and geopolitical ('betweenness') position of the region. In other words, the fact that the Central and Eastern European region is located on the border between the Eastern and Western spheres of interest and that, as a consequence, 'the majority of the countries in the region experienced the alternating domination of Western and Eastern hegemonies during the nineteenth and even more so during the twentieth century' (Máté-Tóth 2022; see also Bibó 2012; Szűcs – Parti 1983; Huntington 1996) has contributed significantly to the trauma-focused self-description of the region's societies.[3] This kind of regional

3 In relation to Hungary's position, classical (Hankisset et al. 1982) and more recent sociological research on values (Füstös – Tárnok 2013; Tóth 2017) have also come to similar conclusions. As István György

traumatisation becomes crucial not only at the micro level of family memory, but also at the macro level of social institutions, because of the events strongly linked to the repeated changes in state sovereignty, the two World Wars and their consequences, and the fundamental uncertainty of national autonomy and state sovereignty. The institutionalisation of these historical traumas in Hungary is particularly evident in the country's dominant literary works (the National Anthem,[4] the National Song), in national holidays (the 1848 or 1956 revolutions) and in the school events that symbolically revive them every year.

All of this suggests that, although the theory of wounded collective identity draws heavily on national character approaches, it goes 'beyond' them in two respects. On the one hand, – at least according to the authors of these lines – instead of a general metaphysical grounding of national traits, it sees collective 'wounds' as language games (Wittgenstein 1973) or narratives framing (Lakoff – Johnson 2003) historical contingencies. This approach builds on the premise that the world, or indeed 'Hungarianness', can be narrated in myriad different – sometimes radically different, but equally valid ways (Rorty 1994; Goodman 1978; Kollár et al. 2019; Kollár – Stefkovics 2021). While these narratives are significantly aligned with specific historical experiences, they nevertheless offer a significant role for different interpretations. On the other hand, instead of monocausal – reductionist – models, which (more or less) try to attribute the characteristics of the Hungarian society to a single factor, the wounded collective identity (WCI) approach focuses on the interactions between different elements. The model of wounded collective identity, modified on the basis of empirical research, includes, in addition to narratives focusing on historical trauma, perceptions of regional betweenness, social memory, personality (sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, political orientation, religiosity) and well-being expectations. As Máté-Tóth and Balassa (2022: 72) note, 'the sense of collective woundedness' can be considered an almost universal phenomenon in Hungarian society. "Especially for those who perceive the country's position as vulnerable, who tend to favor an authoritarian leadership style, who are religious, and who attach importance to state commemorations of historical events' (Máté-Tóth – Balassa 2022: 72).

Although these results are significant and confirm the theoretical assumptions, they capture identification with the trauma-focused national narrative (woundedness) as a dependent variable, and they do not take into account that we are not talking about linear causal relationships between the compo-

Tóth notes, 'Hungary is located on the world value map in roughly the same place as its geographical location predestines it to be (i.e. on the edge of Western culture, near the Balkan and Orthodox worlds)' (Tóth 2017: 38)

4 That these results are not only specific to Hungary is confirmed by the fact that a comprehensive analysis of the region's anthems shows that in other countries, too, expressions such as 'Long torn by ill fate' are frequently found (Kiss 2011).

nents identified in the theoretical model, but about interactions between the individual factors. For example, sympathy for authoritarian personality traits is clearly not in itself a cause of woundedness, just as woundedness alone does not make someone live in an unfavourable life situation. Therefore, in line with the original model's aims, in the present study we investigate the interactions between the different factors. In other words, in line with the theoretical approaches presented, we assume that there are strong (mutually reinforcing) relationships between the different variables in the WCI model. On the other hand, we believe that this causal network of relationships is fundamentally influenced by the perception of historical trauma.

II. The wounded collective identity as a network of elective affinities

The concept of elective affinity (Weber 2020) provides an excellent framework for understanding the above outlined possible interactions. The term itself originates from chemistry and, simply put, describes the attraction or repulsion of different elements towards each other, i.e. the process by which elements with different qualitative properties create new compounds (McKinnon 2010; Kollár 2021). The earliest – significant – use of the concept in the humanities was by David Hume. Hume used the term to capture the interactions between parts of the mind (cf. Demeter 2016, 2022). Contrary to mechanical approaches, in Hume's model the 'attraction' between different elements is only some kind of 'gentle force' (Hume 1976: 34; Demeter 2016, 2022), not a universal and insurmountable law like gravity' (Kollár 1998: 30; Hume 2007: 12). Hence, the relationships between different elements are highly sensitive to the specific, heterogeneous qualitative nature of each factor (Demeter 2022).

Hume thus derives the workings of mental processes not 'from first principles and the interaction of homogeneous corpuscles, but from the internal activity of matter, the interactions of heterogeneous qualitative features' (Kampis 2017: 2). This endeavour – and the concept of elective affinity itself – was considered crucial in the field of social sciences in Max Weber's oeuvre (Kollár 2021; McKinnon 2010). Weber used the concept to describe 'sociochemical' reactions, in which new qualities, emergent patterns, are created through the 'mixture' of elements with different qualitative properties, which go beyond the inherent specificity of each element (McKinnon 2010; Kollár 2021). The best-known example of this is 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' (2012), in which Weber shows how different religious doctrines and narratives can influence factors with different qualities, such as economic practices. However, Weber has also applied the elective affinities approach to a wide variety of other phenomena, such as the interaction between different religious doctrines and other ideas, or the congruence between certain ideas and social classes (Weber

1970; Jost – Federico – Napier 2009). In all these cases, elective affinity describes a kind of usability relation (cf. Kollár 2021). The 'purpose' of the pre-modern capitalist economic practice, for example, is clearly not to be a field for the fulfilment of an ascetic vocational ethic. However, due to its specific qualitative properties (e.g. simple quantification of the success of work in the world) it is explicitly useful (acceptable) for this purpose (cf. Kollár 2021; Kollár – Kollár 2020). This kind of usability relation can be illustrated explicitly through a less abstract example. The functions of a window include, for example (cf. Ludlow 1976), letting in sunlight and air (open window), reducing external noise and temperature loss (closed window). Engineers, interior architects and designers optimise windows along these functions: for example, they develop more efficient insulation techniques. Clearly, windows – or the professionals who design and optimise them – are not intended to promote suicide. Nevertheless, a well-opening window is particularly useful when one wants to commit suicide. The affinities between the factors identified in the (WCI) model under study can be explained in a similar way. Meaning that, for example, for those who identify with a national narrative that focuses on historical traumas authoritarian personality traits can be particularly useful. If we believe that it is the destiny of Hungarians to continue their unbroken struggle in the world in the face of historical adversity, then we need a strong leader to lead the way in times of despair. As already suggested by Max Weber (1980: 661), periods of – psychological, political or economic – trauma provides favourable conditions for a charismatic leader, who has authoritarian personality traits to gain support (Hidas 2018: 187; cf. Győrffy – Martin 2022; Körösényi 2019).

III. Methodology: quantification of elective affinities

Quantifying these kinds of – qualitative – relations is not a simple task. However, the most suitable approaches for these type of analysis are agent-based modelling and network analysis. While the former focuses on how collective structures emerge through interactions at the micro level (Kollár D. 2021; Macal – North 2006; Lineras 2018: 29), the latter focuses on the interactions and feedback loops between individual agents rather than on the linear descriptions of relations (Dalege et al. 2016).

In the present study, given the data available, we apply the latter approach and attempt to interpret the elective affinities between the factors defined in the WCI model as an attitude network. Network analysis has rarely been used in the past to investigate the interactions between attitudes. The primary reason for this is that the main goal of traditional approaches has been to reduce different factors to a single latent attitude. This type of procedure is based on the assumption that particular attitudes are (causally) reducible to other more general attitudes. In contrast, the network theory approach argues that

different attitudes cannot be traced back to a single 'generic' entity, but that the interactions between different attitudes determine the explicit form of the attitude network. Accordingly, certain attitudes are more 'usable' for other attitudes, but this usability relation can be fundamentally influenced by other factors, other attitudes. This is well illustrated by what has been said before: for someone who believes that his country belongs nowhere, a narrative focusing on historical trauma is particularly useful, and the reverse is also true. Conversely, someone with a strong European identity is unlikely to have a strong elective affinity with a sense of regional betweenness. To empirically capture this insight, Dalege et al. (2016) developed the Causal Attitude Network (CAN) model, which combines the study of attitudes with network theory (Dalege et al., 2016). The CAN model 'conceptualizes attitudes and ideologies not as entities based on a common cause, but rather as networks in which measurable evaluative reactions represent nodes that are causally connected through edges' (cf. Schlicht-Schmälzle – Chykina – Schmälzle 2018: 4; Dalege et al 2016). In other words, the primary aim of the approach is to capture the interactions between different factors as a causal network in which the elective affinities between the individual elements become tangible.

In line with this, in our paper we use the Causal Attitude Network method to explore the dynamics of the elective affinities between the components of the WCI model. This approach thus allows, on the one hand, the exploration of the interactions between the different components and, on the other hand, the identification of central factors that have a decisive influence on the dynamics of the relationships between the network components.

Data collection and variables

The empirical analysis is based on a survey of 1,000 respondents conducted by the Századvég Foundation in May 2021, and is representative of the Hungarian adult population by gender, age group, highest level of education and type of settlement. The questionnaire included a total of thirteen statements[5] capturing an aspect of the Wounded Collective Identity Model, each of which asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a statement on a four-point Likert scale.[6] We also included an additional dimension in our analysis, measuring the sense of agency. The rationale for this is that currents research has shown a significant (negative) relationship between individuals' trauma-focused self-descriptions and their experience of agency (Mohat et al. 2014; Beste 2007; Veronese et al. 2019; Ataria 2015). This was conceptualised

5 For descriptive statistics, see Appendix 1.

6 In formulating the individual statements, we have drawn heavily on the empirical study by Máté-Tóth and Balassa (2022).

through two variables. The average inter-item correlations[7] were above 0.2 for all dimensions. This means that the internal reliability of the scales is satisfactory. In addition, we used two additional factors in line with the theoretical model: one measuring the respondent's religiosity[8] and the other measuring the respondent's political orientation.[9]

Table 1: Variables and dimensions used for analysis

Hungarians are considered secondary citizens in the EU.	Failure	Trauma-focused narratives
Hungary is in a powerless position in world politics.		
Hungarians always choose the side that loses in the end.		
Hungarians are constantly fighting for their independence.	Narratives focusing on historical traumas.	
Hungarian culture must be protected from foreign influences.		
Society must remember the tragedies of our history.		
The vicissitudes of history have forged the Hungarians into a strong nation.		
Hungarians have unjustly suffered a lot throughout history.		
My family has suffered directly from the hardships of history.	Memory	Memory
Strict rules mold people into good members of society.	Sympathy for authoritarian personality traits	Sympathy for authoritarian personality traits
Children need to be disciplined in order to build character		
Hungary does not really belong either to the West or to the East.	Perception of regional betweenness.	Perception of regional betweenness
Overall, how satisfied are you with your current life?	Well-being	Well-being
How religious do you consider yourself to be on a 7-point scale, with 1 being irreligious and 7 being religious?	Religiosity	Personality
I control my life, it's up to me how it goes.	Sense of Agency	
Adversity doesn't break the dynamic that drives me towards my goals.		
Which of the following would you identify yourself as? 1. Left-wing 2. Centre 3. Right-wing	Political orientation	

7 The 'traditional' reliability tests (Cronbach's alpha) are particularly sensitive to the number of items constituting each dimension, which is why for short scales it is more appropriate to look at the average inter-item correlation (Pallant 2016). For the average inter-item correlation, the optimal range is between 0.2 and 0.4, according to the classic paper by Briggs and Cheek (1986).

8 How religious do you consider yourself to be on a 7-point scale, with 1 being irreligious and 7 being religious?

9 Which of the following would you identify yourself as? 1. Left-wing 2. Centre 3. Right-wing

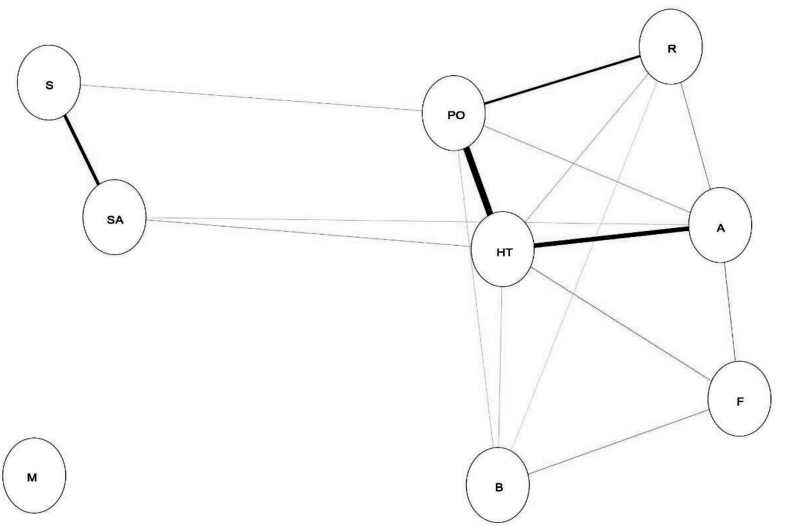
The network model was developed in three steps. In the first step, latent variables were constructed along each dimension by principal component analysis. Factor values greater than 0.1 were assigned a value of one and values less than 0.1 were assigned a value of zero. Then, in a third step, we created the weights using the IsingFit function of the R program package qgraph (cf. Dalege et al 2016; van Borkulo et al. 2014). The IsingFit function runs an n-number logistic regression model, where each variable is regressed iteratively on the other variables. That is, each variable (node) is regressed by the other eight remaining variables. The weights are thus the logistic regression parameters between the two variables, obtained by controlling for all other variables.

Results

General network topology

The network of factors in the WCI model is illustrated in Figure 1. It shows that eight of the nine components are linked to the network and that the memory factor is the only one that does not play a role. After excluding the latter and re-running the model, we see a highly integrated network. There is a positive relationship between the different elements, showing that the various components of the WCI model are mutually 'reinforcing'. The most marked elective affinity is between political orientation and self-description focusing on histori-

Figure 1: General network topology



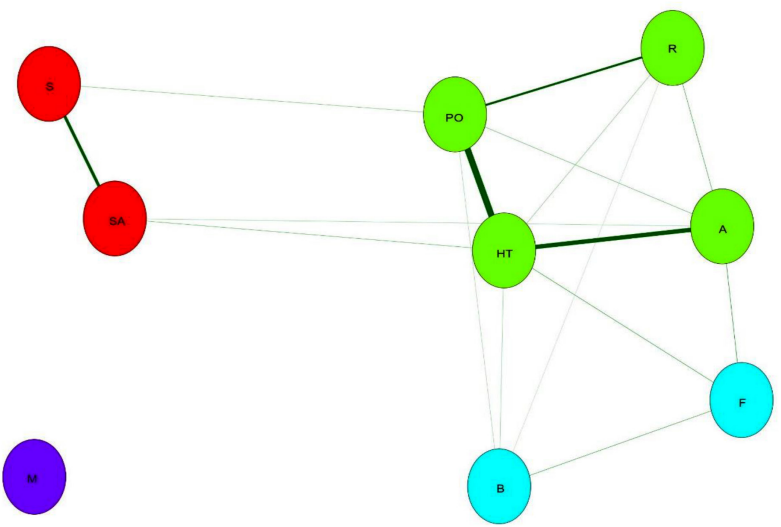
S – Satisfaction, SA – Sense of Agency, M – Memory, PO – Political orientation, R – Religiosity, HT – Narrative focusing on historical trauma, A – Sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, F – Failure, B – Perception of regional betweenness

cal traumas, and between the latter and sympathy for authoritarian personality traits. However, there is also a significant relationship between religiosity and political orientation. Similarly, there is a strong interaction between agency and life satisfaction.

This suggests that the two sets of variables (1. agency and satisfaction; 2. politics, narratives focusing on historical trauma and sympathy for authoritarian personality traits) essentially represent two distinct clusters. That is, in these cases, we observe dense and strong relationships between the individual variables (nodes). To verify this hypothesis, we performed a cluster analysis using the Walktrap function of the igraph package (Pons – Latapy 2005), which finally both confirmed and nuanced our hypothesis. The procedure resulted in three clusters. The first cluster (red) consists of the variables of agency and satisfaction. The second cluster (green) is constituted by political orientation, narrative focusing on historical traumas, sympathy for authoritarian personality traits and religiosity. Finally, the third cluster includes indicators of betweenness and failure.

Looking at the 'bridges' between the clusters (Figure 3), the 'red' cluster is linked to the 'green' cluster in three ways. On the one hand, we observe an elective affinity between political orientation and life satisfaction, while on the other hand, the agency indicator is linked to the historical trauma and sympathy for authoritarian personality traits variables. Similarly, the 'blue' cluster's failure index interacts with the historical traumas narrative and sympathy

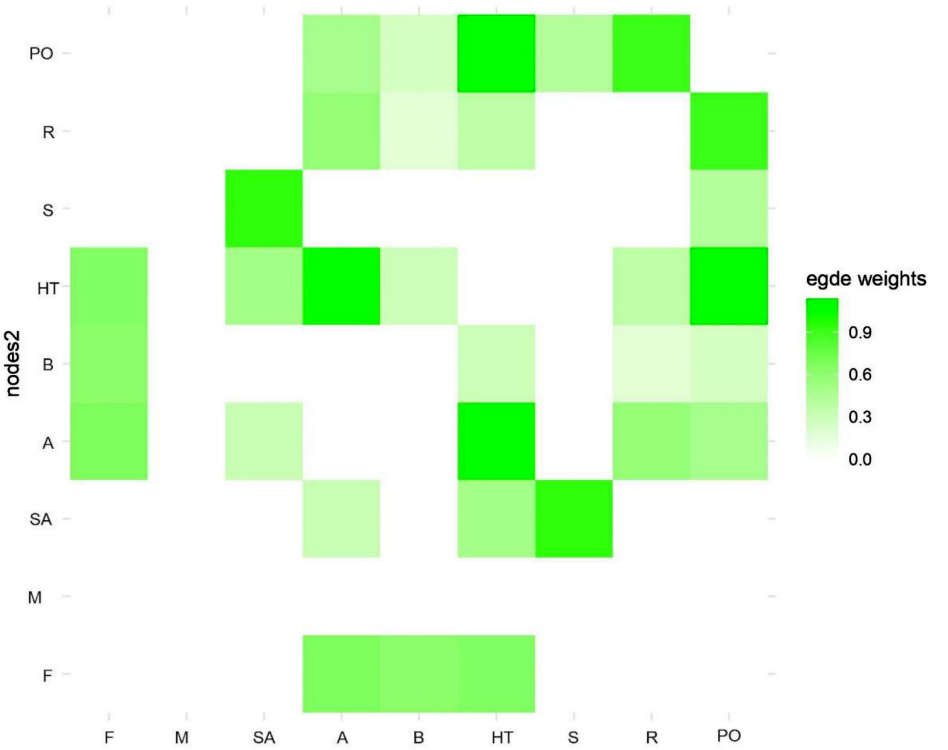
Figure 2: Clusters



S – Satisfaction, SA – Sense of Agency, M – Memory, PO – Political orientation, R – Religiosity, HT – Narrative focusing on historical trauma, A – Sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, F – Failure, B – Perception of regional betweenness

for authoritarian personality traits variables, and the betweenness indicator shows affinity with the historical trauma narrative, political orientation and religiosity variables.

Figure 3: Heatmap



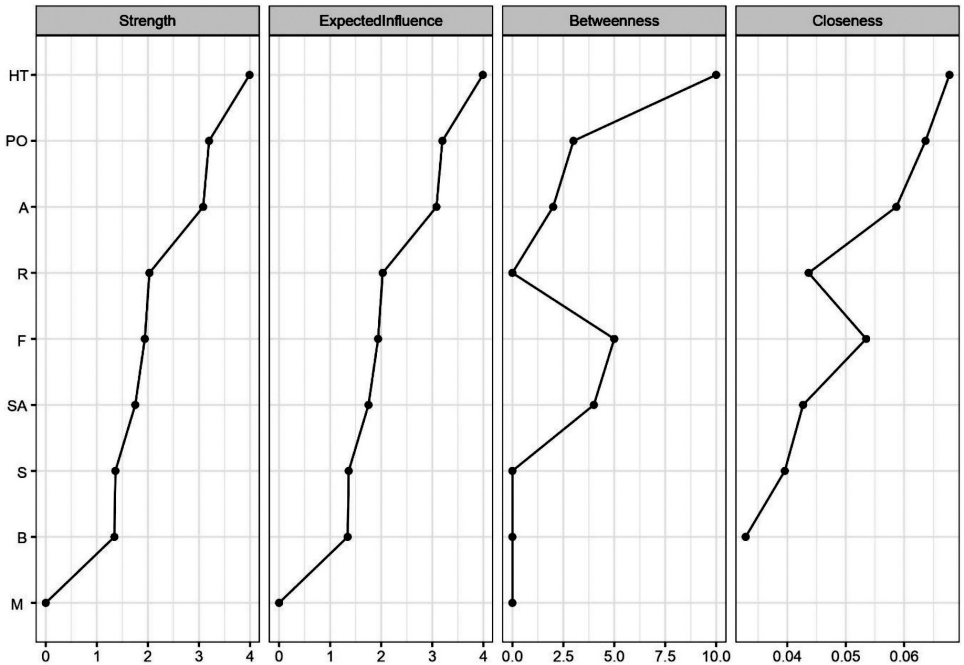
S – Satisfaction, SA – Sense of Agency, M – Memory, PO – Political orientation, R – Religiosity, HT – Narrative focusing on historical trauma, A – Sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, F – Failure, B – Perception of regional betweenness

Centrality analysis and network dynamics

After exploring the general topology of the network, we also examined which variables occupy a central position in the network. In other words, which factors have the most influence on the 'information flow', i.e. which variables have the most significant impact on the network. The three most commonly used indicators for measuring this are strength, closeness and betweenness. The strength is the sum of the edges that are directly related to a given node (variable). In other words, this indicator describes how much direct influence a given node has on the network. Closeness expresses the inverse of the shortest path length between a given node (variable) and all other nodes in the network (Dalege et

al 2016; Schlicht-Schmälzle – Chykina – Schmälzle 2018). So, closeness is an indicator of the probability that information from a given node will 'travel' directly or indirectly through the entire network. Finally, betweenness describes how strongly a given node can influence the flow of information in the network (Dalege et al 2016).

Figure 4: Centrality metrics



S – Satisfaction, SA – Sense of Agency, M – Memory, PO – Political orientation, R – Religiosity, HT – Narrative focusing on historical trauma, A – Sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, F – Failure, B – Perception of regional betweenness

Based on the relevant metrics, self-description focusing on historical traumas has the greatest impact in the network, followed by political orientation for all three metrics. In other words, the interactions between the individual factors – the elective affinities between the variables – are most remarkably influenced by these factors. Thus, it is historical trauma-focused narratives and political orientation that frame the usability relations between the other factors (Lakoff – Johnson 1980; Lakoff 2002).

IV. Discussion

In our paper, we explore how the self-description of the Hungarian society, focusing on historical traumas, is related to other variables such as sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, sense of regional betweenness, religiosity, memory, political preferences, life satisfaction and agency. The results show that the most marked elective affinities are between political orientation and historical trauma-focused narratives, and between the latter (historical trauma-focused narratives) and sympathy for authoritarian personality traits. Moreover, there is also a significant relationship between religiosity and political orientation. As mentioned earlier, the trauma-focused narrative is particularly well suited to make a person favour authoritarian personality traits to (and vice versa). The relationship between political orientation and historical trauma-focused narrative can be explained in a similar way. Indeed, dominant political rhetoric relies heavily on the postmodernised use of romantic (Bojtár 2015) 'horror stories' (Kollár – Kollár 2017), and it is particularly useful to have an elective affinity for the narrative of historical trauma. The link between religiosity and political orientation is also not surprising. The plasticity of right-wing rhetoric is created precisely by the specific reuse (exaptation) of messianic tone. Obviously, this in turn creates a useful medium for the spread of religious ‚memes'.[10] These results therefore fit in very well with the theoretical assumptions.

In contrast, a somewhat surprising result is the positive relationship between the sense of agency and the historical trauma narrative. That is, those who identify more with the historical trauma-focused national narrative report higher levels of agency. Although the literature on trauma would suggest the opposite sign (Mohat et al. 2014; Ladányi 2015; Beste 2007; Veronese et al. 2019; Ataria 2015), it is possible that rhetoric of the governing party reframes these traumas in a way that also increases the sense of agency among those who are receptive of it. To test this hypothesis, we looked at how this correlation changes when we examine the relationship between the two variables disaggregated by political preferences.

Table 2: Correlation between commitment to a narrative focusing on historical trauma and the sense of agency

Political orientation	Correlation
Left-wing	0,01
Centre	0,22**
Right-wing	0,36**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

10 This is not to say, of course, that religiosity is necessarily a right-wing characteristic, merely that right--wing rhetoric in the Hungarian context is a fertile – and usable – medium for religious narratives.

The results show that while there is no association for those who identify themselves as left-wing, there is a significant degree of correlation for those who identify themselves as right-wing. All this seems to confirm that the narrative of the governing party is able to enhance the experience of agency by rewriting collective historical trauma (cf. Denham 2008). As Kollár and Kollár argued (2017), one of the dominant narratives of the Hungarian political discourse states that although 'there are many dangers for Hungarians, history has chosen Hungarians, and especially their leader, not only to save their people from „evil", but also to show the way to the world as a patron' (Kollár – Kollár 2017). In other words, this narrative reframes a national history based on collective trauma in such a way that the agents are elevated to heroic figures who have significant roles to play in defending not only the nation but also Europe. The metaphorical 'struggle for freedom' against international elite groups, Brussels or even George Soros (cf. Jenne 2021; Visnovitz – Jenne 2021; Jenne et al. 2022) thus represents a kind of ontological therapy for those who show affinity with it.

V. Conclusion

In our study, we have mapped the relationship between the self-description of the Hungarian society focusing on historical traumas and other variables such as sympathy for authoritarian personality traits, sense of regional betweenness, religiosity, memory, political preferences, life satisfaction and sense of agency. Our results suggest that the attitudes outlined in the WCI model are closely interrelated and form an essentially coherent set of beliefs, based on interactions and feedback loops.

Dalege et al. (2016) and Schmälzle et al. (2018) argue that 'in highly connected networks, the attitudes are more stable and difficult to change, which requires more persuasive force since the strongly related evaluative reactions keep each other in place' (Schmälzle et al. 2018: 7). This suggests that the factors in the WCI model form a highly stable belief system that can only change in response to significant 'interventions'.

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Appendix – Descriptive statistics

ITEM	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
HUNGARIANS ARE CONSIDERED SECONDARY CITIZENS IN THE EU.	2,58	1,19
HUNGARY IS IN A POWERLESS POSITION IN WORLD POLITICS.	2,91	1,02
HUNGARIANS ALWAYS CHOOSE THE SIDE THAT LOSES IN THE END.	2,62	1,05
HUNGARIANS ARE CONSTANTLY FIGHTING FOR THEIR INDEPENDENCE.	2,91	1,01
HUNGARIAN CULTURE MUST BE PROTECTED FROM FOREIGN INFLUENCES.	3,33	0,96
SOCIETY MUST REMEMBER THE TRAGEDIES OF OUR HISTORY.	3,60	0,68
THE VICISSITUDES OF HISTORY HAVE FORGED THE HUNGARIANS INTO A STRONG NATION.	2,82	1,06
HUNGARIANS HAVE UNJUSTLY SUFFERED A LOT THROUGHOUT HISTORY.	3,29	0,88
MY FAMILY HAS SUFFERED DIRECTLY FROM THE HARDSHIPS OF HISTORY.	2,66	1,15
STRICT RULES MOLD PEOPLE INTO GOOD MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.	2,91	1,00
CHILDREN NEED TO BE DISCIPLINED IN ORDER TO BUILD CHARACTER	3,45	0,79
HUNGARY DOES NOT REALLY BELONG EITHER TO THE WEST OR TO THE EAST.	2,89	1,05
OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR CURRENT LIFE?	3,20	0,83
I CONTROL MY LIFE, IT'S UP TO ME HOW IT GOES.	3,46	0,75
ADVERSITY DOESN'T BREAK THE DYNAMIC THAT DRIVES ME TOWARDS MY GOALS.	3,30	0,85
HOW RELIGIOUS DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE ON A 7-POINT SCALE, WITH 1 BEING IRRELIGIOUS AND 7 BEING RELIGIOUS?	4,06	2,14
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS? 1. LEFT-WING 2. CENTRE 3. RIGHT-WING	2,21	0,69

Hungary's Pragmatic Diplomacy in the Age of Détente: The Case of the African Opening between 1956 and 1970

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Abstract: *Following the change of the political systems that swept across the former Soviet Bloc region toward the end of the 1980s, it was obvious for the ex-satellite states that they would direct the major (re)orientation in their foreign policies towards the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Since the 2010s, every country of the ex-Communist Bloc, including the Russian Federation itself, has fostered pragmatic foreign policies with African regions and states. To be able to understand present-day Hungary's recently enhanced engagements with the African continent, as well as making sense of its governmental 'Africa Strategy' of April 2019, this paper proposes to offer a general and historical analysis of changing geopolitical landscapes and foreign policies – towards Africa in the Age of Détente, between 1956 and 1970.*

Keywords: ***Hungary's foreign policy, détente, Africa, Soviet diplomacy, Cold War***

I. Introduction

A large number of scholars have undertaken the task of analysing the era of Hungarian foreign politics between 1945 and 1989. And yet, among the adaptations and approaches, up to this day the attention directed towards African countries in the period of Hungarian foreign policy détente – especially in the era following the 1960s – has been lacking or appeared with an insignificant emphasis (Tarrósy 2018).

This paper aims to offer an in-depth historiographical analysis of an African centred foreign policy of the volume in Hungary during the 1960s and

1970s. First, we draw a broad picture about the context of limitations before the 1960s, then we will demonstrate how Hungary led the way in improving trade, economic and diplomatic relations with numerous partners across Africa. Second, Hungary's special place and status in the Soviet Bloc before and after Stalin's death, and the country's attempts to break out of the status quo of international isolation, are presented. Third, we provide a further discussion at length about the Kádár-led government's achievements in creating a new pragmatic, well-thought-out foreign policy in Africa (Solymári – Tarrósy 2022). Finally, with rich Hungarian archival sources, we point out the most important cases of the different pioneering Hungarian Africa-related diplomatic efforts.

II. Theoretical Assumptions and Methodological Considerations

The paper investigates Hungarian foreign policy in the period of the Cold War (Békés 2022: 150) with the help of a complex theoretical framework including political realism with a focus on the realities of power politics as the ultimate goal in the international system (Carr 1939). Also, structural realism is offering here the ground not only to shed light on the foreign policies of states, but also on the international system as such (Waltz 1995). In connection with this paper, structural realism has a particular relevance, as John Mearsheimer found, since with no regard to the international affairs, nations should pursue their own and ideological interests (Mearsheimer 2019). Ideological cooperation, in line with the Soviet foreign policy, during the détente, the time of late Cold War, was strongly associated with cooperation and national parochialism as pragmatic 'state' interest (O'Riordan, 2022: 308). It seems also useful that Nye's (2011) power theory, which encapsulates a broad(er) definition of power for states not only as an instrument of survival, but also 'the ability to alter others' behaviour to produce preferred outcomes' (Nye 2011: 10). For Hungary's consolidation efforts after the 1956 revolution (especially from 1962, after the 'Hungarian Question'), for instance, can be better understood from all these angles, and the aim of this paper from a foreign policy perspective is to specify the context to be able to 'tell us who gets what, how, where, and when' (Ibid: 7) revealing the intentions of the different actors and their power relations.

In this paper problem-oriented historical analysis helped to understand, with particular regard to John Lukacs's approach, what opportunities the historical actor (the acting agent) was facing, what it has chosen and why. In addition, the research presented in this work draws upon Gilpin's state-centric position, underscoring that: 'states must be continually attentive to changes in power relations and the consequences for their own national interests of shifts in the international balance of power' (Gilpin 2001: 19). This will be especially significant in light of the setup of the bipolar world and Hungary's re-imagined national interests again after the events of 1956.

The paper uses a number of methodological approaches, amongst which historiographical research draws the initial major framework. This is coupled with a two-year archival work, which covers formerly secret or previously unresearched foreign policy documents, governmental reports or minutes from the National Archives of Hungary and from the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Desk research and a critical review of connecting literature are complemented by several pieces of the printed press of the age. The paper derives from a doctoral dissertation research, which centres around the opening of the Hungarian diplomacy towards Africa in the age of Cold War.

III. Lack of Diplomatic Sources on Africa before 1945

This paper reveals the traces of the 'African connection' in Hungarian foreign policy. We began to take a quick look for evidence about African relations in Hungarian foreign policy chronologically starting from 1918 when the modern, independent Hungarian foreign service was born, and the first laws regarding it were adopted. We mainly worked with primary and archival sources and used the announcements, minutes and notes of the respective Hungarian ministries of foreign affairs. The Imperial and Royal Foreign Ministry (the so-called Common Foreign Ministry of Austria-Hungary) did not have an official journal (except the *Yearbook of the Imperial and Royal Foreign Ministry*, published annually from 1911 to 1917, which typically contained protocolary and consulate information). In the years following World War I and the disintegration of the Monarchy, one month after the Treaty of Trianon entered into force, a decree was passed on 26 August 1921 about that, and like other newly established ministries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to issue an official journal. Only from 1921, therefore, was the institutional system for the internal flow of information (bulletins, daily reports and instructions on archiving these) established. In 1939, the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published papers and documents relating to the foreign relations of Hungary (*Pièces et documents relatifs aux rapports internationaux de la Hongrie*, in retrospect and reflecting on the Trianon peace treaty), these contained all the foreign correspondence of the period between 1919 and 1921 in a monograph. In 1921, the Decree no. 9925/1-192 established the *Foreign Affairs Journal*, which contained 'the decrees issued by the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its subordinate authorities, and other relevant information for the public', announcements, and news about appointments and recalls. Information for the journal was provided by both the local departments and foreign missions. The journal's last issue, the second issue of Volume 24, was published on 11 April 1944. In 1929, the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched its *World Factbook*, which contained factual, rather catalogue-like information about each state. In addition to these sources, we also mined the *Foreign Yearbook*, which had only two issues in 1941 and 1942.

The official foreign journal, which was relaunched in 1968 as the *Hungarian Foreign Policy Yearbook*, contained the country's international relations and foreign policy activities monographically. The last printed version of this journal came out in 2010, and between 2011 and 2013, three more electronic issues were published. After that, however, this gap-filling, summative source material ceased to exist. Another primary source for this research was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' internal, non-public collection of documents (minutes and notes) on all aspects of the relations between Hungary and foreign countries, as well as on the internal situations and international relations of foreign countries, which have been partially published in edited form, but their segments concerning Africa are only available in the Hungarian National Archives.

In the 1920s, the first mentions about Africa were typically of only a consular nature: information on the extent of the African consular jurisdictions in the Hungarian Royal Embassies, Consulates General, and Honorary Consulates in Europe, and notifications on visa fees. Its significance lie in the fact that Hungarian travellers, researchers and explorers had vital African connections and regularly visited some areas of the continent. Diplomatic documents and emissary reports on Africa that were produced in the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1936 and 1945 focused on the preliminaries and developments of World War II with a few specific exceptions such as aspects of the Hungarian-Egyptian relations which we will mention later (Ádám 1962: 78). It is impossible to paint a complete picture based on these documents, because during Hungary's German occupation on 19 March 1944 some of the documents and registers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were destroyed or carried into the West. Many things, including some of the Hungarian National Archives' records, were destroyed during Budapest's bombing in April 1944. Therefore, many 'blank spots' exist in the remaining documents. Although important sources of contemporary history remain extant, they are unfortunately insignificant regarding the Hungarian foreign policy's opening to Africa.

IV. Striving for an Independent Hungarian Foreign Policy until 1945

First, we give a brief overview of the modern history of Hungarian foreign policy focusing on how Hungarian diplomacy sought and shaped its independence, with an eye on the context in which Hungarian-African relations are embedded. The significance of this background consists in its support of our premise that for a long time, Hungarian foreign policy remained in a completely dependent situation, and in such conditions, forming the country's independent Africa-policy had no possible chance to be realised. As a result, for an extensive period the Hungarian foreign apparatus could not even dream about exhibiting an independent latitude. The first traces of Hungarian diplomatic and political connections with Africa go back as late as the 1950s. Although Hungarian travellers

also played vital parts in reporting on interior Africa as an addition to other relevant international expeditions' coverages, official diplomatic connections came to life quite late.[1] Opening political channels with Africa seemed to be lagging behind these expeditions, but it would be a mistake to think that this was due to political indifference. A country's Africa policy is affected among other reasons by a major requisite: whether or not an independent foreign policy exists, one that provides the incumbent government with the capacity to freely set up priorities and work out strategies. From a historical perspective, looking at Hungarian foreign policy from the 18th–19th century to the present day, we can see that this room for policymaking was granted for only short periods of time. In fact, Hungary has typically been in dependent, subordinate, vulnerable positions since the end of the reign of Matthias Corvinus (1490) until the first free parliamentary elections in 1990.

Hungarian foreign policy generally lacked independence since before the time during which the concept of the modern states was born (i.e. the Westphalian sovereignty concept) up until recently. A continuous loss of positions, political and economic weight described this 500-year period. Hungary could not pursue its own foreign policy, except for some short periods during the two revolutions and – to some extent – during the age of the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary (1867–1918). Limitations and no room for manoeuvring described Hungarian foreign policy that was determined by a perpetual struggle for more independence for a very long time. After the Ottoman occupation, Hungary became a part of the Habsburg Empire (1711). This great power of the time considered Hungary as a legally separate but conquered state. Although it was not fully incorporated into the Empire (since it possessed certain political freedoms), it did not have an independent foreign policy (Herczegh 1987: 197–205). Even though the Hungarian Parliament insisted on having Hungarians among the top-ranking officers of Habsburg foreign services, all they could achieve was that Hungarians could become envoys (albeit important ones) of the Austrian Emperor (Horváth 1941: 391).

In 1848, the Habsburg Empire teetered on the verge of collapse. The Hungarian reformists strived for independence, while others wanted to remain within a supranational framework. Although there were numerous talented Hungarian diplomats as a result of foreign studies and positions in the preceding years, such as Pál Esterházy or Antal Apponyi, the Hungarian ruling elite did not have a clear and uniform vision about the country's foreign policy. After dethroning the Habsburgs, complete Hungarian independence became the focal point of

1 Among others, *Sámuel Teleki* (1845–1916) was a Hungarian explorer who led the first expedition to Northern Kenya. He was the first European to see Lake Rudolf (Lake Turkana). *Kálmán Kittenberger* was also a Hungarian traveller, natural historian, biologist and collector. He made six travels to Africa. *István Czimmermann* and *László Menyhárth* were Hungarian Jesuit Missionaries in East Africa in the Zambezi area. All these were pioneer travellers and Africanists.

Hungarian politics (with Kázmér Batthyány, Hungary's first minister of foreign affairs, playing a leading role), which they planned to stabilise through bilateral relations. However, despite some promising results, the Hungarian War of Independence failed, and the Hungarian reformist elite (with Lajos Kossuth as a critical figure) was forced to join the diplomatic theatre as exiles from abroad. The hope of an independent country vanished once again.

After losing the war against Prussia, Austria had to come to terms with Hungary: the Compromise of 1867 established the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, in which the two sides practised certain state functions through common ministries. During this so-called dualist era, internal and fiscal policies were independent, but the Monarchy had a unified foreign policy. In 1867, the Imperial and Royal Ministry of Foreign affairs was established, led by a common foreign minister. Between 1867 and 1918, the Monarchy had eleven common foreign ministers, out of which three were ethnic Hungarians (Győri Szabó 2011: 16–21). According to the quota of the 1867 Compromise, initially 26 percent (later 32 percent) of the foreign service's staff had to be Hungarian citizens.

The Monarchy was dissolved in 1918 and Hungary gained full sovereignty. The independent Hungarian foreign service was established, which 'shall see to all foreign affairs of the country independently', according to Act V of 1918 (Hungarian Law-Lex 1918. V). The era of Hungary's modern, independent foreign policy began at that time. Following World War I and the Paris Peace Conference, Hungarian foreign policy's attention revolved around the country's new borders: Hungary lost most of its territories, so the national focus was on the revision of the peace treaty. Other goals of foreign policy could not gain momentum. By 1930, however, Hungarian diplomacy, which was on its own, reorganised foreign affairs administration (a new ministry of foreign affairs was established) and foreign affairs training. A vast network of embassies was established across the continent, but now with representations outside Europe, too. On the African continent, an embassy in Egypt was established as the first substantial territorial achievement. In the interwar period, the country became isolated, and its international relations diminished to a minimum. As in the nineteenth century, it could only send envoys but could not establish embassies. The search for allies was done through secret diplomacy: the great powers and neutral states did not take the risk of discrediting themselves in the international space openly with a state from the losing side. Thus, the room for manoeuvring in foreign affairs had narrowed again. To alleviate this isolation, Hungary joined the League of Nations in 1922, which allowed for more dynamics in its foreign relations. However, despite all stabilisation and neutralisation efforts, Hungary was drifting towards World War II (after the Great Depression) and eventually entered into the war in 1941. Then, the post-war coalition period put Hungarian foreign policy on a fixed path again: the country's administration

was overseen by the Allied Control Council (ACC), and the Soviet leadership of the ACC decided on foreign affairs and new diplomatic relations. Hungary lost its independence yet again.

V. Foreign Policy Mindset in the Soviet Bloc

In order to properly understand the place and significance of the opening towards Africa (and in general, towards the so-called Third World) in the Post World War II Hungarian diplomacy, it is necessary to know the status quo that had formed in Eastern-Central Europe, as well as the political and foreign political way of thinking in the Eastern Bloc. This short historic segment aims at clarifying the peculiar geopolitical structure and political manner of operation during this period. In the following, we present an overview of those key events after 1945, and specifically, the post-1956 foreign politics from a Hungarian perspective, which led Hungarian diplomacy in Africa's direction.

In the bipolar world that had emerged through the dominance of the United States and the Soviet Union, the two superpowers of the age, a sphere of influence arose in which Hungary was reduced to a part of the thus established Soviet sphere, a quasi-Soviet member republic. As Yordanov also noticed 'The Soviet Union's presence attracted the watchful eye of the local regime and its Western representatives' (Yordanov 2016: 224). A sovereign Hungarian policy defined along independent interests and goals was not possible; our foreign policy was in all cases determined by belonging to Moscow and the Soviet sphere of influence. In this peculiar 'bloc policy', goals of national economy, culture and politics could only appear on a very limited plane, the goals professed by the new organisations of cooperation that had formed after 1945 (such as the Cominform, the Comecon, and later the Warsaw Pact) and set by Moscow, took precedence.

Between 1945 and 1955 during the Communist takeover, the country's foreign policy became fundamentally transformed. By the end of 1948, Hungary, like the entire region, became part of the Soviet sphere of influence, sinking to the level of a Soviet satellite. At the inaugural meeting of the Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties) in 1947, Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov outlined the dual worldview of the new power: an aggressive, warmongering imperialist bloc vs. a peaceful, democratic, socialist bloc (Délmagyarország 1953: 1–2). Hungary was Sovietised at a stormy pace: the parliamentary system as well as the multi-party system ceased to exist, a one-party-based dictatorship was established, and the diplomatic space was clearly closed. Stalin became the ultimate leader of foreign policy, controlling each satellite country's state-party secretary generals through the foreign affairs department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

By that time, Hungary's foreign political latitude had been completely narrowed down: Mátyás Rákosi, general secretary of the Hungarian Communist

Party, and later chairman of the Council of Ministers, Hungary's de facto leader between 1947 and 1956, subjected it to Moscow's will and intentions in every aspect. As Békési states it, 'From the documents researchable at present, a markedly initiative-taking Rákosi-profile emerges, just as if it were attempting to live up to the earlier slogan, "Rákosi is Stalin's best Hungarian apprentice"' (Békés 2021: 17). In Hungary, Mátyás Rákosi, secretary-general, later chairman of the Council of Ministers in the People's Republic of Hungary, and Ernő Gerő managed 'Hungarian foreign policy'. Rákosi, Gerő, as well as the foreign ministers Károly Kiss and later János Boldóczki, set out to perfectly implement the directives of Soviet foreign policy: 'The Soviet Union, supported by the entire Socialist Bloc, reaps successes of world-historic significance with the national liberation movement. Where the last remnants of former colonial empires collapse, the new Asia is rising. The national liberation movement's African march of triumph continues' (Khrushchev 1963: 43). In this aspect, Rákosi was considered a proactive politician: as a result of his scholarship-funded study tours in his younger years, he spoke several languages, English included, with which he stood out from among the region's Communist leaders. He wished to be an accurate executor of Zhdanov's two-camp policy as a response to the Truman Doctrine, which divided the world in two: with the imperialist forces, led by the United States, on the one side, and the promoters of peace directed by Moscow, on the other side. 'We will go all out for continuing to successfully fight for protecting peace, to strengthen the front of those who build Socialism, to thwart the imperialists' plans, so we can solidly maintain the line of the peace front, which the Hungarian Working People's Party, and the Hungarian national democracy, is dedicated to defend', as Rákosi put it (Rákosi 1951: 214). Hungarian foreign politics and the diplomatic leadership also lined up accordingly: no sovereign foreign service, no proper diplomacy, mainly the execution of the orders assigned from Moscow. The system and network of Stalinism provided the international framework of reference in terms of foreign affairs: the Hungarian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (1948) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), and later the so-called 'collective defence treaty' of European socialist countries, that is: the Warsaw Pact (1955). The events of the Cold War narrowed down the diplomatic leeway for Hungary even more: the possibility of travelling abroad was eliminated or reduced to a minimum (it was difficult or impossible to obtain a passport enabling travel to the West), sending letters was also limited; the country's foreign relations became hostile and conflicted with countries beyond the Iron Curtain.

Embassies and diplomatic missions in the West only had formal functions, if any. Nonetheless, certain foreign economic relations intensified by the 1950s: Hungarian foreign policy, which among the 'third world countries' turned primarily towards the Middle East, China, South America and Japan, sought

new partners and bilateral agreements. The period can be considered a new opening, one of the most significant diplomatic steps of which was Hungary recognising (among the first few countries) the People's Republic of China and reopening its embassy in Beijing in 1949. However, as Stalin refused to recognise the newly independent former colonial countries, Africa's opening could not yet begin.

VI. From Stalinism to Self-Management

In the closed and secluded politics of the Soviet Bloc's countries during the 1950s, it was Stalin's death in March 1953 that we consider as the beginning of détente – even though, as Békés states, the newest researches indicate that this détente had started earlier, in order to invigorate the economies depleted as a result of military and defence-related expenses, and replenish the vast shortage (Békés 2019: 76–99). One of the outstanding examples for a self-management effort took place in Yugoslavia, but this effort affected all the other countries of the bloc, with a varying dynamic. Milovan Djilas, a trendsetting Communist ideologue and later critic phrased this as follows in his work *The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class*: 'I discovered many new ideas and, most interesting of all, ideas about a future society in which the immediate producers, through free association, would themselves make the decisions regarding production and distribution – would, in effect, run their own lives and their own future' (Djilas 1991: 95). In accordance with the bloc's countries, Hungary proceeded with a more open and initiative-taking foreign policy from 1953 (Békés 2022: 150). This policy, however, did not give rise to ground-breaking results, notwithstanding the significant historic fact that in December 1955, our country became a UN member. The programme of new, vital policy-making that was launched upon Soviet initiative was 'formalised' in 1954 in Berlin, during the Four-Power Conference of foreign ministers, and then in the course of the Geneva Convention on the subsequent Korean and Indochinese Wars, which can be considered as an important part in the policy of the Cold War. 'The doctrine of active foreign politics that was announced in the spring of 1954 – simultaneously with launching the Four-power Conference of Foreign Ministers in Berlin – was directly aimed at enhancing the Allies' international presentability. From this time on, Moscow encouraged its allies to use their enhanced international authority – (to be) acquired by means of the Soviets' help – as effectively as possible to strengthen the Eastern Bloc's authority and influence in international politics' (Békés 2019: 91). In this period, the Eastern and Western Bloc's countries began establishing contacts with one another, one after the other, including the United States and the UN. Nikita Khrushchev, as first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and later president of the Ministerial Council, opened up towards the Third World, diverging from Stalinist foreign politics, expanding and strengthening the

Non-Aligned Movement of non-committed countries. During the 1955 Bandung Conference, Dasa Sila ('Principles of Peaceful Coexistence') was announced; this foreign policy progressed along both a pragmatic and an ideological course (Tarrósy 2006). As Khrushchev put it in his writing 'On Peaceful Coexistence', published in the October 1959 issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "The principle of peaceful coexistence demands... that the countries' political and economic relations must be put on a basis of complete equality and mutual advantage.... We have always held, and continue to hold, that the establishment of a new social system in one or another country is the internal affair of the peoples" (Khrushchev, 1960: 340–460). In Hungary, for a period of time, the revolution that broke out in 1956 interrupted this dynamising process of opening outwards. As a result of the revolution's bloody suppression, our country with its Sovietised leadership fell into a 'diplomatic quarantine', a massive isolation in international space. On an American initiative, the UN started discussing the circumstances of Soviet military intervention, referred to as the 'Hungarian Question'; in this period, bilateral Hungarian relations were reduced to a minimum. The 'diplomatic embargo' – which lasted until December 1962 – began to thaw as a result of the agreement between János Kádár, general secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and chairman of the Council of Ministers, de facto leader of Hungary, and the United States. By the 1960s, the earlier severe exit restrictions loosened, and it became possible to travel within the Socialist Bloc without a visa. Kádár took the initiative to seek breakout points and new relations; Moscow supported this foreign policy attitude rather than just tolerating it. Continuing the political arc of détente, stimulating economic relations and gradually strengthening Hungary's legitimacy and role in international space, he built vital relations with 'pro-Soviet as well as non-aligned countries of the Third World' (Romsics 2003: 512).

VII. Roots of the Hungarian-African Relations in the Socialist Era Between 1945 and 1960

After 1945, Hungarian politics compliantly followed the Soviet leadership's respective goals, intentions and worldview, which remained a point of orientation for the Hungarian party leadership. They proved to be some of the best apprentices of the Moscow leadership, not only regarding leader personalities but also in terms of their applied politics. The respective leadership's foreign political character spanned the field from hostile seclusion to initiative-taking, dynamic opening. When the situation called for it, this politics could conform pragmatically – as Mátyás Szűrös, Hungarian ambassador in Moscow, later temporary president of the Republic (as the Parliament's then president) phrased it: 'Our country... does not have at its disposal sufficient means to substantially influence these changes; therefore, first of all, it has to flexibly adapt to the changes...

Flexible adaptation presupposes a continuous analysis and activity, as well as conscious foreign political actions' (Szűrös 1989: 40).

Thus, the post-1962 political leadership sought a free diplomatic latitude in the world in a more pluralistic, more open way. However, in Europe, regarding Western countries, Hungary only had a limited opportunity for this. Since Hungary was one of the first to recognise the People's Republic of China, reopening its embassy in Beijing in 1949, it seemed logical to make one of our 'breakout attempts' in that direction. The Chinese leadership also sympathised with our Kádár-led government along its quest for a new path: in 1953, the two governments entered a bilateral agreement on technological and scientific cooperation. In 1956, China sent an aid transport to Budapest; export exchange and knowledge transfer flowed continuously (Vámos 2017: 47–45). Then in 1958, negotiations were launched regarding entering a Chinese-Hungarian friendship and cooperation contract (HNA 1. 1958/3301). From 1960, however, China and the Soviet Union stood in an open conflict with one another, and upon Soviet pressure, the Hungarian leadership was also compelled to turn the cold shoulder to Beijing. Then, after the cultural revolution broke out in 1966, bilateral relations fell back to the minimum and remained there until 1978. Hungary had to face into a new direction.

Hungary's openness towards 'developing countries' grew out of the class--based politics of this period, that is: the Soviet ideological endeavour which wished to support "the battle of national liberation movements against both old and new colonisation, imperialist oppression and aggression" (Horváth – Kecskés – Mitrovits 2021). Hungary struggled for realising the peaceful coexistence of countries with various different social systems, enhancing our cooperation with the independent countries of Asia and Africa (Puja 1980: 62). The Hungarian political leadership followed this intellectual and ideological orientation as an eminent Soviet member state, at the same time striving to fill it with content as a country seeking its independent leeway (Marsai 2020). The United Arab Republic seemed to be an obvious partner in this aspect: following the establishment of diplomatic relations with them in 1928 (as the first African country), with a consulate-level Hungarian representation from 1947, and an ambassadorial level from 1957. As early as 1957, led by Károly Szarka, deputy of foreign affairs minister (Hungarian UN-ambassador in 1972), a government delegation travelled to the United Arab Republic to acquire support for the 'Hungarian Question', at that time still on the political agenda (Békés – Kecskés 2006). The 1958 issue of the daily newspaper Népszava (meaning 'People's Word') went as far as reporting 'dynamically improving friendly relations' on the occasion of Gamal Abdel Nasser's Budapest visit (Népszava 1958: 86). Egyptian relations were vital; in the Hungarian press, questions pertaining to 'developing country' issues became recurring themes; newspapers such as Szabad Nép, later Népszabadság, Pesti Hírlap, Esti Hírlap, Az Est and others reported weekly

on home-related as well as foreign policy questions involving the Arab World. Relations between the two countries were re-established (similarly to the pre-1945 status quo). Among the Western diplomats, the French consul stationed in Budapest wrote about a 'constant visit of the East' and a 'trade offensive' in his report (Nagy 2017: 47).

Recognising the Republic of Sudan upon its gaining independence on 1 January 1956 became another relatively significant African-related event. András Hegedűs, president of the Ministerial Council of the Hungarian People's Republic, laid down in a decree on 30 December 1955, upon the proposal of the Africanist-diplomat Endre Sík (an earlier Hungarian ambassador in Washington and president of the Foreign Affairs Academy) (Magyar Közlöny 1956). Following the establishment of bilateral relations and reciprocated visits, at this time, the Sudanese-Hungarian relations did not yield outstanding results as yet; so much the more similar to Hungarian diplomacy, the new Sudanese government was still seeking its position in international space, building up its own foreign relations. Thus, this act might rather be considered symbolic, its significance being that Hungarian diplomacy became more respectable by the 1960s: by 1955, the Hungarian leadership of foreign affairs had established diplomatic relations with 36 states in the Middle East, South-America and the African continent, and by 1958 this number rose to 39 (Győri Szabó 2011: 266).

IX. From Agenda to Action?

Even though this period's African references could be regarded as significant diplomatic results, they were not yet widely extended. These breakout attempts occurred first of all in the direction of old partners that could be considered strategic allies, while we still couldn't talk about an ambassadorial level in many locations on the African continent. And yet, we can witness an undoubtedly tangible process of rediscovering African relations, of Hungarian foreign affairs engaging in initiative-taking foreign politics. Furthermore, this was a determining period also in terms of significant foreign administration, professionalising and modernising diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gained respectability and underwent vital organisational changes. According to János Sáringer's compendium, between 1945 and 1950, the foreign affairs office underwent reorganisation in varying degrees on five occasions (Sáringer 2015: 11–55); this office initially functioned in the buildings located at 15 Szabadság Square and 2 Géza Street, then moved to the palace building at 47 Bem rakpart in Budapest (or Illés Mónus rakpart by its former name), where it can be found up to the present day. In the following, referring to this study, we will do a brief overview of these changes. The organisational structure of the foreign relations administration followed the post-World-War-II Hungarian values and priorities, and we can say that in the period after 1945, it did not yet possess any territorial

or geographical divisions. The most significant, 'modernised' reorganisation occurred in 1950–1951, under Gyula Kállai's foreign ministership. One of the most important changes also bearing a significance related to our subject was that the territorial main departments were formed into which the individual countries were grouped. Two such main bureaus were formed: the Territorial Main Department A/I. and the Territorial Department B/II., divided into further sub-departments. Egypt and the Arab countries belonged to the latter. At this time, we couldn't yet talk about further African countries or an administrative focus encompassing the whole territory. It is a very telling fact that in the same period, in 1954, the new Ministry of Foreign Trade was established, under the leadership of László Háy, doctor and economist, a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the intent of which was to stimulate foreign trade developments, export turnover and last but not least, university and college scholarships. The new ministry coordinated the implementation of directives functioning in the planned economy as the peculiarity of that era.

Hungary's African-focused foreign relations in the 1950s were primarily linked to its UN-membership that the country had gained in 1955: based on the ministerial council's documents, it followed the introduction of international agreements, contributing to the issues that the UN placed on its agenda. As we have stated, with the exception of certain strategic-level cases or unique relations stemming from historic tradition, bilateral relations with African countries that could be considered as an organisational level only began in the early 1960s. The first and maybe most important step of this process was the Ministerial Council decree No. 3212/960, in 1960, regarding the 'recognition of African states' (HNA 2. 1960). The ministerial council act that that the foreign affairs ministry put forward under the leadership of Endre Sík decreed concurrently on the subject of 'recognising the Dahomey Republic, the Niger Republic, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, the Republic of Chad, the Central-African Republic, the Republic of French Congo and the Gabon Republic' – that is, about the Brazzaville group that gained independence from among the French colonies. The act on establishing a Hungarian embassy in the Republic of Guinea tells a lot about the diplomatic significance of African relations and the viewpoint of Hungarian foreign affairs: "The majority of Socialist countries overtook our homeland in establishing relations to Black-African countries. The Soviet Union is in the vanguard in building relations, and simultaneously with recognising these countries, expresses its willingness to establish diplomatic relations and set up foreign representations.... Czechoslovakia operates foreign representations in eight African countries; it intends to establish diplomatic relations and set up foreign representations in a further ten countries" (HNA 3., 1960). In the very same year, the decision was made to recognise Nigeria, as well (HNA 4. 1960).

Besides the Socialist Bloc's ideological politics, the interest in Africa originated from the historic 'African-European' alignment, pragmatically acknowledged

by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – namely that within the course of one or two years, seventeen former colonial territories gained their independence (annus mirabilis). The diplomatic interest remained mutual: the freshly liberated African countries not only received the cooperation intentions directed towards them but also sought relations with the bloc's countries. "Among the liberated African countries, the Republic of Guinea practised the most consistently anti-imperialist politics, and since the first days of gaining its independence, it has been and is seeking relations with the Socialist bloc's countries" (HNA 3. 1960). As Fage and Tordoff wrote: "In the independent countries, there was a rapid shift from pluralism to the centralisation of power (power was usually concentrated in the hands of a single party) and a kind of Socialist approach. However, only eight African countries have officially announced a Socialist government programme. By the 1970s, only a handful of African leaders identified with orthodox Marxist views. Instead, most of them adapted Marxism and other ideas to the African conditions. The "Socialist umbrella" in Africa was so broad that even the Kenyan and Senegalese leaders who pursued capitalist-type policies could fit in under it" (Fage et al. 2002: 423). A kind of unique 'African socialism' (Léopold Sédar Senghor) was born, fusing anti-Communism, pragmatic cooperation with the West, and the conscious incorporation of private capital. Even though politicians who truly believed in Socialism existed (such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Abdou Diouf or Henry S. Meebelo), the majority saw it rather as a kind of progressive tool in the bloc's ideological political arsenal, capable of breaking sharply away from the colonialist past. 'Africa must be ruled by whites, developed by Indians and worked by blacks' (Meebelo 1986: 3). The African proletariat sprang from this 'Johnstonian' philosophy ('white aristocrats, yellow middle class and black proletariat'), seeking its path towards becoming independent. Thus, walking an independent, pragmatic, 'non-capitalist' path, infused with thoroughly sized-up economic goals was much rather the idea that constituted the African Left's motivation.

X. 'Hungarian Africa Agenda' 1962

In the early 1960s Hungary recognised, one after the other, the freshly gained independence of African states that sympathised with the Socialist bloc's countries, elevating these relations to an ambassadorial level: Ethiopian consulate in 1959, embassy in 1964, Ghana in 1961, Algeria, Benin, Republic of Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Tanzania in 1962, Kenya in 1964, Mauritania and Uganda in 1965, and Ivory Coast in 1968 (Biczó 2010: 385–397). The next turning point occurred in 1962. János Péter, minister of foreign affairs, put forward a 12-page proposal titled 'Political, economic, and cultural tasks of the Hungarian People's Republic in Black Africa' to the ministerial council under János Kádár's leadership, which

was accepted in decree No. 3177/1962 (HNA 5. 1962). This can be considered as the African relations appearing in the contemporary policies, an African agenda and strategy. In the following, we will quote from this document.

Regarding its structure, this detailed and policy-type document starts with an introduction divided into countries. As the introduction explains, 'by 1962, the colonial system's disintegration process resulted in 29 states gaining their independence'. The text introduces the individual territories in a geopolitical grouping, merging Ghana, Guinea and Mali, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, Nigeria, Tanganyika, Sierra Leone and Togo, arranging the former French West-African colonial territories, Ruanda, Burundi, Kenya, Angola and Northern Rhodesia in a group, and the South-African Republic as well as Congo individually. It also dwells on territories that cannot be or can only be partially considered as strategic target countries: regarding Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, it remarks that 'they endeavour to receive support from Socialist countries but their dependence on imperialist countries is still too great. Feudal-type social relations and the imperialists' strong economic positions put a brake on developing their relations with Socialist countries', which tells a lot about the era's bloc perspective. The document also marks the continent's most important target areas, simultaneously expressing the idea that at this time, Hungary was unable to establish political and economic relations: such as with Nigeria (following the document, the relation was established within a short time), Congo (which reached the ambassadorial level in 1973), and Tanganyika (with relations being established in 1962). The document aptly reveals that 'Socialist countries – first of all the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the People's Republic of China and Poland – place a great emphasis on improving their Black African relations and on studying all issues of the still dependent territories.' The second half of the programme document focuses on the countries that cooperated the most closely with the Hungarian People's Republic at that time: Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Sudan and Ethiopia. The document describes in detail the economic and cultural relations that were established with the individual countries, highlighting the scholarships offered to university students.

The university scholarships offered to certain African countries constituted an important tool of foreign policy. Their effect remains considerable up to this day and lives on in the programme called Stipendium Hungaricum. Students who attended Hungarian universities or colleges in this period have by now frequently become successful business or political actors in their countries, with their student years in Hungary having become part of their identity. The 1962 document also dwells on this subject. As the text puts it, 'we struggle with the scholarship holders' placement. The decree that in 1964, we were required to provide accommodation for 300 foreign scholarship holders will considerably improve the present situation, but until then, we should keep in mind that the conditions and quality of providing for the students have to be satisfactory....

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs should inquire into providing aid via educators speaking languages and who are up to the task.'

The Ministerial Council accepted the proposal and decreed that 'we have to gradually enhance our participation in aiding "Black African countries", so that they can achieve, defend and strengthen their political and economic independence, and their society can develop in a progressive direction', as well as setting the goal of a Hungarian delegation's visit in 1962 and 1963 to Guinea, Mali, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria and Tanganyika. The decree also dealt with other bilateral economic and cultural programmes. As we can follow from the Ministerial Council's documents, they made the decision about the individual tours with reference to decree No. 3177/1962, as detailed above. So we can state that the Africa-policy of the next few years meant the systematic implementation of this programme.

XI. Africa Visits Between 1962 and 1970

Regarding Africa, the era of Hungarian foreign policy until 1970 can be summarised briefly as the implementation of the '1962 Agenda'. African delegations arriving in Budapest trailed one another, from which stood out the recurring visits of Haile Selassie, Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Gamal Abdel Nasser or even Julius Nyerere. As for the Hungarian part, the first delegations to visit Africa, more specifically the Sub-Saharan region, were led by Gyula Kállai, vice-president of the Revolutionary Worker-Farmer Government, then Pál Losonczi, president of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic, involving in bilateral economic, cultural, educational and sport-related agreements. Out of these tours, the following stand out:

- The West-African government delegation led by Gyula Kállai in 1962
- The North-African delegation led by Kállai in 1963
- The Algerian delegation led by Kállai in 1964
- The East-African delegation led by Kállai in 1966
- The round-tour delegation led by Pál Losonczi in 1970
- The visit to Algeria and Guinea, led by Losonczi in 1971
- The West-African delegation led by Losonczi in 1973
- The visit of the Libyan and Somalian delegation led by Losonczi in 1975.

It is an important detail that the Hungarian government implemented these tours independently. The MALÉV Hungarian Airlines, which existed in those days, made this possible. The Il-18 type aeroplane, bought from the Soviet Union in 1960 and put in operation that same year, already had the sufficient range (4800 and later 6500 km). Initially it only managed to reach the North-African states; later, however, flights to the more southern territories could also be achieved with independent technical capacities. Thus, it is not an accident that

the first time the HA-MOH, registration mark: Il-18 crossed the equator on the Budapest–Addis-Ababa–Nairobi route occurred on a government flight on 11 February 1966 (Zainkó 1993: 13). This circumstance also contributed to entering aeronautical agreements becoming an important element of the bilateral agreement packages signed with African countries.

In the following, we provide a brief overview of the significance and political historic notations regarding Gyula Kállai's 1962 and 1966 tours.

On the occasion of its 1962 tour to Africa, the government delegation led by Gyula Kállai visited seven countries: the Republic of Guinea, Mali, the Republic of Dahomey, the Republic of Ghana, as well as engaging in high level negotiations and signing contracts in Nigeria, the Algerian Democratic People's Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco. Following the delegation's return, the participants compiled a detailed proposal package for the Ministerial Council, which the government approved in its decree dated 29 August 1963, at the same time deciding on executing it (HNA 6. 3321–3380/1963, 3334/1963). Among the most important elements of this package, the following were listed on the Hungarian part:

- The proposal to create bilateral economic joint ventures and credit agreements
- Training professionals speaking the languages of African countries
- Offering 137 available scholarship slots for the 1963/64 school year (Today: regarding the Stipendium Hungaricum, this programme still exists, and remains outstandingly successful)
- Establishing an English language study group at the University of Medical Sciences at Pécs (Today: the Africa Research Centre, which operates within the framework of the Pécs University of Sciences, is one of the most active research institutes of African studies in Hungary)
- Launching a major named International Studies at the Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences, and receiving scholarship holders (Today: the Institute of International, Political and Regional Studies, which operates within the framework of the Corvinus University of Budapest, is one of the best venues for teaching Hungarian relations)
- Establishing an African studies department at the Faculty of Arts at the Loránd Eötvös University of Sciences (ELTE) (Today: the African history studies that operate at the ELTE Department of Modern and Contemporary World History constitute a determining location of African studies in Hungary)
- Preparations for establishing the Africa Scientific Institute, elaborating a research programme involving the Afro-Asian research group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Today: the Africa Sub-committee operating within the framework of Scientific Sections IX. of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences accomplish a vital job up to this day)

The package also contained other sub-fields and smaller-scale items. Because of their significance, however, we highlighted the above because of their influence on African studies in Hungary, and in the general sense, on the international relations studies in Hungary that lasts up to this day (as we mentioned in the brackets above).

In the course of his 1966 tour to Africa, Gyula Kállai visited the United Arab Republic, the Ethiopian Empire and the United Republic of Tanzania. In the UAR, he negotiated with Prime Minister Zakaria Mohieddin, then with President Gamal Abdel Nasser, with Haile Selassie in Addis Ababa and with Julius K. Nyerere in Tanzania. This tour picked up the thread of numerous, previously launched processes, such as increasing the number of available scholarship slots and economic joint committees, and the scope of cultural activities. From the perspective of our present subject, however, the almost 50-page long report that was completed regarding the tour, and constitutes one of the period's important documents (HNA 7. 1966) drawing from first-hand experiences, is perhaps even more significant. We do not have the opportunity here to give a detailed analysis of this document. From a Hungarian governmental point of view, its role is defined by the government's unwavering dedication for African relations. 'We have to continue our political activity in the newly liberated countries, strengthening our relations with the countries actively taking a stance against imperialism. Through strengthening high-level relations and making them more frequent, with mutual orientation, forwarding the experiences of our constructive work, we have to enhance cooperation between Socialist countries and developing countries' – as the report accepted in a decree by the Council phrased it. 'We have to further advance our economic relations, supported by the previously established and created foundations, seeking new forms of cooperation, weighing in the changes in the above-mentioned countries' internal affairs, as well as the mutual interests'. One of the document's important character traits is to assign (very close) execution deadlines to the decrees arranged into groups based on individual countries, which further strengthened the policy character and activity level of the 1962 agenda, and the subsequent agendas built on it.

After 1970, the Hungarian political top leaders completed numerous trips, while the bilateral relations progressed and commitments deepened. By the end of the decade, we established ambassadorial-level diplomatic relations, which bore an outstanding strategic significance in Hungarian foreign politics.

XIII. Conclusion

In our paper, we offered the birth of our country's foreign relation system with African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. This 'southern orientation', along with the results and experiences springing from it, not only exerted a fruitful influence on the entire Hungarian foreign affairs apparatus but also, as a result

of the period's geopolitical situation, it fundamentally determined Hungarian foreign affairs. Both external and internal causes contributed to this: Moscow's foreign political détente during the period of the Cold War, Soviet-Chinese relations growing cold, and the opening attempts (apart from the Middle East and South America) on the part of Sub-Saharan African countries gaining their independence one after the other – as well as the efforts of a few well-prepared professionals in the Hungarian foreign affairs leadership who had a vision. All these together resulted in the Soviet leadership tolerating the opening attempts on the part of Hungarian foreign affairs seeking their own path, which, in turn, found their partners in the friendly African countries gaining their independence at the same time. Even though it was the ideology determined by Moscow and originating from Soviet Bloc politics that had laid the foundations for all this, on the whole, the Hungarian political leadership pragmatically exploited the opportunity, successfully entering the geopolitical space that presented itself. The fact that numerous scientific and foreign political elements born during that period still function up to this day also testifies to this. In this work, we wish to point out, following some historic overview, that Hungary – as a country deprived of its sovereignty for a long age – achieved its independence in terms of foreign relations precisely while building up African relations and framing its diplomatic apparatus in individual countries within the Sub-Saharan region as well as within the Arab world.

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Russia's war against Ukraine and the transformation of the Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture

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Abstract: *This article attempts to contribute to the debate on the reasons for the inability of the US and its allies to prevent Russia from destroying the Euro-Atlantic security architecture by a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as well as to the discussion of scenarios to strengthen the Euro-Atlantic community in the frame of preparation for the new post--war political landscape and reality. Based on a critical analysis of existing research, it is argued that despite the diversity of views of scholars and the still unpredictable outcome of the war in Ukraine, today it is possible to formulate some theses on the main directions of the European order transformation. These include enhancing the unity of the collective West, awakening Europe in the security and defense dimensions, strengthening and expanding NATO, increasing the US presence in the European region and 'the end of the history' of Russia's return to the League of Superpowers. At the same time, the following issues remain controversial: the relations between Russian aggression and the US-NATO strategy after the Cold War, the prospects of the United States maintaining the leading role in ensuring European security given the war-induced increase in Europe's defence capabilities, and Ukraine's future European and Euro-Atlantic integration.*

Keywords: ***full-scale invasion, war, Russia, the collective West, NATO.***

I. Introduction

Ukraine plays an important role in maintaining European and international security, although for a long time this fact has been hardly taken into account. Now it has become one of the fronts of rivalry between the great powers, i.e.

a renewed geopolitical confrontation between the collective West and Russia, which is likely to be one of the main features of the international order in the coming years. Russia's current war in Ukraine is much more than Ukraine itself and its possible membership in NATO, rather it is about the future of the European, and perhaps global, order after the Cold War. By invading Ukraine, Putin seeks not only to bring the country back under his influence, but also to change the security architecture in Europe, which, he believes, ignores Russia's security concerns. He wants to turn the clock back to the late 1990s until NATO's first eastward expansion or to the late 1980s when Moscow ruled in this part of Europe.

The conflict, which before the beginning of the full-scale war on 24 February 2022 seemed terribly inconceivable, has marked the end of one era and the beginning of another, the contours of which are still unknown. They will be determined not only by the results of the fighting in Ukraine, but also by the global response to this unprovoked aggression.

Given the unbelievably destructive scale of this conflict, as well as its transformation potential for the European and perhaps global political order, it inevitably provokes much debate about how this disaster could have been prevented and what challenges it posed to the future of Euro-Atlantic security. There is a heated scientific debate whether Putin's war in Ukraine has finally destroyed the liberal international order, or whether, on the contrary, it has a chance to be revived under this challenge. What should the strategy of the collective West be to counter the aggressor and restore mechanisms to ensure European security? Some argue that a concerted response to Russian president Vladimir Putin's actions could strengthen a global alliance that unites democracies against Russia and China, thereby strengthening a free world for the next generation (Beckley – Brands 2022). Others insist that the future of the global order should be decided by competition in Asia rather than by wars in Europe. Events in Ukraine are of limited significance for the world, and decisive only for the European region (Menon 2022). The third group of scientists presume that there is no liberal world order (Applebaum 2022) or that the Cold War never ended (Kotkin 2022), and they call on the West to rediscover itself and consolidate through renewal.

So far, it is difficult to predict the extent to which the Russo-Ukrainian War will determine the direction of the global order transformation. However, some contours of changes in the Euro-Atlantic region that strengthen the unity of the West and the power of its partners and alliances are already evident. These are not the changes that Putin sought out but they have appeared to be a direct consequence of his actions in Ukraine.

As an attempt to draw some preliminary conclusions, this article analyses the debate on the reasons for the failure of the collective West to prevent Russia's destruction of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and on the scenarios

for the future of transatlantic security. The authors offer a critical analysis of publications on this topic in the authoritative magazine *Foreign Affairs*, on the pages of which the views of representatives of various scientific camps are constantly presented regarding the causes of the Russo-Ukrainian War and possible ways to stop the escalation, as well as individual materials in such publications as *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, *The National Interest*, *The New York Times*, *Atlantic Council*, etc. The chronologically analysed sources cover the period from the autumn of 2021, when warnings about the likelihood of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine and admonition regarding the risks of escalation were published, to the autumn of 2022. It is also necessary to emphasise two purposeful restrictions before proceeding to the presentation of the main material. Firstly, given the recentness of the events, the article relies heavily on non-peer-reviewed literature. And, secondly, since the conflict is still ongoing, its long-term consequences are difficult to forecast, so predicting any scenarios in this situation is analytically difficult and may turn out to be futile.

In the first part of the article, we consider Russia's demands for 'security guarantees' from the West and the discussion on the 'NATO door' on the eve of the invasion. In the second part, we examine the scientific debate whether the NATO enlargement was a strategic mistake that led to the war or, on the contrary, the far-sighted wisdom confirmed by this war. The third part is devoted to the analysis of the most significant geopolitical consequences of the war for the Euro-Atlantic security structure, which are emphasised by scholars studying this conflict. We focus on issues that remain controversial, such as the relations between Russian aggression and the US-NATO post-Cold War strategy, the prospect of the US leading role in maintaining and ensuring European security given Europe's defence capability increase provoked by the war, and European and Euro-Atlantic prospects of Ukraine's integration, etc.

II. Russia's demands for 'security guarantees' and the discussion on 'NATO's door' on the eve of the invasion

Since the autumn of 2021, Russia has deployed about 150,000 troops on its border with Ukraine and has threatened 'military-technical measures' if NATO continues to cooperate with Ukraine and Russia does not receive security guarantees from the West. In December, the Kremlin unilaterally developed two extremely aggressive draft treaties with the United States and NATO that, Moscow said, were necessary to prevent a possible military conflict in Ukraine. The Russian government demanded a formal halt to NATO's eastward expansion, a ban on the deployment of Allied military infrastructure in the countries that had joined the alliance after 1997, a halt to Western military aid to Ukraine and so on (McFaul 2022). It was more like an ultimatum before the war than a step towards negotiations.

In January 2022, the US president Joseph Biden and NATO provided detailed written responses to the Kremlin in an attempt to enter into a dialogue with the Russian president (McFaul 2022). Naturally, no Western government was ready to accept these demands. The United States and Europe are committed to the idea that nations are free to determine both their internal systems and their foreign policy orientation. In his special address on the situation around Ukraine on 15 February 2022 Joe Biden declared decisively 'the right of countries to choose their destiny, the right of peoples to choose their future' (Посольство США в Україні 2022). On 17 February Russia conveyed, through the US ambassador to Moscow, a 'response to a previous US response to Russia's draft treaty... on security guarantees', which called for the withdrawal of all the US troops and weapons from Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Baltics and the Alliance's legal refusal to expand to the east. In case of failure to provide legal security guarantees of this kind, Russia repeated the threat to realise military-technical measures (Радіо свобода 2022).

Against this background, a heated scientific debate erupted over whether restrictions on Ukraine's future membership in NATO could resolve the crisis and prevent war. Some argued that it was time to close the alliance's doors to new members, while others claimed that it would be a serious mistake to allow Putin to dictate conditions for European security.

Some Western analysts claimed that NATO should close its doors to Ukraine. Thus, Michael Kimmage has asserted that for its own good NATO should change course publicly refusing further enlargement so as not to be involved in a conflict between a country that is not a member (Ukraine) but only seeks to do so, and a nuclear state that wants to prevent this membership. Since Ukraine will still not be able to join the alliance in the near future, NATO must close its doors, which will reduce the likelihood of a Russian military attack. Continuing the course of Ukraine's accession to NATO in such conditions would be, in his opinion, 'strategic madness' (Kimmage 2022).

However, other international analysts have vehemently criticised such approaches, believing that the arguments are wrong and should be rejected once and for all. Thus, Eric S. Edelman and David Kramer have considered that following this logic would mean rewarding Putin for his aggression and blaming the state of affairs not on the Russian leader (on whom it undoubtedly lies), but on the North Atlantic alliance, which has contributed to the security of the European continent for more than seven decades. The scholars have realistically predicted that Putin will not be reassured by assurances that Ukraine's (and Georgia's) membership will not be considered. On the contrary, such concessions would increase their rates, as he would see them as a sign of weakness, and may further require the exclusion of the possibility of these states' membership in the European Union, and so on. Closing the door to NATO in those circum-

stances would demoralise Ukraine, make it more vulnerable to Putin's plans and split the alliance itself (Edelman – Kramer 2022).

Thus, two broad narratives about the possibility of war aversion dominated the debate even before Russia's full-scale invasion. The first, which can generally be characterised as realistic, considered attempts to integrate Ukraine into Western structures to be harmful and called for compromises with Russia, which were considered better than a probable war (Kimmage 2022, Charap 2022). The second narrative, typical of liberals, viewed Russia as an imperialist state seeking to dominate its neighbours, chastised the West for its lack of containment efforts in previous years and called for active opposition to Putin (e.g., Edelman – Kramer 2022, McFaul 2022, Stent 2022).

As a result of active diplomatic contacts between American, European and Russian diplomats, the Biden administration and its allies have strongly rejected the Kremlin's demand that Ukraine never join NATO. Indeed, it would violate the principles of the alliance's founding Washington Treaty, the UN Charter, the Paris Charter for a New Europe of 1990 and the 1999 European Security Charter which provide for the right of every state to freely choose and change its security measures; it would leave Ukraine in a dangerous 'gray zone' and would mean NATO's recognition of Putin's claims to influence.

On 21 February, Putin signed Decrees recognising the 'independence' of the 'L / DPR' which marked a failure in Western diplomatic efforts to deter Russian aggression, destroyed the Minsk agreements, escalated tensions between the West and Moscow, and posed new threats to security and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The same day in his speech, Putin said his security was threatened by a much smaller neighbour who, he claimed, was not really a sovereign country, but only a toy in the hands of much more powerful Western powers (*The Guardian* 2022). On 24 February, Russia launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, hoping to seize it quickly. However, its leader miscalculated, not taking into account the patriotism, heroism and ingenuity of the Ukrainian people, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the determination of V. Zelensky and the rapid awakening of the West.

The most important conclusion that can be drawn today from the debate about the possibility of preventing a big war is that it was very difficult to avert an invasion in the months leading up to it. Russia had and still has many significant reasons to consider control over Ukraine to be its vital interest. Containment of Putin was much more complicated because of his obvious ideas about the political weakness of both Ukraine and the West at the time.

III. Is NATO enlargement a 'strategic mistake' that led to the war, or the far-sighted wisdom confirmed by this war?

In this very direction the scientific debate on the NATO factor in this war after 24 February 2022 is developing. A number of researchers, mainly international

relations realistic theorists, continue the tradition started by the famous American neorealist John J. Mearsheimer in 2014 (Mearsheimer 2014), claiming that NATO's expansion to the East was an unnecessary provocation that encouraged Putin to act aggressively against neighbouring states. For example, Charles Kupchan believes that it was a cardinal mistake to expand NATO and to build a security order in post-Cold War Europe that accumulated Western power against Russia. The United States was to pursue the Partnership for Peace as a more flexible security system that would allow all European nations to cooperate with NATO without formally expanding the alliance and establishing new dividing lines (*Foreign Affairs* 2022). This view is shared by Michael Mandelbaum, who argues that the NATO enlargement has shifted sentiment in Russia from pro-Western to anti-Western, thus creating the political context that Putin used to conduct his aggressive campaigns (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

Robert Kagan (2022) offers a more moderate explanation of the relations between Russian aggression and the US-NATO strategy after the Cold War. In his opinion, it is absurd to accuse the United States of Putin's inhumane attack on Ukraine, but to insist that the invasion was completely unprovoked is also wrong. Russia's decision was in response to the natural expansion of the hegemony of the United States and its allies in post-Cold War Europe due to the desire of Eastern European countries, including Ukraine, to join the transatlantic community. Even if the United States had rejected the states' requests to join NATO, those countries would have continued to resist Moscow's attempts to bring them back into its sphere of interest, seeking any help from the West. And Putin would still consider the United States the main reason for this anti-Russian behaviour. If we blame the United States for what is happening in Ukraine, it is only because Washington failed to see in time that its influence had grown here, and could not predict that participants dissatisfied with the liberal order would try to overthrow it (Kagan 2022).

The insistence of some realists, notably John J. Mearsheimer, that the war is almost entirely the result of the structural factor of NATO expansion, which has become a legitimate Russian security concern (Mearsheimer 2022), has drawn a barrage of criticism from a wide public. Indeed, if NATO's eastward expansion contributed to the war to some extent, it is, at best, only a partial explanation. At this point, there is no way to clearly establish Putin's motivation with a high degree of certainty, but it is unlikely that a single motive can explain this invasion.

The vast majority of scholars believe it is clear that Moscow's rhetoric about threats to its security as a result of the NATO enlargement was only a false excuse to justify Russia's full-scale offensive against Ukraine in order to bring it back under its influence. The NATO enlargement did not pose a threat to Russia, but instead added security to Europe, strengthened democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and finally corrected Yalta's injustice (ask Poland, the Baltic states

and Romania if they consider their membership in NATO a strategic mistake) (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has tragically confirmed the wisdom of the NATO enlargement. As Alina Polyakova rightly emphasises, NATO membership is the only reason why the Baltic states and other Central and Eastern European countries have not been attacked by Russia. Instead, the alliance made a strategic mistake by not moving faster to include Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Putin uses rhetoric about the dangers of NATO enlargement to divert attention from his greatest fear – the loss of his control over power (including the theft of billions of dollars from the state). If Ukraine continued on its path to becoming a prosperous, West-oriented democracy, Russians, by watching the freedom and prosperity of their neighbours, could strive for the same for themselves. Thus, the NATO enlargement has nothing to do with Putin's desire to remain a corrupt dictator of Russia (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

Marek Madej underlines that the accession of CEE and the Baltic states to the alliance has brought positive results both for the senior members of the organisation and for the alliance itself. He doubts that NATO would have been able to undergo a transformation effectively after the Cold War in the realities of the 1990s, only by proclaiming new functions and tasks, and there was also a need for geographical change. Enlargement has not only helped democratise and stabilise Central and Eastern Europe, but it has also strengthened NATO's legitimacy as an organisation that has given Western countries (Europeans and Americans) a better chance of building European security than any other alternative could offer. Expanding, promoting the stabilisation and spreading democracy in the CEE countries have largely given the alliance a 'new reason to live', supporting its core function of an 'insurance policy' for bad times and a collective defence instrument when it was difficult to find external threats that could justify (especially among the US citizens) expenses for organising a collective defence. The new members brought rather mediocre military capabilities, but the political gains were valuable enough to make NATO enlargement profitable (*Foreign Affairs* 2022).

At the same time, it was not the NATO enlargement that led to a resurgence of imperialism in Russia. Russia's desire to dominate its neighbours has a much longer tradition and local roots in tsarist Russia. Given its wealth of natural resources, nuclear potential, post-Soviet nostalgia and long tradition of authoritarianism and expansionism, the likelihood of Russia's imperial ambitions recovering from the Cold War and an authoritarian regime (probably aggressive toward the West) was quite high (*Foreign Affairs* 2022, Florea 2022). Since the mid-1990s Russia's political trajectory has meant that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltics could not be sure that their 'return to Europe' would not be threatened without firm security guarantees. At that time, only NATO, rather than the EU or the OSCE, could provide such guarantees. So

Poland and the Baltic states were right when they warned against Moscow's imperialism. Current events help confirm the rationality of this early precaution.

A great example of the long-standing comprehension of the threat of Russia's imperial ambitions resurgence is cited in *The Atlantic* by Anne Applebaum that quotes a speech by Estonian president Lennart Meri delivered in February 1994 (!) in Hamburg. He warned that freedom in Estonia and Europe could soon be in jeopardy, as Moscow was already boiling with insults, aggression and imperial nostalgia. Meri called on the democratic world to act: the West must 'make it clear to the Russian leadership that another imperialist expansion will not stand a chance' (Applebaum 2022). At this time, the deputy mayor of St. Petersburg, V. Putin, who was present in the hall, got up and walked out (Applebaum 2022).

As Russia is waging its unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine today, it must be made even clearer how important the NATO enlargement has been for the Euro-Atlantic and European security. It has provided stability in much of Europe (it has also made the EU enlargement more likely), and the current degree of NATO unification in the face of Russian aggression is extraordinary. At the same time, it is unjustified to blame the alliance for Putin's desire to destroy Ukraine as an independent state or for his willingness to kill peaceful Ukrainians indiscriminately, as he did in Grozny and Aleppo, two cities that had nothing to do with NATO or its enlargement.

According to Peter Dickinson from the Atlantic Council, Russia's plans to annex southern Ukraine make ridiculous his statements about a defensive 'military operation' against Western encroachments on the Kremlin's traditional sphere of influence. The Russian dictator sought to justify the war by pointing to possible threats posed by decades of NATO enlargement and by claiming that Moscow was simply seeking security guarantees. In fact, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the largest open imperialist event since the time of Adolf Hitler (Dickinson 2022).

All Putin's words of the NATO enlargement and its development of Ukraine's territory is a false pretext to attack it. He knows for sure that NATO does not threaten him. Russia was interested in Ukraine not being in NATO so that it could invade its territory at any time. Because Putin sees Ukraine as Russia's lands under Western influence to be recaptured rather than a sovereign state (*The Guardian* 2022).

Given the aforementioned, one can argue that NATO's strategy in the post-bipolar era has not been entirely flawless. The policy of pretending that Ukraine and Georgia were on the path to membership in the alliance when in fact they remained 'suspended' after the 2008 Bucharest Summit was at least the losing approach if not a strategic mistake. The war in Ukraine is a painful result of Putin's reaction to NATO's Bucharest mistake. In our opinion, the declaration that Ukraine and Georgia would one day join it, which some realists character-

ise as the worst possible solution (Charap 2022), was not a fault. The mistake was that the alliance did not implement this declaration immediately and did not start the process immediately by establishing safeguards (similar to those recently announced by the United Kingdom and the United States for Sweden and Finland at the time of their application for NATO membership). Considering Putin's view of NATO enlargement as a threat to Russia, this period of uncertainty provided him with an incentive, as well as an opportunity, to wage a preemptive war. The erroneous decision of the 2008 Bucharest Summit (not because Ukraine and Georgia were promised membership, but because they did not go far enough to specify when and how) was far from being resolved, left everyone dissatisfied and showed Putin that the West was hesitant, so there was an open window of opportunity to change the situation in his favour as long as these countries did not have a NATO 'insurance policy'.

In any case, today there is no alternative to reaffirming NATO's traditional open door policy, as NATO officials have repeatedly confirmed since Russia's full--scale invasion of Ukraine, regarding Sweden, Finland and Ukraine as well. At the same time, under the current conditions – until the end of the war – it is impossible to accelerate Ukraine's membership in NATO. It is also clear that there will be no Allied troops entering Ukraine, the no-fly zone or no persecution of Russian troops if the Ukrainians manage to expel them from their territory. Such actions pose serious escalation risks that NATO seeks to avoid. However, at the same time, the alliance will make every effort (to increase the supply of weapons to Ukraine, ammunition, intelligence data and military training) to prevent Moscow's victory in this conflict, not only for Ukraine's sake or because it would be immoral, but also because the other option would be destabilising in terms of Europe's future. Russia's war against Ukraine tragically demonstrates that a peaceful and secure Europe depends as much on the stability of smaller states as it does on agreements between great powers.

So, while many realist theorists have correctly predicted war in Ukraine, their warnings about the risks of escalation and calls for compromises with Russia, which allegedly seeks only to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, are not popular with academics and analysts. The arguments of the other (liberal) camp seem to be more plausible, specifically that Putin is an imperialist, revisionist leader who seeks to maintain full control over Ukraine or destroy it.

Different interpretations of reasons of the Russo-Ukrainian War by representatives of competing theoretical approaches lead to significant differences in policy recommendations: if Putin is acting out of ambition, then the West should increase deterrence and take a tough stance against Russia, but if he is acting out of fear of NATO, it should compromise and accept limitations on the future expansion of the alliance. The way the collective West has responded and continues to respond to this conflict is clear evidence of its commitment to the first approach. This will be discussed in the next part of the article.

IV. Consequences of the war for the Euro-Atlantic security architecture and prospects for its further transformation

It is no longer possible to return to the situation that had existed before Russia began to increase its troops on the border with Ukraine. Michael Beckley and Hal Brands believe that the international response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine could form a global alliance that will unite democracies in the fight against Russia and China to preserve a liberal international order. Citing policies that helped the West win the Cold War as a model for what needs to be done today, they call for both Russia and China to be held back by increasing the US troops in both Europe and Asia (Beckley – Brands 2022). At the same time, a number of scholars, such as Shishankar Menon and Stephen Wertheim, claim skeptically that Russia's war in Ukraine will not change the global order, it will be determined by competition in Asia (Menon 2022), and warn the Biden administration against waging a risky global cold war (Wertheim 2022).

It is difficult to predict how profound this war will be for the world. This will largely depend on how the conflict unfolds. However, it is already significantly changing the contours of the European security architecture. We agree with Angela Stent that the third reorganisation of the Euro-Atlantic security system since the end of World War II could be the end result of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The first one took place with the consolidation of the Yalta-Potsdam system into two warring blocs in the late 1940s and mid-1950s. The second (late 1980s–early 1990s) is connected with the collapse of the Communist bloc and the Soviet Union, followed by the expansion of Western structures and especially NATO to the East. Now Putin's actions in Ukraine are challenging this order (Stent 2022).

Regarding the latter, he has already succeeded, but evidently not in the way he probably wanted. Instead of splitting the West, Putin's attack on Ukraine united it. In the days since the invasion, the United States and its allies have joined forces to impose tough sanctions on Russia, making it the world's heaviest sanctioned country. As Stephen Kotkin emphasises, with the start of this war, the West has rediscovered its multifaceted strength. After the Cold War, instead of the concept of the West, many American elites adopted a vision of a liberal international order led by the United States that could theoretically integrate the world, including societies that did not share Western values, into a single globalised entity. Hot dreams of an endless liberal order overshadowed the stubbornness of geopolitics, namely that the three civilisations of Eurasia – China, Iran and Russia – have not disappeared, and in the 1990s their elites clearly showed that they did not intend to participate in the only world in Western conditions (Kotkin 2022). Russia's invasion of Ukraine marks the collapse of the liberal international order. Instead, the collective West has a greater chance than ever to revive, strengthen and even expand its borders. The skillful

diplomacy of J. Biden on the eve of the invasion was of utmost importance in this process. His team and he used declassified intelligence data to strengthen transatlantic relations and to unite the wider democratic community, including Asian partners (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) in order to impose large-scale economic sanctions against Russia, to strengthen NATO's position in Eastern Europe and to provide assistance for the defence of Ukraine.

Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay rightly quote American diplomat and historian George Kennan, who argued that democracies remind a prehistoric monster so indifferent to what is happening around him that 'you practically have to whack his tail off to make him aware that his interests are being disturbed' (Daalder – Lindsay, 2022). However, when their tails are hit hard, Western democracies respond with speed, determination and strength. According to the authors, for the United States and its European allies, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which, in terms of size and scale, has been the largest use of military force on the European continent since 1945 and poses a direct threat to NATO territory, has become just such a case (Daalder – Lindsay, 2022).

In the future, it is important to maintain this unity around Ukraine in the long run, because if it proves short-lived and the West is divided again, Putin will try to exploit these differences in the hope that all is not lost. This is a difficult task, which is well illustrated by the problems with Hungary's position on the EU embargo on Russian oil, different views of Member States on granting Ukraine the EU candidate status, Turkey's ambiguous position on Sweden's and Finland's accession to NATO and so on.

The second consequence of the Russian war in Ukraine, in addition to strengthening the collective West, was the strengthening of the North Atlantic alliance and the course for its further expansion. Instead of withdrawing its forces from Eastern Europe, as Putin demanded, NATO has doubled its fighting presence in the region and intensified its response force. About forty countries have started or increased arms supplies to Ukraine. Russia's attack has reunited NATO and made its enlargement much more likely. Among its most significant and unexpected geopolitical implications is that Finland and Sweden join NATO. 'NATO enlargement was never a cause of Mr. Putin's decision to invade Ukraine, but it is certainly a consequence… Sweden and Finland now see a Russia that is revanchist and revisionist in a way that is much more dangerous than during the latter part of the Cold War', Nathalie Tocci concludes in *The New York Times* (Cohen 2022).

Finland has a 1,300-kilometer border with Russia, and the Finnish capital, Helsinki, is closer to St. Petersburg, Putin's hometown, than to Stockholm. NATO, which will include Finland, will more than double the alliance's land border with Russia. Finland and Sweden will bring significant new military capabilities, including advanced air and submarines that will change the security architecture of Northern Europe and help deter further Russian aggression

(Bildt 2022). Russia's war against Ukraine made strengthening the alliance an imperative and only contributed to its further expansion.

Another consequence of the Russo-Ukrainian War is the rapid awakening of Europe, which has become apparent in recent months. For a long time before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Europe was divided. Countries close to the Russian border, such as the Baltic states and Poland, have long taken the Russian threat seriously, based on bitter historical experience. Countries further west, including Germany and France, have underestimated Putin's ambitions (Cohen 2022). Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put an end to the era of European illusions about Moscow. European countries are trying to strengthen their defences, the European Union is uniting to gradually get rid of its dependence on Russian energy and Ukrainian refugees are being sheltered in Europe, although their numbers far exceed those who arrived in Europe in 2015 from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Germany has reconsidered its pacifist stance and embarked on a rearmament process, as evidenced by Olaf Scholz's announcement of a new € 100 billion defence fund and a firm commitment to spend 2% of GDP on the armed forces (Daalder – Lindsay 2022). The EU countries will continue to increase their military strength, regardless of the end of hostilities in Ukraine. In the long run, these measures are likely to enhance Europe's long-standing desire for strategic autonomy to place less reliance on the United States in defence matters.

The United States will face many difficult dilemmas in the European direction. Russia's invasion of Ukraine came at a time when the US Grand Strategy focused on rivalry with China. Russian missiles and bombs have blown up not only a number of Ukrainian cities, but this strategy as well. Many American politicians and scholars would prefer to continue to focus on long-term competition with China. But to deter an aggressive Russia, the United States will have to increase its military presence in Europe. The Biden administration has already increased the number of American troops in Europe to about 100,000, a level not seen for decades (Wertheim 2022).

We think it is a mistake for Stephen Wertheim to think that the United States should take advantage of the opportunity that falls once a generation, to put the European security order on the path to self-sufficiency, to encourage Europe to stand up to Russia, while the US should focus on 'security in Asia and home renovations' because 'such a division of labor is fair' (Wertheim 2022). We believe the United States will continue to pay more attention to Europe and direct more resources and forces to it, at least until the end of Biden's presidency. Europe's quest for greater strategic autonomy is commendable and deserves US support, but until the European security order is self-sufficient, America cannot afford to leave prematurely because it could have catastrophic consequences.

And what about Ukraine? Since gaining its independence in 1991, Ukraine has consistently moved away from the Soviet legacy and pursued political and

economic liberalisation. For more than thirty years, and especially since the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, it has managed to achieve more democratic progress than most other former Soviet states. In recent years, Ukraine has created transparent anti-corruption institutions, decentralised state power, deregulated business, improved governance of state-owned enterprises and cleaned up its banking system. The country has significantly improved its energy efficiency and independence, fostered the development of a free media and an active civil society, made tangible progress in its aspirations to join the European Union and NATO, which were enshrined in its Constitution in 2019 (Prokopenko 2022). By launching the invasion, Russia aimed to nullify that progress and to throw Ukraine back decades in economic and political development. But the Ukrainian state has stopped Russia's advance owing to the monumental efforts of the entire society.

Eight months after the start of Russia's unprovoked full-scale aggression, it is still unclear how long the war will last, but undoubtedly it will end with the defeat of Russia and the restoration of a sovereign and independent Ukraine as a new European state. However, immediately after the war, Ukraine will need reconstruction. This is where the United States, the EU and the United Kingdom must help.

The economy of Ukraine has suffered greatly from the Russian invasion. It is expected to decrease by 45 percent in 2022 (Haass 2022). Fifty-six percent of companies that are members of the European Business Association in Ukraine have reported that they stopped operating during the war. The direct damage already suffered by Ukraine is estimated at more than 500 billion dollars (Prokopenko 2022). More than 6.5 million Ukrainians (out of the population of 44 million) have left the country since the beginning of the war. More than seven million have become internally displaced persons (Haass 2022). Every fourth Ukrainian was forced to leave his/her native home, not knowing if he/she would ever return (Vindman – Bustillos 2022). If the war continues, many of them will have to build new lives abroad, and many, especially those whose cities and towns were destroyed by Russia, will not return, exacerbating Ukraine's pre-existing demographic problems. According to recent surveys, 44 percent of Ukrainians are now separated from their families because of the war (Vindman – Bustillos 2022). Such huge costs are difficult to sustain.

Today, the West is rightly focused on providing Ukraine with the military aid it needs to win. However, such assistance is only part of the support. Denys Shmyhal, prime minister of Ukraine, and the Kyiv School of Economics have estimated that post-war reconstruction costs will total nearly $ 750 billion – a colossal sum that will only grow as the conflict continues. Werner Hoyer, president of the European Investment Bank, estimated that Ukraine would need up to $ 1 trillion for reconstruction (Vindman – Bustillos 2022). External support from the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom will be vital

to balancing the budget, rebuilding damaged infrastructure and compensating for Ukraine's losses, and will require economic investment on the scale of the 21st century Marshall Plan.

However, all the heroic sacrifices of Ukrainians will be in vain if the United States and its allies wait too long to support the Ukrainian economy. Instead of bombed-out residential buildings and twisted wreckage of industry, Ukrainian refugees returning from abroad should witness the emergence of a viable and prosperous Ukraine – indivisible and secure in Europe (Vindman – Bustillos 2022).

Facilitating the reconstruction of Ukraine is not only the West's moral duty because protection of Ukraine is based in international order and European collective security. An economically successful, sovereign Ukraine is a strategic priority of collective Euro-Atlantic security. Western leaders such as Joe Biden, Justin Trudeau, Liz Truss, Ursula von der Leyen and Andrzej Duda are fully aware of this, and have publicly stated that Putin must be defeated and Ukraine must win (Markiewicz 2022).

The restoration of its territorial integrity and accession to NATO could be considered Ukraine's victory. Because the first without the second will mean the almost inevitable loss of this integrity in five to ten years due to the new aggression of the Kremlin. The decisions of Finland and Sweden to abandon the neutrality they have maintained for decades are the most convincing evidence that a new Europe is emerging today, with no more intermediate space. The countries of the region are either under NATO protection or they are left alone with Russia, which is ruled by a man determined to establish Russia's place on the world stage by force (Cohen 2022).

The Ukrainians are sure to have the right to decide independently on acceptable conditions for ending the war and the future geopolitical orientation of the state. However, any decision on Europe's security architecture and changes in the balance of power on the continent cannot be approved without the participation of the United States and its European allies. Therefore, they may have to decide whether to leave NATO open for Ukraine and other former Soviet republics seeking accession. If Ukraine declares a non-aligned or neutral status or NATO refuses to expand further, an agreement will need to be found that a non-aligned or militarily neutral Ukraine can be confident of its security by maintaining close ties with the collective West (Graham – Menon 2022). Only the settlement that preserves an integral, independent Ukraine with reliable means to ensure its security (the best option is its accession to NATO) can be considered a success. However, if Ukraine gets stuck in no man's land on the outskirts of Russia and without NATO protection (this certainly applies to Georgia and Moldova as well), it will have dangerous consequences in the future.

Ukraine's long-term victory will also require its integration into the European Union. Ukraine is already making progress on its way to the EU: the Ukrainian government submitted an official application for EU membership on 28 Febru-

ary this year, and the country received the status of a Candidate State at the June meeting of the European Council. The future security of the EU largely depends on Kyiv's success, given Ukraine's proximity to the EU and its strong ties to many European economies. Therefore, the EU assistance programme for the reconstruction of Ukraine can be integrated into a broader plan for Ukraine's accession to the Union, which may appear in the near future. However, success on this path will depend not only on the EU. Ukraine will need to meet a number of EU requirements, including the creation of new anti-corruption institutions and a judicial system capable of ensuring accountability.

Taken together, a multinational wave of support for Ukraine would be a powerful opportunity for democratic renewal. As Alexander Vindman claims, the risks of losing Ukraine are much greater and will lead to irreversible damage to the liberal order, international law, security standards and global stability (Vindman 2022).

While the outcome of the war in Ukraine is unknown, it is impossible to predict what country Russia will be in the coming decades. But whatever the next scenario, few doubt that Russia will not only not regain control of Eastern Europe, but it will enter a period of rapid or slow decline. There are no plans for its reconstruction according to post-war German or Japanese models. In addition, it will emerge from this war more dependent on China. It is likely that the country will be significantly weakened economically and limited militarily, but more dangerous and capable of creating geopolitical problems politically. The Putin regime, no matter how long Putin himself stays in power, is unlikely to give up his imperial ambitions. They will last until the regime is transformed, and Russian rulers, as Stephen Kotkin claims, make a strategic choice to abandon the overwhelming desire to become a great power equal to the West, and instead decide to live with it and focus on Russia's internal development (Kotkin 2022).

This reality is fundamentally changing the way we think about the security of European countries. It is clear that the deepening of transatlantic ties, the strengthening and further enlargement of NATO and the increase in European defense expenses are part of the response to this new security situation.

V. Conclusions

Having made a critical analysis of existing research, this article contributes to the debate on the reasons for the inability of the United States and its allies to prevent Russia's destruction of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, as well as to the discussion of scenarios for strengthening the Euro-Atlantic community in preparation for the new post-war political landscape and reality. The most important conclusion that can be drawn today from the debate about the possibility of preventing the Russo-Ukrainian War is that it was very difficult to avert the invasion in the months leading up to it. Russia had and still has many

significant reasons to consider control over Ukraine to be its vital interest. To deter Putin was much more difficult due to his obvious ideas about the political weakness of both Ukraine and the West at the time.

Our results show that while many realist theorists have correctly predicted war in Ukraine, their warnings about the risks of escalation and calls for compromises with Russia, which allegedly seeks only to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, are not popular. The arguments of the other (liberal) camp seem to be more plausible, which sees Russia as an imperialist state seeking to dominate its neighbours, chastises the West for its lack of containment efforts in previous years and calls for active opposition to Putin today.

Our findings also suggest that Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine has had the exact opposite effect than Putin intended. NATO ha not withdraw its troops from the eastern regions, on the contrary, it has expanded due to Sweden and Finland; Ukrainian pro-European identity has strengthened even more; Ukraine is fighting for its right to be called a European nation with dignity and the potential that is known all over the world. The new reality in the field of security has led to strengthening the collective West unity, the awakening of Europe in terms of security and defense, the strengthening and expansion of NATO, the growth of the US presence in the region and the 'end of history' of Russia's return to the league of superpowers.

The outcomes of the study let us state that now Europe and the US are mostly united in their determination to oppose Putin and prevent him from winning the war in Ukraine. In the future, it is important to maintain this unity for the long term. The risks of losing Ukraine are much bigger than the risks of losing Russia, because they can lead to irreversible damage not only to the Euro-Atlantic security system, but also to the global order, international law and world stability. For the West, military support for Ukraine in the war against Russia and assistance in its reconstruction are critically important for the future of Euro--Atlantic security. Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO is the best way to get rid of the Eastern European gray zone, which, according to Putin, Russia should dominate. The war has already caused important reconfigurations in the politics, security and economy of the Euro-Atlantic region. In the near future, the attitude of the collective West towards Russia will be a key factor that will determine its unity, the strength of partnerships between individual states and the efficiency of their alliances

This study also opens up such areas for further analysis as the prospects of preserving the leading role of the United States in guaranteeing European security in view of the war-induced increase in the defense capabilities of Europe, as well as the European and Euro-Atlantic integration future of other states that are between the EU, NATO and Russia (Georgia, Moldova).

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Measures against right-wing extremism in an illiberal populist country: The case of Hungary

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Abstract: *The paper focuses on the question of what it means both conceptually and practically to talk about counter right-wing extremism (RWE) measures in an illiberal populist regime while the dominant political ideology or narratives are very close to those of right-wing extremists. Through a qualitative analysis of policies in the Hungarian context, the paper explores both the political and the policy scene to understand how the political context and policies identified as counter-RWE measures interact. Relying on the categorisation of counter-measures, different sets of policies are scrutinised: legal, security, anti-terrorism, and public order measures including education, prevention, exit, deterrence, training, and communication programmes. It was concluded that there is a lack of government strategy and policies for countering RWE including almost all relevant policy fields. It was also observed that hate crime incidents have increased under the illiberal regime while at the same time previously strong extremist militant activities have declined. However, as it is argued, it is not due to effective policies but the manipulating political strategy of the incumbent party.*

Keywords: ***countering right wing extremism, right wing extremism, right wing terrorism, illiberal regime, hate crime, radicalisation***

I. Introduction

In our paper, we problematise how an illiberal regime with a populist core (Buzogány 2017) addresses right-wing extremism (RWE), and whether it makes any conceptual or practical sense to talk about counter right-wing extremism

measures in such regimes. Although a much-debated concept associated with multiple understandings, RWE in essence involves acts of violence committed by extremists who hate stigmatised groups, and believe in the superiority of the in-group and the need for the securitisation of certain groups and issues (Merkl – Weinberg 2003; Koehler 2016; Carter 2018; Perry – Scrivens 2021). These views that are held by extremists in many ways overlap with the mainstream political rhetoric of the ruling elite in illiberal regimes.

It has been widely addressed how such regimes borrow radical far-right narratives and even adopt their policies (Bozóki 2017; Brown et al. 2021; Wondreys 2020). While taking over narratives and policies and instrumentalising them for their own interests, the approach of illiberal populist regimes to the problem of violent attacks committed by extremists is not unambiguous. While implementing some legal repression of the most extremist actors and groups and relying on such policies may be characteristic of illiberal populist regimes (Ramalingam 2014), tolerating or emboldening certain forms of extremist violence when they are in the interest of the ruling elite can also be an attribute of the former (Perry – Scrivens 2021). These two approaches are two sides of the same coin: one involves the implementation of policies that promote security measures in the form of legal instruments that target violent extremist actions, while the other creates an extremist, securitised political environment in which violence is tolerated.

Illiberal populist regimes have been studied from different perspectives in various disciplines (Pappas 2014; Buzogány 2017; Scheiring – Szombati 2020; Zeller – Vidra 2021). However, there is a scarcity of focus on how these regimes tackle right-wing extremists whose political ideology is very close to theirs. From another perspective, the literature on countering RWE concentrates mainly on liberal democratic regimes where stable democratic institutions are a guarantee that extremist ideas and groups are persecuted, and policies aimed at preventing radicalisation or deradicalising and reintegrating extremists are implemented (Pedahzur 2015; Hardy 2019).

Considering the lack of focus on the nexus of RWE and illiberal populist regimes in the literature, we first explore the current approaches to RWE with an emphasis on how it is dealt with in illiberal populist contexts. Our aim is then to investigate both the political and the policy scene to increase understanding of how the political context and counter-RWE legal and policy measures interact in the case of Hungary. Therefore, the political scene is explored to highlight how extremism and securitisation are present in mainstream politics and to identify what political tactics are used in relation to the far right with the purpose of manipulating it in the interest of the incumbent populist party. A mapping of different RWE activities based on various data sources is then presented to give a rough idea of the extent of the problem and the recent trends. While the political scene and the RWE mapping rely mainly on second-

ary sources, the policy fields will be explored using policy documents, expert interviews developed within the framework of the research project Building Resilience against Violent Extremism and Polarization (BRaVE)[1] and relevant secondary sources. Policies will be categorised and the results will ultimately be interpreted within the framework of the conceptual literature with the objective of illuminating what counter-RWE measures exist and how they relate to the illiberal populist regime.

II. Current concepts about RWE and countermeasures

Attempts at determining RWE or far-right extremism have proven to be a challenging endeavour for scholars for many reasons. Essentially, very different political groups, parties and movements with different ideological positions are categorised under this same concept, which can best be seen as a cluster or family of entities rather than unique ones (Gaston 2017; Perry – Scrivens 2021). Other authors assert that while there is no unambiguous definition, a consensus exists among the different fields and scholars concerning what we should understand by RWE (Carter 2018). Most definitions share a number of components that distinguish RWE from other political and ideological stances. In almost all cases, the exclusionary nature of RWE movements is highlighted, whereby minority groups are presented as a threat to the dominant, racially-, ethnically- and sexually defined, primarily White nation (Perry – Scrivens 2015; Jackson 2021). States are perceived as illegitimate since they serve the interest of minorities, and thus undermine the legitimate power of the White man (Perry – Scrivens 2021). Or, as Gaston (2017) asserts, RWE can be understood as being in direct opposition to the founding values of liberal democracy as it refutes the idea of offering safeguards to minority groups, a civic-based conception of national identity and citizenship, and political pluralism. Carter (2018), based on a synthesis of definitions by several influential authors, argues that it is not definitions that we lack, but the meaningful organisation of them, and he attempts to give a minimal definition of the phenomenon. The author emphasises that 'authoritarianism, anti-democracy, and an exclusionary and/or a holistic kind of nationalism are defining properties of right-wing extremism/radicalism. By contrast, xenophobia, racism, and populism are accompanying characteristics of the concept' (Carter 2018: 18).

While the focus of the paper is the illiberal populist Hungary, our main intention is not to give a thorough definition of the regime. However, it is still crucial to briefly reflect on the term ' illiberal populism' and why we chose it to describe the regime under discussion. There are numerous studies that aim at defining

1 The BRaVE project aimed to systematise existing knowledge and assess the impact of policies and practices on preventing extreme ideologies and polarisation in European societies. http://brave-h2020.eu/

the current Hungarian administration's practice or in more general how and why populist parties are gaining more ground all around the world (Mudde – Kaltwasser 2013; Pappas 2014; Pappas 2020). The most consensual minimal definition of populism was provided by Cas Mudde who called it a 'thin ideology' (Mudde 2014) while other studies classifed Fidesz – the governing party of the Orbán regime – as exclusionary populists (Mudde – Kaltwasser 2013). Some authors named it as authoritarian pluralism by putting the emphasis mostly on the polarisation in societies based on values and age (Inglehart and Norris 2019). The explanation relies on the assumption that different cohorts in societies have different values: older, more conservative voters vote for the authoritarian-populist parties while younger generations tend to choose liberal parties. According to this concept, authoritarian populists gain ground among the former group with the promise to reverse the breakthrough of liberalism. However, as others pointed out, this approach has weak empirical support and the cleavages in societies are not based on these categories (Schäfer 2021).

The illiberalism of the Orbán regime, besides being a buzzword to mobilise voters unsatisfied with the left-wing (liberal) governance of the post-transition period (Magyar 2016, Buzogány 2017), refers to the undermining of democracy by emptying its institutions while keeping a democratic facade. Although illiberal regimes are often authoritarian, the case of Hungary is often interpreted as being more a populist than an authoritarian one (Enyedi 2016; Bátory 2016). Pappas (2014) describes the Hungarian regime as an illiberal democracy, which is a subtype of democracy. He also differentiates between liberal and populist democracies, where the latter can also be illiberal. Illiberal democracy evolves in already established democratic systems followed by a crisis in the democratic representation (Pappas 2020). Although with serious limitations, in these regimes certain democratic procedures are still working (Zakaria 1997). Additional mechanisms might contribute to the development of illiberal democracy such as the 'politicization of social resentment', 'the forging of a community of "the people"' and, 'the successful political mobilization of those people to win an electoral contest' (Pappas 2020: 56). These mechanisms are characteristics of the Orbán regime. Other scholars pinpoint some regional specificities of the Visegrád countries where some inherited structures of illiberalism from the previous communist system are combined with the 'compromised form of liberalism' (Dawson – Hanley 2016). Furthermore, illiberalism can gain ground even more efficiently in the region as a consequence of the weak social and intellectual basis of democracy in the region (Krastev 2007). Based on these, we found illiberal populism as the adequate term to describe the phenomenon both of its regional and country-specific characteristics.

In this study our aim is to underline some of the typical exclusionary populist features of the Orbán regime that connect it to RWE. Taking the above approaches into consideration, it is intriguing that the core components of RWE

are to a large degree constitutive element of illiberalism. Illiberal politics and regimes almost always seek their legitimacy and attempt to maintain their power by turning selected groups – either internal or external – into enemies and using the political strategy of fearmongering and polarisation (Wodak 2019). Hence, illiberal populist political actors are intrinsically exclusionary, and similarly to right-wing extremists, many times they define citizenship on a (White) ethnic basis that they intend to privilege, protect and defend (Gaston 2017). Illiberal populism is a type of political regime or political practice that intentionally undermines civic liberties, the rule of law, democratic procedures and norms, and typically also embraces authoritarian values (Pap 2017; Kauth – King 2020). Essentially, these features mean that illiberalism has some of the traits of RWE as they are described in the literature.

Another issue that needs to be highlighted when addressing RWE and illiberal populism is the general trend that we find all over the (Western) world – that is, the mainstreaming of far-right extremism (Feischmidt – Hervik 2015; Stocker 2017; Mondon – Winter 2020). In brief, it means that far-right extremist ideas and often policies are adopted within the narratives and politics of central political actors (Bíró-Nagy et al. 2012; Gaston 2017; Brown et al. 2021). This has happened in many countries with strong liberal democratic regimes, but also in countries that have gradually embraced illiberalism. There are numerous consequences of this trend. As often quoted, previously marginalised or even taboo ideas become normalised and exclusionary discourses formerly rejected become increasingly accepted – this also makes the public environment more prone to extremist activities while 'the parameters of what constitutes "extreme" views are shifting' (Gaston 2017: 2). Normalisation of far-right discourses often happens by the blurring of boundaries between the mainstream and far--right extremism. Kallis (2013) formulates it as a transgression or shifting of boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable where 'radical ideas are essentially attempting to remap these established cognitions and subvert the mainstream frames that support them' (226).

As far as violent acts themselves are concerned, the literature mainly differentiates between three categories: far-right violence, terrorism, and hate crime, and the second and the third type are not always related to the far right (Sullaway 2017; Ravndal – Jupskås 2020). Hate crimes are mostly understood as bias-motivated acts against a vulnerable group, while terrorism is defined as an act that is intended to have a greater impact on a wider group. Sullaway (2017) further differentiates the former based on the level of their instrumentality: hate crime is considered more reactive, while terrorism is rather instrumental. It is also emphasised as a difference that terrorist acts are typically preceded by some degree of planning, while hate crimes are usually spontaneous in nature (Koehler 2019). The third category is far-right violence, which is mostly located under the larger umbrella of hate crime, although there are some differences

between the two. First, as we have noted above, not all hate crimes are committed by far-right actors. Second, hate crime is not always 'only' violence; and third, in some cases violent acts are not committed due to racial beliefs, such as in the case of attacks against politicians, which are thus not considered hate crime (Ravndal – Jupskås 2020). Hence, far-right violence is a third category that partially overlaps with both categories of hate crime and terrorism.

In the following, we focus on the context in which these violent acts take place so that we can explain the connection between the different political environments and RWE. In this respect, the political environment can have meaningful effects in many ways. While widely accepted legal and scholarly definitions of different violent acts exist, it is crucial to see that their local understanding and local practice can be highly politicised both in liberal and illiberal contexts (Gaston 2017; Bjørgo – Ravndal 2019). In countries with strong populist-mainstream political forces that use far-right and extremist language, one may intuitively establish a relationship between violent acts committed in the name of some extremist ideology and a fearmongering political context. While it is fundamentally important to look into the nature of such violent acts in these contexts, it is also relevant to note that the link between the political environment and such acts is not well-established and the two cannot be equated (Blackbourn et al. 2019).

It is certainly hard to establish a link between violent acts and the political environment, or to understand how hostile narratives and propaganda about stigmatised groups can trigger such acts. However, one of the major issues when studying RWE in illiberal populist regimes is the question of the nature of extremist violence in these regimes; what kind of acts are committed (hate crimes, far-right terrorism, or other forms of violence?); and whether we see an increase in these acts. It has been observed that in the US under Trump, for example, while the presence of far-right parties diminished (in other words, the latter were partly neutralised by the political environment), the number of white nationalist groups increased by 55% between 2017 and 2019, and a new wave of racially motivated violence occurred (Gaston 2017; Gunter et al. 2020). From another perspective, the political environment in an illiberal populist regime can influence how violent acts are defined and persecuted. As Blackbourn and her colleagues (2019) argue, when persecuting far-right violent acts, ideological and political motivations have to be proven. This means that courts have to convict far-right terrorists for the same ideology that is dominant in the political environment of these types of regimes. The latter authors found that in India, for example, there have been no far-right terrorist convictions since the right-wing party has been in power.

Responses to RWE embodied in government and local policies and programmes are apparently very different in liberal democratic and illiberal populist regimes, and we aim to highlight some of these major differences. Many liberal democratic countries and political regimes are also faced with the influence of

the far right on mainstream politics, raising questions about how effectively they can or want to challenge RWE (Kundnani – Hayes 2018). However, there still seems to be some distinctive major features of different regimes in terms of how they address RWE.

In our paper, we focus on RWE and policies that aim to curtail activities related to right-wing ideologies – it is noteworthy how this policy field has come to the forefront of policy and scholarly debates. Most importantly, the policy field of countering RWE should be discussed together with the field of countering violent extremism (CVE) and preventing violent extremism (PVE). Chronologically, countering RWE emerged after CVE/PVE policies – often labelled as CVE/PVE strategies or the CVE/PVE policy field (Koehler 2019) – which focused primarily on Islamic extremism, had been established in many countries. Major concerns about CVE/PVE are related to the fact that Islamic violent extremism was the main target of CVE/PVE policies. On the one hand, one of the drawbacks of CVE/PVE policies is that the field is highly securitised and Muslim communities and individuals have become the targets of security monitoring (Jensen et al. 2018; Blackbourn et al. 2019). On the other hand, while CVE/PVE has become an industry (Gielen 2017), the expansion of policies and programmes that target far-right extremism occurred only later. There are many reasons for this, such as the fact that the latter type of extremism has been, from a security perspective, considered less important (Perry and Scrivens 2015) – and additionally due to seeing violence as more likely to originate in individuals (lone wolves) and thus having less of a community nature, therefore posing less threat to society (Perry – Scrivens 2021). It may also be that general public opinion is strongly xenophobic, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, etc., which prevents states from concentrating more effort on far-right extremism that mostly emerges from the majority society (Gaston 2017). In the same vein, the blurring of the mainstream and extremism makes it very challenging to respond to RWE (Perry – Scrivens 2015). The evidence that in many countries extremist violent acts committed by individuals or groups from the far right exceed those committed by Islamists (Perry and Scrivens 2015) has often only become a concern following some major attacks, or other political factors (Blackbourn et al. 2019).

We have seen how countermeasures often have securitised features; namely, when the emphasis is on repressive and punitive tools rather than those aimed at social integration. While the problem of 'oversecuritization' and legal repression prevail in some countries, we argue that liberal democratic regimes always look to apply other preventive measures as well – such as prevention, deterrence, exit programmes, monitoring, education, etc. The question we address in this paper is how in many respects an exclusionary illiberal populist regime is responding to RWE, given that it shares features of far-right extremist discourses and policies.

III. The Hungarian illiberal populist political environment: polarisation, extremism, and securitisation in mainstream politics

Now in its third term, the Hungarian government that has been in power since 2010 is labelled in the political science literature an illiberal, populist, anti-democratic, radical right-wing, nationalist and in some respects authoritarian government (Scheiring – Szombati 2020). Various political instruments are manifested in the political narratives that the regime uses to maintain power, such as polarisation, extremism and securitisation.

It has been asserted that the political success of the current government is largely due to the use of the polarising strategy: a constant state of war with enemies that they themselves create. Within this context of government-generated polarisation, civil society actors have also become the enemy, especially those who work to mitigate racism and extremism and want to reinforce democratic values, human rights, critical thinking, dialogue and partnership (Malomvölgyi 2017). This fearmongering rhetoric and strategy has been paralleled by the intentional erosion of democratic institutions such as revision of the electoral system in a way that blatantly favours governing coalition parties, restricting the freedom of the press and persecuting non-governmental organisations and public sphere actors.

The strategy of polarisation as used to weaken the democratic system is also supported by the mainstreaming of extremism (Bozóki 2017). Issues traditionally connected to the extremist far right are adopted by the mainstream political power (Krekó – Mayer 2015). This is also what characterises the government: it has borrowed themes from the far right and reframed them for its own purposes. The two most salient of these issues are immigrants and gender (Grzebalska – Pető 2018), but other less dominant themes have included rhetoric about and policies related to Hungarian Roma (Dinók 2021).

The regime's treatment of the far right constitutes its wider political strategy. Before the current government came into power in 2010, the popularity of the extreme-right Jobbik party and the viral far-right network around it was on the rise (in 2006 winning 2% of the votes, which increased to 14% at the 2009 European Parliamentary elections), political and public racism dominated public discourse, far-right extremist groups were proliferating, and extremists organised hate marches without the police effectively intervening (Spengler – Friedrich 2013). Even though the left-liberal governing coalition from 2002 and 2010 tried to introduce some legislation to manage this phenomenon, it constantly failed. This was especially due to the weak implementation of pre-existing legislation to counter RWE (hate crime and hate speech, and the banning of militant extremist groups) as well as the political climate imbued in mainstreamed extremism (OSCE, 2010).

Taking over important issues as well as adopting the policies of the far right started right at the beginning of the first cycle of the national-conservative government in 2010, which meant the gradual shifting of the governing coalition to the extreme right. However, it was only after their second victory (2014) that an even more extremist stance was taken by the illiberal populist government. It started using more explicitly polarising and extremist rhetoric with the strategic aim of weakening the far-right political party. In 2015, the refugee crisis provided the political opportunity to come up with an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim narrative. The anti-immigrant frame became one of the government's main political tools, while the more 'traditional racisms' such as anti-Roma and anti-Jewish talk, were more or less toned down. Even though harsh and explicit anti-Roma and anti-Jewish rhetoric is not typical, they are still part of the narrative in implicit ways. The political rationale behind this strategy is that the government tries to avoid being strongly criticised for being racist towards the Roma and Jews.

IV. Mapping RWE in Hungary

The far-right problem can be measured using qualitative and quantitative data (Bjørgo and Ravndal 2019). The majority of the relevant international datasets focus on 'acts' such as hate crimes, far-right violence and terrorism (in different combinations). In theory, these data could serve as a basis for comparison between countries and for detecting tendencies over the years in single countries. However, they often suffer from some inherent methodological problems that make comparisons difficult or even impossible (Ravndal – Jupskås 2020). For example, Europol's annual EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) is a yearly report about terrorist events based on the information provided by Member States. In the case of Hungary, it highlights that some known members of far-right organisations have previously been convicted for violent crimes as an 'indication of a transaction-based convergence of low-level criminals and extremists, who frequently overlap socially in marginalized areas' (Europol 2020: 21). However, the report includes zero convictions for right-wing terrorism in 2019 (2020: 87). Based on these data, we could conclude that the far right is not a huge problem in Hungary as (deadly) attacks committed by far-right extremists are very rare compared to in other European countries. Although it is quite difficult to compare the different countries' records due to the already mentioned methodological shortcomings, as well as to the different sizes of the countries, one can confidently state that Hungary has a relatively high score using the ODIHR data set. From 2010 to 2014, cases doubled almost every year from 19 to 79 and grew even more dramatically from 2016 (33) to 2017 and

2018, with 233 and 194 incidents accordingly.[2] The numbers slightly decreased in 2019, with 132 incidents.

The already mentioned TE-SAT 2020 report describes Hungarian right-wing extremist organisations' activity in the following way: membership fluctuates significantly from a few people to up to ten, and such groups maintain relationships with the far right of neighbouring countries and some other EU countries, including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. According to the report, typical activities are marches and rallies connected to the anniversaries of historical events, like the Day of Honour every February in Budapest that commemorates the German and Hungarian soldiers who 'broke out' from Buda Castle in February 1945.[3] At these events, 'behavior, symbols and chanting disparaging political, religious or ethnic minorities has been observed' (Europol 2020: 68). Another activity typical of the Hungarian extreme right is paramilitary training and skills development, often connected to the use of firearms on private properties (farms) and abandoned military installations (Europol 2020: 69). Apart from this, there have been some confrontations in the last couple of years with groups labelled enemies, including an attack on the Aurora Community Centre (where, among others, Roma and LGBT civil organisations reside) by more far-right groups in 2018,[4] and a toppling of a statue installed to honour the Black Lives Matter movement in the ninth district of Budapest by activists from the far right Legio Hungaria in 2021.[5] However, acts mostly remain indirect, and violent attacks are the least common incidents.

As this report also demonstrates, data about country-level far-right actors and acts are not usually collected systematically in a comparable way but in the form of separate country reports that do not follow the same structure, even within one volume (Charalambous 2015). For this reason, we can only compare the data on Hungary with that of previous years. However, this is not an easy task either because of the different data collection criteria of the various organisations. The former Athena Institute collected data systemati-

2 The first year from where data is available on Hungary is 2009, when the number of incidents was 15. Source: https://hatecrime.osce.org/hungary?year=2009 (accessed 15 February, 2023).

3 The Day of Honour can be used as a litmus test for measuring the attitude of current authorities towards far-right gatherings. After many years of allowing the event to proceed almost without restrictions, in 2020 the police were about to ban it on the grounds that it could threaten certain groups in society. However, this decision was repealed by the Metropolitan Court, which stated that the latter decree was not supported strongly enough with explanations. Therefore, the Day of Honour took place in 2020 after all. Source: https://index.hu/belfold/2020/02/28/budapest_becsulet_napja_rendezveny_biztositasa_rendorseg_27_millio_forint_eloallitas/ (accessed 15 February, 2023).

4 https://eeradicalization.com/between-moderation-and-extremism-the-strange-evolution-of-hungarian-far-right/ (accessed 15 February, 2023).

5 https://www.euronews.com/2021/04/02/black-lives-matter-statue-torn-down-a-day-after-its-budapest-unveiling (accessed 15 February, 2023).

cally on hate groups for years. According to their collection,[6] in 2010, 18, and in 2011, 16 hate groups were active on a countrywide basis that had an extreme-right ideological stance. In 2014, Sonkoly (2014) identified 23 far--right organisations involved in self-defense or paramilitary activity based on data from the Athena Institute and Political Capital.[7] The period since the second half of the 2010s can be called the 'post-Jobbik period' for the Hungarian far-right scene due to the change in the political spectrum and in the party itself (Félix 2019). According to reports, in this changed scene, the extreme, violent far-right has become a much smaller group. At the same time, some new organisations have been formed in the last few years, like the Legio Hungaria movement and the Hungarian version of the international franchise Identity Generation. There are smaller and bigger organisations, with a few dozen members up to a few hundred. As of 2021, around five to eight main organisations and several smaller organisations can be distinguished that are active in organising events or other forms of action.[8] On the party level, Our Homeland Party should be mentioned as the most significant and relatively new actor (founded in 2018) (Bálint et al. 2020). This party typically receives a relatively low percentage of all votes,[9] as measured in opinion polls but enough to pass the election threshold.

IV. Policy fields that address RWE: Legal and repressive measures and public-order management

As mentioned in the literature (Ramalingam 2014), certain countries, including Hungary, have adopted a securitised approach that exclusively implements repressive legal measures against RWE. Following this empirical observation, we intend to further investigate the issue by bringing in more empirical data from Hungary and analysing it, before coming to a conclusion about whether this illiberal populist regime can be defined as having a fully securitised approach or if there is there any scope for other policies – i.e. in general, what can be said about the nature of the counter-RWE policy field in an illiberal regime.

6 Source: https://boon.hu/magyarorszag/athena-intzet-gyulletcsoportok-magyarorszgon-3184813/# (accessed 15 February, 2023).

7 The author of the cited article aggregated the smaller skinhead groups into one.

8 In its latest relevant study, Political Capital distinguishes five main organisations while mentioning that more smaller organisations also exist (Political Capital 2020). Other reports like the Antisemitism Report 2019–2020 of the Jewish Federation names a few more who were active in this period (Félix 2021).

9 It was around 2–3% that increased to over 5% in 2022 at the parliamentary elections and to 7% in 2023.

Methodology

Data was collected as part of the BRaVE project aimed at building a counter-extremism database.[10] Policies and practices[11] were identified from policy fields relevant to RWE measures using purposive sampling. The timeframe for the database was set between 2014 and 2019; however, for our analysis we did further data collection to include policies prior to and after this period. Given the scarcity of the policies (some fields did not have any associated policies), our strategy was to rely on secondary sources (NGO reports and research reports), as well as some expert interviews that were conducted within the BRaVE project with NGO representatives and field experts.[12]

Our data were thematically clustered in line with Ramalingam's (2014) categorisation of counter-RWE policies and interventions. Legal and repressive measures include policies that address hate crime, far-right violence and terrorism. Based on the literature we examined (Ravndal and Jupskås 2020), while right-wing violence, terrorism and hate crime are overlapping categories, racial beliefs are a 'must' in the case of the latter and are not necessarily associated with acts classified as belonging to the second and the third categories. Therefore, we first discuss hate crime policies separately from policies targeting right-wing violence and terrorism. The legal framework and repressive measures serve to monitor, control and persecute extremist individuals and groups. These measures are necessary but not adequate if the objective is to reduce or prevent the presence of RWE in a country. Following the Ramalingam categorisation, second, we explore policy interventions that fall into the category of public-order management: i.e. prevention (school curricula and public institutions), deterrence and exit programmes, information and public communication policies, and the training and capacity building of relevant actors.

At this stage of the analysis, our aim is to provide a qualitative description (Braddock 2015) of each category by synthesising our data. The latter consist of policies (texts of laws, strategies and regulations), reports and interviews. During the analysis, in each policy field (category), we used all the collected narrative and qualitative data, put them alongside each other, and started an iterative process of comparing themes, arguments and narratives and identifying the most common and relevant points that best describe the state and nature of the given policy area. In the next step, interpretation of the data followed.

10 http://brave-h2020.eu/database

11 For the database, data were also collected on institutions and research; however, these were not included in our current analysis.

12 Interviews: hate-speech and hate-crime expert; representative of interdisciplinary think-tank running programme and research on counter-extremism; representative of think tank dealing with extremism; representative of NGOs dealing with informal education; representative of organisation on intercultural dialogue; representative of organisation dealing with conflict prevention.

Based on the relevant theoretical concepts from the literature on the one hand, and the major themes revealed in each of the policy categories on the other, various analytical dimensions were developed and policies interpreted using this conceptual frame.

Legal and repressive measures

Hate speech and hate crime policies

Although no legislation explicitly addresses hate speech or hate crime, there is some legislation that falls into this category. Incitement to hatred and violence against protected groups and members of protected groups is regulated in the Criminal Code.[13] One of the criteria used for labelling an act as incitement is that the act should be committed in front of 'the public at large' (Free World Centre 2018). This can be a large number of people, or there should be potential that a large number of people witness it (e.g. will hear a speech). Based on a Constitutional Court decision,[14] the third criteria is to consider a constitutional crime that leads 'to the clear and present danger of violent actions or to individual rights'. In many cases, legal procedures fail at this stage because of the difficulties in proving a causal connection between an incitement and concrete bias-motivated acts that follow.

Online hate speech is also mentioned in the closing provisions of the Criminal Code as 'a crime committed, inter alia, through publication in the press, or through other media services, by way of reproduction or by means of publication on electronic communication networks'.[15] Apart from this section in the law, there is no such coordinated initiative against online hate speech.

Experts (Subjective Values Foundation, 2017) have found that the police do not usually classify incidents as hate crime, therefore no prosecution follows, or the latter are treated as crimes without a bias-motivation, thus no investigation is initiated.

It is also often observed that in the case of extreme right-wing attacks (the main targets are members of the Roma community, LGBTQ people, refugees and migrants, and Jews), when physical violence and racist verbal assaults happen, the police start an investigation into the crime of vandalism, and only in cases when complaints are made is the legal classification changed to hate crime. It is also important to note that if a crime is committed with a 'bias--motivation' it is considered an aggravating circumstance, and the court has to take this into account and pass down a more severe sentence. However, in

13 Criminal Code 332 2012

14 Decision 30/1992 (V.26) AB Resolution; 18/2004 (V. 25.) AB Resolution 18/2004 (V. 25.); 95/2008 (VII. 3.) AB Resolution

15 Criminal Code, 459 (22)

most cases courts do not identify and examine the possibly biased motive, or they tend to take biased motives into account only partially, and instead of hate crime they often classify such acts as minor offenses. There are also cases when perpetrators' biased motives are obvious (e.g. involve the wearing of specific symbols, skinhead clothing or the open declaration of extremist views), yet the court does not classify these incidents as hate crimes (Barna – Hunyadi 2016). Moreover, misinterpretation of hate crime legislation also complicates the situation insofar as the court has the tendency to associate hate crime as being perpetrated by the Roma. It has been found that Roma are more often convicted of hate crime (against Hungarians) than members of the majority against the Roma (Jovánovics 2017).

Nonetheless, some institutional changes have been introduced, partly as a result of the activities of the Working Group Against Hate Crimes that was established by five NGOs. A Police Hate Crime Network was established in January 2012, a network which consists of individual investigators who specialise in hate crime at each county police level, with a coordinator at National Police Headquarters. In addition, a protocol has been introduced so that law enforcement can identify and pursue investigations into hate crime more efficiently.[16]

Policies targeting right-wing violence and terrorism

The Criminal Code was amended in 2011[17] by the illiberal populist government that entered into power in 2010 to curb far-right vigilant groups. The law became known in colloquial language as the 'law on crime in uniform', referring to the fact that members of vigilante groups often wear uniforms to signal their self-proclaimed law enforcement role. As described earlier, the pre-2010 period under the socialist-liberal coalition saw the rise of far-right political parties as well as the proliferation of RWE vigilant groups. These latter militant groups had formal and informal links with the far-right party, Jobbik. The new conservative government's political aim was to weaken the latter party, which was the second strongest party at that time. According to the law, those who intimidate others based on their national, ethnic, racial or religious identity can be sentenced to up to three years in prison, and those who engage in activities aimed at maintaining public security or public order without lawful authorisation for up to two years. The law was criticised by NGOs who pointed to the fact that RWE vigilante groups could have been curbed by relying on the existing legislation and that ineffective law implementation was the major obstacle to countering the activity of RWE vigilante groups, rather than the lack of legislation. They

16 National Police Headquarters' Protocol 30/2019 (VII. 18.)

17 Criminal Code, 2011/XL. 34/2011 (V.7.)

were concerned that the law served political purposes rather than being an effective tool for countering RWE militant groups (TASZ 2017).

Apart from this law, targeting far-right violence and terrorism is addressed by anti-terrorism and security policies. As the European Crime Prevention Monitor points out:

> *Central and Eastern European MSs, which are less likely to suffer from violent radicalization and terrorism, often do not have national strategies in place (or at least such strategies have not been reported)…. Several other MSs do not have dedicated counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism strategies, instead (summarily) treating these phenomena in their general security strategies. Such is the case for Hungary, Lithuania, and Estonia* (Aerts 2019).

What needs to be highlighted is how far-right terrorism and violence appear in policy documents, and what policies are formulated to monitor and persecute far-right organisations and leaders and members of these organisations.

Our research on policy documents[18] reveals that terrorism is not identified as a right-wing threat – in fact, it is not defined what kind of terrorism the documents refer to. In the policy document on anti-terrorism, when extremism appears in connection with terrorism, it is not specified what the document means by extremism – 'the priority security risks of our future are terrorism and organized crime as well as extremism that may pose threat to the democratic state institutions, and national and public security'.[19] We find a similar perspective in Hungary's National Security Strategy, according to which various security areas are identified (migration, drug trafficking, organised crime, natural and industrial disasters, etc.), one of which is 'extremist groups'. The document says that:

> *A security challenge is posed by extremist groups exploiting social tensions and the freedom of association, assembly and expression provided by the democratic state based on the rule of law to restrict the basic rights of others, disrupt the functioning of… constitutional institutions, or promote their anti-democratic political aspirations.*[20]

Neither the anti-terrorism nor the security strategy specifies right-wing terrorism or violence as a separate concept or area.[21]

18 Anti-terrorism resolution (Terrorizmus ellenes végrehajtás), 2015; Anti-terrorism Draft Bill (Terrorizmus elleni fellépés), 2016; Hungary's National Security Strategy 1035/2012. (II. 21.) Government Decree

19 Hungary's National Security Strategy 1035/2012. (II. 21.) Government Decree

20 Ibid. 18.

21 Security and anti-terrorism strategies usually refer to and identify different forms of terrorism, e.g. Islamist, right-wing, or left-wing terrorism. See: http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/PB-BRAVE-final-version.

In light of the legal regulations and policies, how then are violent extremist far-right groups and individuals monitored and persecuted? A couple of arrests and persecutions of far-right leaders typically take place annually, although it is claimed by the experts that were interviewed that the police do not investigate very actively. There is also monitoring of the activities of extremist groups, and police are present when they organise events (demonstrations, marches and patrolling), but no harsh measures are applied to persecute them (Barna – Hunyadi 2016). Also ambiguously, the police have become more professional in handling the far right in terms of not allowing demonstrations or intervening in those that openly express hatred. It should also be mentioned that there is a local character to how events are handled, as municipalities have some authority to take measures against events that occur on their territory. Some of them use this opportunity when they oppose such events, while a few of them even actively cooperate with NGOs and minority communities regarding these issues.

The fact that extremist far-right organisations are not under strong state control is reflected in what members of the movement themselves say. As reported in interviews published by Political Capital (Bálint et al. 2020), they are left in peace by the police; some of them even mention that they have unofficial but friendly relationships with the police based on mutual respect. They can do their 'nation-building' work almost undisturbed.

Public-order management.

Prevention policies. The field of *prevention policies* is aimed at reducing the vulnerability of risk groups, promoting democratic values and attempting to develop school curricula to include materials on counter-extremism. The new National Core Curriculum that came into effect in September 2020 reflects the ideological leaning of the illiberal populist right-wing government. Building a stronger, ethnic-based, exclusive Hungarian national identity is the primary aim of the current regime, and this includes increasing knowledge, among other topics, about national defense. According to the research of Political Capital (Bálint et al. 2020), this strongly ideological curriculum gives no space for teaching democratic values. Hungarians as victims of history is one of leading topics in history books. Moreover, myths associated with Hungarian ancient history are presented as facts, some authoritarian regimes are glorified, and Islam is represented in a very negative light.

pdf; the United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf; the Danish anti-terrorism legislation and strategy: https://curis.ku.dk/portal/files/91173827/Terrorism_legislation_National_report_J_rn_Vestergaard_Denmark_final_version.pdf; the European Union (EU) Terrorism Situation and Trend report (TE-SAT) 2020: https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/european_union_terrorism_situation_and_trend_report_te-sat_2020_0.pdf

Civil society actors are under strong pressure under the illiberal regime (Scheiring – Szombati 2020). Few are active in the field of education, such as running programmes on democratic values and human rights. As mentioned in the interviews we conducted, most of those that do have this function receive no government funding (they receive their support mainly from the EU and other international donors). This may lead to the situation that the NGOs initiate the programmes that can be funded by these donors, rather than focus on actual problems. These organisations try to establish partnerships with schools to introduce their programmes to students, teachers or both. Most schools are not open to these projects, or are afraid of the reactions of parents or the school authority (a government-controlled body). Another problem is that such projects are just 'come and go' efforts; they are not a part of the everyday life of schools. Therefore, they often do not have a long-term impact on students' attitudes and/or behaviour (Simonovits – Surányi 2019). It is also a problem that – partly because of the lack of time and resources – activities are not tailored to the exact environment they are implemented in, thus no specific answers are given that can increase the chance of a positive outcome (Félix 2023). The illiberal regime's ideological dominance of education exemplifies how unlikely it is that curricula and schools can have any significant preventive effects.

To further investigate prevention policies, we also looked at another area that usually appears in the literature as a relevant field – namely, youth policy. In the National Youth Strategy (2009–2024), the danger of engaging in extremist activities is highlighted: 'some young people choose an extreme, sometimes disruptive form of self-expression [that]endanger[s] democratic values'.[22] Here, the meaning of extremism is not defined properly; no reference is made to whether this is seen as an ideologically driven behaviour or as a product of other social factors such as social exclusion. The treatment proposed in the Strategy is similarly vague; it says that a *tolerant, inclusive attitude should be spread*.[23]

Given the lack of focus on preventing RWE, it is not surprising that government *deterrence and disengagement and de-radicalisation exit programmes* are non-existent. Except for a very limited number of NGO programmes,[24] no government interventions can be found.

Information and public communication policies. Regarding the media and their strategies concerning how they talk about RWE, the first general conclusion is that there is no specific strategy (Bernáth 2014). On the other hand, three different but inappropriate ways are distinguished: overdramatising, portraying it

22 National Youth Strategy, 2009: 7.

23 Ibid. 46.

24 The Subjective Values Foundation mentioned some of their projects. However, no information is available about these projects, thus their potential short or long-term effects cannot be measured either.

as a bagatelle issue, or supporting radical ideologies and groups in a direct or in an indirect way (Barta 2008). Part of the latter include those cases from the last few years when far-right public figures were introduced in media as private individuals, which contributed to the normalisation and greater acceptance of RWE (Bernáth 2014). Analyses showed how the bad practices of the media contributed to the rise of the far right and to the normalisation of racist and anti-LGBT speech (Boros et al. 2013). Related to this, the topic of migration has also been represented in a very stereotypical way in the media, especially in public media, involving portraying migrants first and foremost as criminals and terrorists, thereby increasing prejudice against them (Hungarian Helsinki Committee 2015).

Another aspect of public communication, data collection on right-wing terrorism and violence, hate crimes and extremist groups, is best described as sporadic and random. As demonstrated, the government does not collect data systematically. The data that are publicly available are those that the government provides to international organisations that appear in reports, or from international organisations who collect data from various sources. Civil actors working in the field are very few, and given that most of these NGOs are viewed with suspicion, the government is not collaborating with them. Thus there is no information and knowledge sharing and transfer between government bodies and the civil sector (Mink 2017).

Training and capacity building. As revealed during the period of data collection, in the field of training and capacity-building state interventions are lacking. Instead, similarly to the field of education, civil society actors implement programmes funded by external – mainly EU – sources to fight hate speech, racism and extremism. Civil stakeholders have asserted that state institutions refuse to engage in dialogue. Therefore, for NGOs it is not possible to get access to government and state organisations and ministries, although it is very important that the interventions of NGOs are integrated into state services, especially if they are successful.

V. Discussion and conclusion

Based on the descriptive analysis of the policies, our aim is now to try to answer the question whether counter-RWE policies in an illiberal populist regime fall entirely into the category of security measures – that is, a legal and repressive approach. Or, in more general terms, how the policy field can be characterised given that there are several policy areas other than legal and repressive measures where some interventions can be detected. We do not seek to answer the questions that are raised about counter-RWE policies in liberal democratic settings (as mentioned in the literature) (Hardy 2018), but rather to see how an illiberal

populist political environment affects the policy field and, in response, what consequences this has on RWE in the country.

Relying on the main concepts in the literature about RWE in illiberal regimes, as well as the main themes the descriptive analysis of the policy fields has revealed, various dimensions are now developed to arrive at a deeper understanding of counter-RWE policies. The following dimensions are found to create the analytical frame for contextualising and evaluating the policies:

(1) Interventions are first categorised in line with whether they are part of a wider government strategy or policy. This dimension allows us to see whether the given policy is considered a priority for the regime, and whether legal and repressive or other measures are more dominant.
(2) The cooperation of government/state and civil society actors is a related dimension, but more specifically refers to the situation that, in illiberal regimes, civil society actors are often considered enemies, or even persecuted and oppressed as representing democratic values that are against the mainstream ideology (Malomvölgyi 2017). The lack of cooperation with civil society actors can be assumed to negatively impact policy making and implementation. Without the latter, the know-how, local embeddedness and flexibility that civil actors have are excluded from the policy field.
(3) The assessment of policies and policy implementation is carried out in line with three sub-dimensions:
    (a) how the policy affects or reflects the mainstreaming and normalisation of extremism and the blurring of boundaries in political and social life,
    (b) what can be said about the policy, as measured by data (increase/decrease in such activities, behaviour, etc.), and,
    (c) whether the intervention has securitising effects.

The following table presents these dimensions according to each policy that we identified and described qualitatively in our analysis.

The overall picture indicates that there is no government strategy for countering RWE. Our findings, based on a qualitative analysis of relevant policies, reveal that the RWE policies of the Hungarian illiberal populist regime cannot be strictly categorised as a security approach that relies exclusively on legal and repressive measures.

Applying the concepts from the literature on RWE and counter measures in illiberal populist settings, analytical dimensions were developed to enable us to interpret the Hungarian case. The political environment in which policies are drafted and implemented is dominated by extremist and securitising views. This is presumably a factor that explains the lack of government strategy and policies for countering RWE. It is only in the area of hate crimes that policies that target extremist activities exist – a finding that reveals that legal and re-

Table 1: Policies and dimensions of analysis

Type of intervention	(1) Government strategy/policy	(2) Cooperation of actors	(3) Assessment of policy and policy implementation
Hate crime policies	Yes, hate crime legislation exists	Some cooperation between state institutions (police, and judicial system) and civil actors, resulting in improvements in policy implementation	(a) Normalisation and blurring of extremist views can be detected in the fact that a large proportion of incidents are still not classified as hate crime by the police or courts. Practice of reversing hate crime accusations and applying them to minority perpetrators (b) Data show an increase in incidents since 2016 (unclear whether this is due to a higher number of incidents or an improvement in policy implementation that led to more classified cases). (c) The case of the reversal of hate crime law can be considered a securitisation feature
Far-right violence and terrorism	No, there is no government strategy and (the type of) extremism is defined neither in security nor in anti-terrorism policies	No cooperation reported	(a) Normalisation and blurring of extremism and non-extremism is manifest in non-persecution and non-monitoring of extremist activists and groups (b) Decrease in the number of far-right extremist groups with relatively wide membership (c) Extremist groups are deconstructed as a security threat by blurring
Prevention: education policy	No, curricula reflect nationalist conservative ideology, no proper civic education	Some cooperation between state (controlled) schools and civil actors, but given the strong state control of schools, this happens only in a very limited number of cases	(a) Mainstreaming of extremist ideas in curricula (b) Increase in number of church schools, centralised education system that secures loyalty to the government (c) By promoting the idea of Hungarians as victims throughout history, a general security threat is being built into the self-identification of the new generations
Prevention: youth policy	No, youth policy does not define extremism, but refers to it only in general terms, no strategy for countering extremism	No specific cooperation given the lack of policies	(a) Lack of definition of extremism may contribute to the blurring of boundaries (b) No specific policies, therefore no data can be specified to examine effects (c) No securitisation aspect
Prevention: deterrence	No state policy exists	Some small-scale civil initiatives	(a) Civil initiatives represent oppositional values to those of the government, and are intended to counter the normalisation, blurring and mainstreaming of extremism (b) Very few NGOs, little impact (c) NGOs countering a securitised approach

Type of intervention	(1) Government strategy/policy	(2) Cooperation of actors	(3) Assessment of policy and policy implementation
Prevention: disengagement/de-radicalisation/exit programmes	No government policy exists	Some small-scale civil initiatives	(a) Civil initiatives represent oppositional values to those of the government, and are intended to counter the normalisation, blurring and mainstreaming of extremism (b) Very few NGOs, little impact (c) NGOs countering a securitised approach
Information and public communication policies	No government policy exists	Some small-scale civil initiatives but no cooperation between them and the government	(a) Civil initiatives represent oppositional values to those of the government, and are intended to counter the normalisation, blurring and mainstreaming of extremism (b) Very few NGOs, little impact (c) NGOs countering a securitised approach
Training and capacity building	No government policy exists	Some small-scale civil initiatives but no cooperation between them and the government	(a) Civil initiatives represent oppositional values to those of the government, and are intended to counter the normalisation, blurring and mainstreaming of extremism (b) Very few NGOs, little impact (c) NGOs countering a securitised approach

pressive measures are only partially applied. In all other policy fields, including security and anti-terrorism as well as public-order management, policies are not explicit about RWE (e.g. security, anti-terrorism, education and youth policy) or simply do not exist (e.g. prevention, disengagement, de-radicalisation, exit, deterrence, information and training).

The indirect policies we analysed were found to reflect, as well as reinforce, tendencies that may foster more extremism. Normalisation and blurring of boundaries are found to characterise security and anti-terrorism policies insofar as far-right extremists are not properly persecuted and monitored. This was also pinpointed in the area of hate crime policy implementation (e.g. not specifying cases as hate crimes). Through a centralised education system and the prevalence of a favored ideological approach in curricula, education is similarly assumed to have a normalising and blurring effect.

These policies were also examined for securitising tendencies, and it was found that the securitisation of minorities is present (in hate crime prosecutions, for example). From another perspective, not defining extremism and extremist groups deconstructs them as a security threat to society. In education, the emphasis on a monolithic ethnic-national identity, enforced by teaching history through the lens of the victim and a lack of civic education, may be grounds for the acceptance of securitised narratives, typical of far-right extremists. Proper counter-RWE policies are being implemented only by small-scale NGO projects funded by the EU and international donors. While their activities aim at constructing an environment in which individuals are empowered to recognise and oppose extremism, their societal impact is limited. Among other factors, this is mainly due to their small number and size, as well as the hostile political environment in which they operate.

Looking at the RWE mapping, we can see an increase of hate-crime incidents in previous years, and a decrease in the significance of militant and vigilant far-right groups. In parallel with this decrease, far-right violent activities and terrorism have also been on the decline. Compared to the pre- and early 2010s, when paramilitary far-right extremist and terrorist groups were active and highly visible, in recent years these activities have almost disappeared. The data reflect the changes that have taken place under the illiberal populist government: an increase in hate-crime incidents, and a decrease in far-right violent and terrorist acts.

The relatively positive picture of the minimal threat from far-right extremists may lead to the wrong conclusion that this is the reason why there is no RWE strategy or related government policy. While it did not constitute part of the empirical investigation of this paper, the explanation should be sought in the analysis of the political environment. As pointed out by analysts (Bálint et al. 2020), the government has a specific strategy regarding how to treat far-right extremist organisations: it needs extremists in order to be able to claim that it

controls them, keeps them calm and prevents them from becoming stronger. Indeed, being ideologically very similar to the incumbent party, extremist groups are less interested in engaging in violent action than in the past. The political climate of top-down extremism and the securitisation of certain issues may thus be a contributing factor in the decline in the appeal of extremist far-right organisations and the fact that there are fewer supporters of these organisations.

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