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MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF WORLD ORDER STUDIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The concept of "world order" is pivotal in understanding international relations and global dynamics. This bibliometric study maps the landscape of world order research, analyzing publication trends, intellectual structures, and future directions from 1990 to 2023. Using the Scopus database, 6762 relevant documents were identified and analyzed through keyword, co-authorship, co-citation, and bibliographic coupling analyses. The study highlights the increasing volume of publications, with major contributions from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Leading journals such as "International Affairs" and "Third World Quarterly" are key platforms for world order discourse. Influential works by scholars like G.J. Ikenberry and Amitav Acharya have significantly shaped the field. Several thematic clusters were identified, focusing on polarity, power dynamics, economic shifts post-2008 financial crisis, and China's rising influence. Future research should explore the evolving multipolar world order, the role of emerging powers, and the impact of technological advancements on geopolitical stability. This analysis not only synthesizes existing literature but also provides a conceptual framework for future research, addressing gaps and proposing new directions in the study of world order.

Keywords

Bibliometric analysis, World Order, Co-citation analysis, International Relations, International Order.

Resumo

O conceito de «ordem mundial» é fundamental para compreender as relações internacionais e a dinâmica global. Este estudo bibliométrico mapeia o panorama da investigação sobre a



ordem mundial, analisando as tendências de publicação, as estruturas intelectuais e as orientações futuras entre 1990 e 2023. Utilizando a base de dados Scopus, foram identificados e analisados 6762 documentos relevantes através de análises de palavras-chave, coautoria, cocitação e acoplamento bibliográfico. O estudo destaca o volume crescente de publicações, com contribuições importantes dos Estados Unidos, Reino Unido e Canadá. Revistas importantes, como «International Affairs» e «Third World Quarterly», são plataformas fundamentais para o discurso sobre a ordem mundial. Trabalhos influentes de académicos como G.J. Ikenberry e Amitav Acharya moldaram significativamente o campo. Foram identificados vários grupos temáticos, com foco na polaridade, dinâmica de poder, mudanças económicas após a crise financeira de 2008 e a crescente influência da China. Pesquisas futuras devem explorar a evolução da ordem mundial multipolar, o papel das potências emergentes e o impacto dos avanços tecnológicos na estabilidade geopolítica. Esta análise não apenas sintetiza a literatura existente, mas também fornece uma estrutura conceitual para pesquisas futuras, abordando lacunas e propondo novos rumos no estudo da ordem mundial.

Palavras-chave

Análise bibliométrica, Ordem Mundial, Análise de co-citação, Relações Internacionais, Ordem Internacional.

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MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF WORLD ORDER STUDIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Introduction

The concept of the World Order is fundamental to understanding international relations and global developments. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson used the term 'new world order' after World War I to envision a system for maintaining international peace and security, coinciding with the establishment of the League of Nations. This political order had already been in place in the Western world for several centuries (Grinin, L. 2016). A "world order" in its true global sense has never existed that accommodated the needs, desires, and wishes of all. The modern international order, often regarded as having its origins in the Peace of Westphalia, was established in Western Europe at a peace conference. This conference, known as the "Peace of Westphalia," accommodated the practical realities of it (Kissinger, H. 2015). However, it wasn't until the post-World War II era that the true implications of Westphalia began to manifest in the form of a bipolar world order. The bipolar world order that emerged after World War II was characterized by the dominance of two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 heralded the dawn of a unipolar world order characterized by American hegemony and the ascendancy of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism as the prevailing norms of governance. In the twenty-first century, the world order stands at a crossroads, buffeted by a confluence of geopolitical, technological, and environmental upheavals that have upended traditional paradigms of power and governance. This concept has recently become the focal point of academic discourse, given its pervasive influence on diplomatic relations, trade dynamics, security paradigms, and human rights discourse. In recent years, the concept of world order has been used more often to depict changes in today's international system. Following the 2008 financial crisis and China's growing economic power, experts and scholars frequently argue that the United States has lost its dominant position. They suggest that a significant shift away from unipolarity is taking place (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016). As a result, there is growing interest among government analysts, policymakers, and the academic community in comprehending the concept of world order. However, the field of world order is vast and diverse, encompassing a wide range of disciplines and perspectives, including studies focusing on polarity and power dynamics among nations. This diversity poses a significant challenge for researchers attempting to synthesize an objective review of world-order literature under a single framework. The interdisciplinary



nature of the field results in a multitude of theories, methodologies, and interpretations. As a result, achieving a comprehensive understanding of world order necessitates navigating through a complex tapestry of ideas and approaches, making the task of providing a unified analysis challenging. The increasing number of publications makes it essential to take a meta-perspective of the world-order research field.

Rationale of the study

The contemporary global order is often described as being in a state of crisis, yet there is little agreement on whether this crisis is intrinsic to the order itself or indicative of a deeper systemic issue. While the literature on changing power dynamics, global challenges, the decline of the West, the rise of regional groupings, shifts in the global power hierarchy, and the increasing importance of maritime security is rapidly expanding, clarity and consensus on the emergence of a post-Western or post-American world order remain lacking. Previous research has predominantly addressed historical perspectives on world order, Euro-centric pluralistic international order, the American concept of order, the decline of US hegemony, the decline of the West, the emerging Asian century, and the post-American world order. However, these studies have yielded inconclusive results, and scholars hold differing views on the polycentric nature of the world order and whether we are moving towards a new world order or if this is merely rhetorical. Currently, the rise of various multi and mini-lateral groups in different global regions suggests signs of multipolarity. Key questions remain unanswered, such as whether economic relations are supplanting political ones in the international arena, the validity of the Asian century narrative, the role of non-state actors, and the roles of Western stable powers and rising powers like China, Japan, Brazil, and India in these changing dynamics. Moreover, there is a notable gap in bibliometric studies on the topic of world order. Despite the extensive qualitative and quantitative research available, there has been little effort to systematically analyze and map the scholarly literature on this subject using bibliometric methods. This represents a significant gap in the existing research, as bibliometric studies could provide valuable insights into the evolution, trends, and key contributors to the discourse on world order. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing a thorough bibliometric analysis of world order. The following research questions will be addressed by this study:

RQ1: What publication trend is the world order field currently experiencing? Which countries, organizations, authors, and articles have had the biggest impact on this field?

RQ2: What is the current state of the field's intellectual structure? In what way might it be incorporated to create a conceptual framework?

RQ3: What are the future directions for this field of study, and what research trends are now influencing world order research?

The research offers an intricate examination of thematic clusters, identifying potential avenues for future research within each cluster. Furthermore, the knowledge domains have been defined, which has prepared the way for the development of a conceptual framework, an essential instrument for addressing potential gaps in existing literature.

The article's structure is as follows: The initial section provides an explanation of the research methodology, outlining the process of data retrieval and screening.



Subsequently, the analysis and findings section delineate the results of co-citation and co-occurrence networks. This is followed by an examination of clusters identified through bibliographic coupling analysis and the proposal of future research directions. A subsequent section introduces a conceptual framework derived from cluster themes. Finally, the discussion segment delves into the theoretical and practical implications as well as the study's limitations.

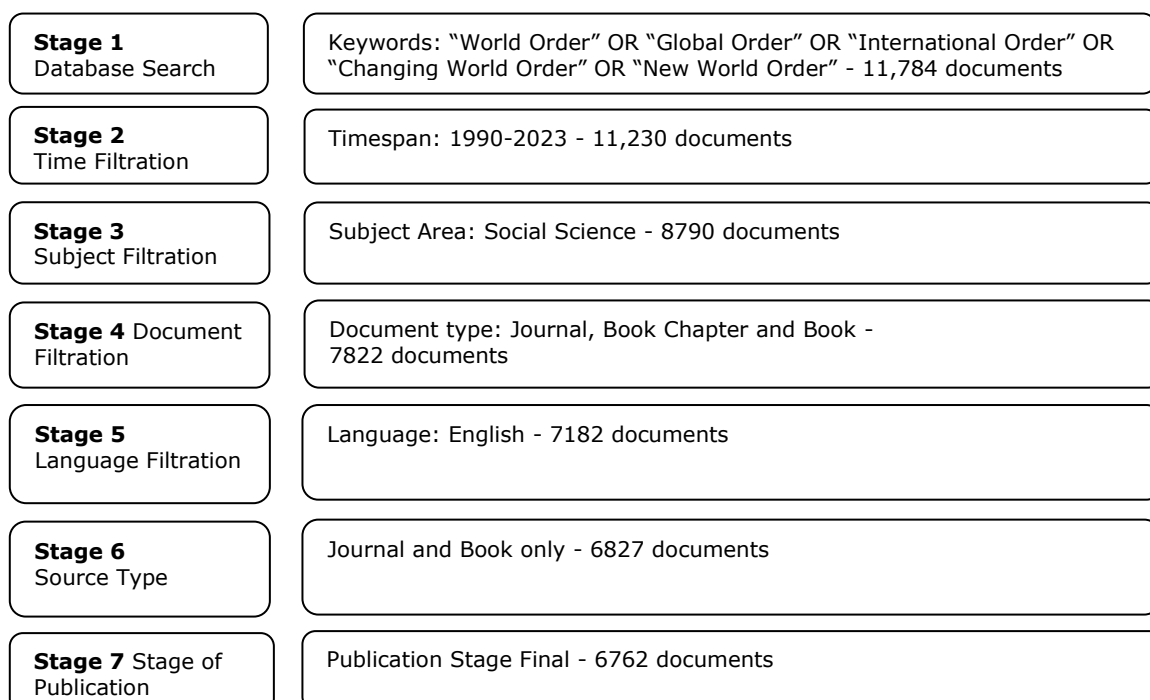
Material and Methods

In the current article, bibliometric analysis is employed for three key reasons, contributing to the growing number of systematic literature reviews using this approach. Firstly, bibliometric analysis assists in organizing and categorizing literature on any subject, offering a structured perspective on the advancement of knowledge in a particular field through scientific mapping. Secondly, this method facilitates retrospective analysis by identifying trends, research areas, overarching themes, and subtopics within the field. Lastly, it provides an overview of trends such as prominent authors, papers, journals, and nations related to the subject being researched, thereby supporting specific areas and sources of interest in the discipline. Synthesizing various outputs and knowledge gained through different bibliometric methodologies enables researchers and practitioners to identify research gaps and establish future research directions.

Methodology for Searching and Retrieving Data"

The retrieval, selection, and analysis of data from the literature were done using a multi-stage method (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Flow Diagram of Search Strategy



Source: Author (s)



The first stage involved conducting an extensive search in the Scopus database by selecting keywords such as World Order, Global Order, International Order, Changing World Order, and New World Order. The keyword selection was not limited to 'World Order' alone. The next step was figuring out which database to use to gather articles. As a dependable database for gathering articles for quantitative analysis, Scopus is highly recognized throughout the world (Guerrero-Baena et al., 2015; Duran-Sanchez et al., 2019; Valenzuela-Fernandez et al., 2019). We combed over articles in the World Order field using the Scopus database.

This database is considered to be the largest multidisciplinary collection of peer-reviewed literature in the field of social sciences (Norris & Oppenheim, 2007). As of now, Scopus contains over 94 million documents with more than 2.4 billion cited references. It is important to note that these numbers are subject to change as the database is regularly updated. The data was accessed on April 8, 2024, and includes influential articles dating back to 1979 up to 2024, with a larger concentration of articles from 1990 onwards. The database includes various types of documents such as research articles, book chapters, reviews, letters, and notes, totaling more than 11,230. After the initial extraction of documents based on selected keywords, the next step involved the elimination of irrelevant documents. A wide range of papers from several disciplines, including food science, psychology, marketing, and other facets of life, were included in the list. As such, it needed to be carefully screened. After removing articles by scrutinizing the headline and keywords and restricting the topic to social sciences, we were left with 8790 documents. After more screening that looked at the language, source type, and document type, the total was reduced to 6827. Upon choosing the ultimate publication phase, we ultimately found 6762 papers that pertain to the field of world order.

The collection of studies involved gathering bibliographic data in CSV format from Scopus. The data obtained from the Scopus database included various metrics such as h-index, citations per paper and author, total publications and citations. We also tracked multiple forms of citation and publication information using Scopus IDs. The VOS Viewer, a tool for clustering and creating network (.net) files, was used to process the CSV file. The tool helped in visually representing co-occurrence and co-authorship networks and calculating network centralities. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the study on a global scale, network analyses such as keyword analysis, co-authorship analysis, co-citation analysis, and bibliographic coupling analysis were performed. The study period's most common themes were identified through keyword analysis.

The relationships between contributing authors, institutions, and nations were investigated by the co-authorship analysis. In addition, this analysis contributes to our understanding of the collaboration network, which can help us comprehend a particular research topic even better (Bhukya et al., 2022; Randhawa et al., 2016).



Findings and analysis

Trends and development of World Order research

Main Information

After extracting the search query from the Scopus database, I identified the main features provided in Table 1. The dataset includes a total of 6,762 documents spanning from 1920 to 2023. On average, each item has 12.28 citations and 329408 references. The consistent citation of these materials suggests that the study of international order has been ongoing for quite some time, possibly even before World War II, highlighting the enduring relevance of this academic field.

Table 1. Main Information Regarding Selected Articles

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	1990:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	2981
Documents	6762
Annual Growth Rate %	13.83
Document Average Age	9.69
Average citations per doc	12.28
References	329408
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	1559
Author's Keywords (DE)	8658
AUTHORS	
Authors	6801
Authors of single-authored docs	4105
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	5142
Co-Authors per doc	1.32
International co-authorships %	7.705

Source: Author (s)

Annual Publication Trends

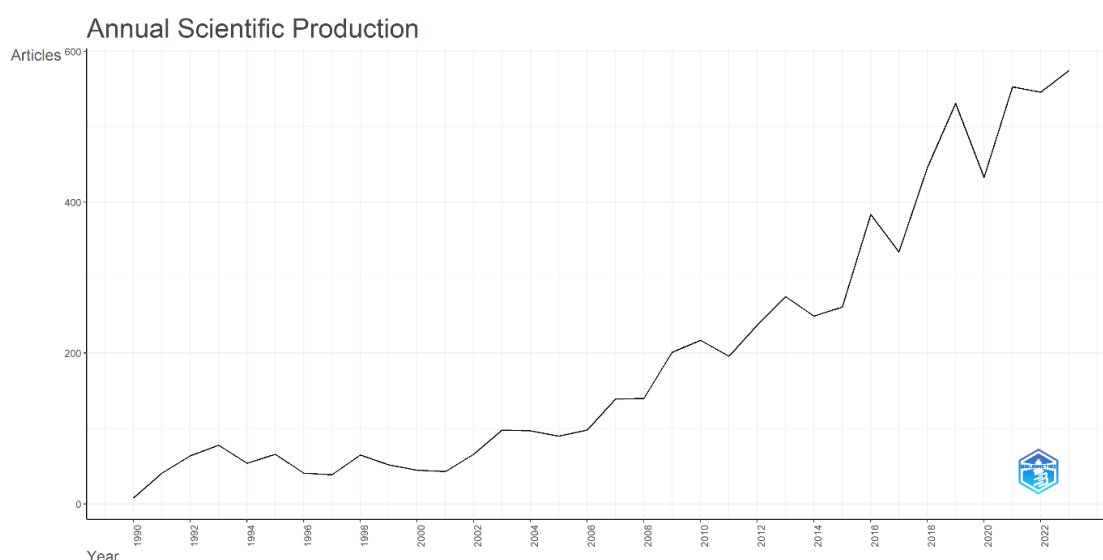
Figure 2 highlights the annual growth in scientific publications on world order from 1990 to 2023. From 1990 to 2000, article production remained low, fluctuating between 0 and 200 annually, indicating limited scholarly interest. A gradual increase occurred between 2001 and 2007, with a noticeable rise from 2005, as publications surpassed 200 per year by 2007. From 2008 to 2015, the number of articles increased steadily, reaching around 400 annually by 2015, reflecting growing academic attention, likely due to evolving global geopolitical dynamics.

In recent years, from 2016 to 2023, the growth rate accelerated, surpassing 500 articles per year from 2017 onwards, and approaching 600 by 2023, marking the highest level of scholarly output on world order to date. This trend reflects the increasing relevance of



world order studies in response to contemporary global challenges, underscoring the field's importance within international relations and related disciplines.

Figure 2. Annual Publications Trend



Source: Author (s)

Most Productive Journals

In order to comprehend the most eminent publications on the topic of World Order, this study determined the top 10 contributing journals (see Table 2).

Table 2. Most Productive Journals

TOP 10 CONTRIBUTING JOURNALS							
S.No.	Name of the Journal	Publisher	TP	TC	AC	h	g
1.	International Affairs	Oxford University Press	93	3985	42.84	33	62
2.	Third World Quarterly	Taylor & Francis	85	3022	35.55	30	53
3.	International Politics	Palgrave Macmillan	70	611	8.72	13	20
4.	Globalizations	Taylor & Francis	55	489	8.89	13	18
5.	Review of International Studies	Cambridge University Press	55	1986	36.10	21	44
6.	European Journal of International Relations	Sage	53	1584	29.88	21	39
7.	International Relations	Sage	50	835	16.7	15	27
8.	Cambridge Review of International Affairs	Taylor & Francis	43	363	8.44	10	17
9.	Millenium: Journal of International Studies	Sage	39	1010	25.89	18	31
10.	Pacific Review	Taylor & Francis	38	413	10.86	12	18

Source: Author (s)



Table 2 lists the top 10 contributing journals in the field of international affairs, detailing metrics such as total publications (TP), total citations (TC), average citations per publication (AC), h-index, and g-index. "International Affairs" leads with 93 publications and the highest average citations (42.84), reflecting its strong impact. "Third World Quarterly," published by Taylor & Francis, follows with 85 publications and notable citation metrics (AC of 35.55). "International Politics," from Palgrave Macmillan, has 70 publications but a lower average citation rate (8.72). "Globalizations" and the "Review of International Studies" (Cambridge University Press) have 55 publications each, with the latter having a significantly higher citation impact (AC of 36.10). Other notable journals include the "European Journal of International Relations" (Sage) with 53 publications and strong citation metrics, and "Millennium: Journal of International Studies" (Sage), which, despite fewer publications, maintains a solid citation profile. The "Pacific Review" (Taylor & Francis) rounds out the list with 38 publications. These journals collectively contribute significantly to the discourse on international affairs, as evidenced by their citation and publication metrics.

Country-Perspective Overview

Table 3. Top Publishing Countries on World Order

TOP 10 PUBLISHING COUNTRIES			
S.No.	Country	TC	Average Article Citation
1.	USA	6518	13.40
2.	UK	6408	15.60
3.	Canada	1553	11.10
4.	Australia	1378	10.10
5.	Germany	1296	11.40
6.	China	1217	8.40
7.	Netherlands	963	19.70
8.	South Africa	617	14.70
9.	Denmark	586	16.30
10.	Sweden	502	13.60

Source: Author (s)

The table on the "Top 10 Publishing Countries" lists countries by their total number of citations (TC) and the average number of citations per article. The USA tops the list with 6518 citations and an average of 13.40 citations per article, showcasing its dominant role in academic publishing. The UK follows closely with 6408 citations and a higher average citation rate of 15.60, indicating a strong influence in highly cited research. Canada ranks third with 1553 citations and an average of 11.10, highlighting its significant yet smaller contribution compared to the USA and UK. Australia and Germany round out the top five, with citation counts of 1378 and 1296 and average citations per article of 10.10 and 11.40, respectively, demonstrating their active participation in global research. China, the Netherlands, South Africa, Denmark, and Sweden complete the list, with the Netherlands standing out for its high average citation rate of 19.70, suggesting its



research is particularly impactful. This table illustrates the geographic distribution of academic influence and highlights the country's leading in scholarly contributions.

Most Cited Documents (Global)

Table 4. Most Cited Documents (Global)

S.No.	Author(s)	Document Title	Source Title	TC
1.	Ikenberry GJ (2009)	After Victory: Institution, Strategic Restraint, & the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars	Princeton University Press	927
2.	Mazower M. (2009)	No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the UN	Princeton University Press	713
3.	Adler E. (1992)	Conclusion: Epistemic Communities, World Order and the creation of a reflective research program	International Organization	677
4.	Balakrishnan Rajagopal (2003)	International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements and Third World Resistance	Cambridge University Press	661
5.	Ikenberry GJ (2018)	The End of Liberal International Order?	Oxford University Press	561
6.	Andrew Hurrell (2007)	On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society	Oxford University Press	548
7.	Ikenberry GJ (2011)	Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and transformation of the American World Order	Princeton University Press	490
8.	Mark Purcell (2003)	Citizenship and the Right to the Global City: Reimagining the Capitalist World Order	International Journal of Urban and Regional Research	449
9.	Amitav Acharya (2014)	Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies	International Studies Quarterly	431
10.	Stefan Halper (2004)	America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order	Cambridge University Press	392

Source: Author (s)

The "Most Cited Documents (Global)" table provides a list of the top ten most cited documents in the context of world order studies. At the top is Ikenberry, G. John. (2019) book "After Victory: Institution Strategic Restraint & the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars," published by Princeton University Press, with 927 citations. This work explores how victorious powers use institutions to maintain post-war order with historical cases



such as the post-Napoleonic era, the aftermath of World War I, and the post-World War II period to understand how leading states establish enduring international orders. Following this is Mazower, M. M. (2009) book "No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the UN," also from Princeton University Press, with 713 citations, discussing the UN's formation in the context of decolonization. It offers a critical examination of the historical and ideological roots of the United Nations. (Adler & Haas, 1992) article on epistemic communities in "International Organization" is third with 677 citations, contributing to the understanding of knowledge networks in international relations. It explores the concept of epistemic communities and their role in shaping international policy and world order. Rajagopal's 2003 book "International Law from Below," which discusses development, social movements, and third-world resistance, has 661 citations. Rajagopal challenges the traditional, top-down approach to international law, which often reflects the interests of powerful states and elites, and instead highlights the role of grassroots movements in shaping legal norms and practices. Ikenberry appears again with his 2018 article "The End of Liberal International Order?" at 561 citations which critically examines the challenges and uncertainties facing the liberal international order in the contemporary global landscape. These documents are pivotal in shaping contemporary understandings of international relations and global governance.

Top Contributing authors

Table 5. Most Productive Authors

S.No.	Author Name	TC	TP	h	g	M	PY_start
1.	Ikenberry, GJ.	3447	27	18	27	0.667	1998
2.	Falk, R.	195	24	8	13	0.267	1995
3.	Acharya, A.	1198	18	10	18	0.303	1992
4.	M Smith	165	14	6	12	0.286	2004
5.	Cox, RW.	693	13	6	13	0.182	1992
6.	Philips Andrew	194	13	7	13	0.467	2010
7.	Thakur, R.	213	13	4	13	0.235	2008
8.	Buzan, B.	776	12	7	12	0.250	1997
9.	HE K	107	12	4	10	0.444	2016
10.	Held, D.	273	12	6	12	0.182	1992

Source: Author (s)

The "Top Contributing Authors" table identifies the most influential scholars in world order studies, ranked by total citations (TC), total publications (TP), h-index, g-index, m-index, and the year they began publishing (PY_start). G.J. Ikenberry leads with 3447 citations and 27 publications, known for his influential work on international relations and the liberal world order. His research advocates for multilateralism and the strategic use of international institutions to promote global cooperation. Richard Falk, with 195 citations

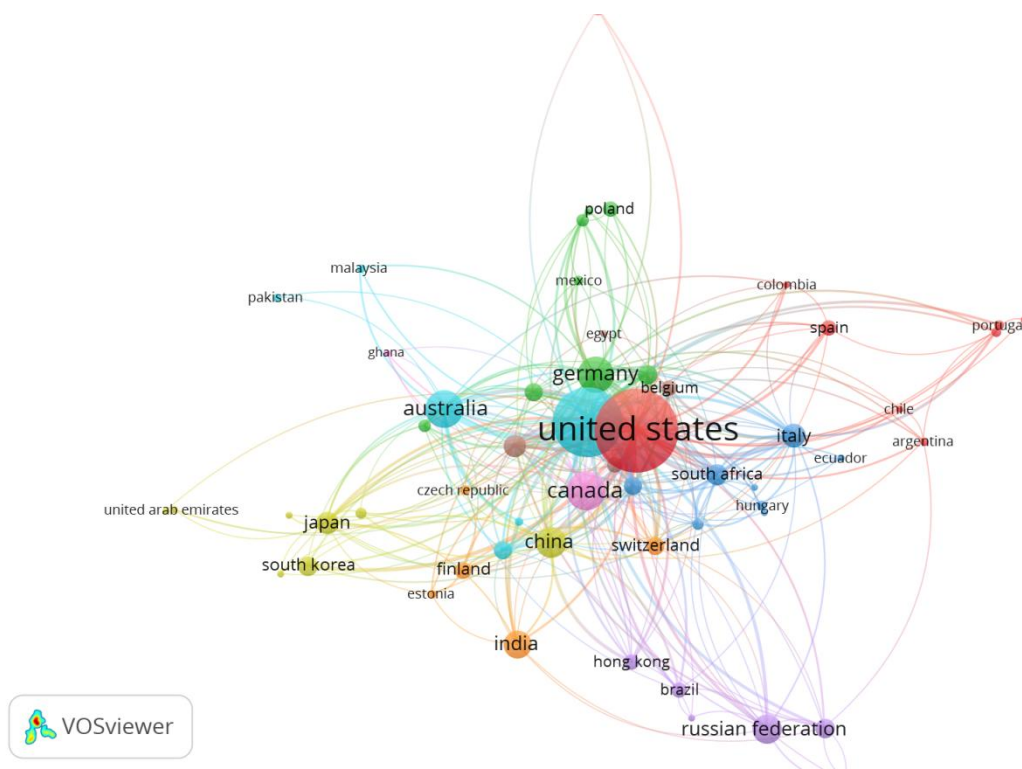


and 24 publications, has significantly contributed to discussions on global governance and human rights. Amitav Acharya, with 1198 citations and 18 publications, focuses on regionalism and non-Western contributions to international studies, particularly in his book *The End of American World Order*, which examines the rise of a multipolar world. M. Smith (165 citations) and Robert Cox (693 citations) have also contributed, with Cox recognized for his critical theory approach. Andrew Philips and Ramesh Thakur, both with around 13 publications, explore global security and international institutions. Barry Buzan, with 776 citations, is notable for his work on security studies and international society theory. Ke He and David Held, each with 12 publications, have contributed to political theory and global democracy. These scholars have significantly shaped the field of global order and international relations through their research and theoretical contributions.

Co-authorship network of countries in world order

The dynamics and structure of the world order knowledge area will now be visualized. The co-authorship network serves as an example of how academics from different universities and nations collaborate on projects related to academia (Donthu et al., 2020)

Figure 3



Source: Author(s)

The graph in Figure 3 displays a network of co-authorship among 57 countries that have co-authored at least six scientific publications. This network consists of 316 links and 979

In a study article, scholars from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany collaborated with Chinese scholars. The United Kingdom is a member of cluster six (sky blue) and is the second largest circle. The largest cluster (red), consisting of eight members, shows collaboration among authors from institutions in democratic countries with governance based on representative democracy principles. All the countries in the red cluster actively participate in initiatives to promote international peace and security.

Keyword co-occurrence or co-word analysis can be used to expand on the content of each topic cluster and suggest future prospects for certain study domains (Donthu et al., 2021). According to (Goel et al., 2021), there is a greater probability of a similar topic among keywords that belong to the same cluster. We developed a term thesaurus file based on recommendations from (Van Eck et al., 2010).

The network graph visualizes the relationships between numerous concepts in international relations. The nodes are colored and sized to represent different clusters and their relative importance. The graph shows a dense web of connections between various concepts.

Key Concepts and Clusters:

- Red Cluster (Central):** Includes 'international order', 'globalization', 'global order', 'sovereignty', 'crisis', 'security', 'terrorism', 'empire', 'cold war', 'war', 'geopolitics', 'imperialism', 'diplomacy', 'international relations', 'china', 'india', 'soft power', 'belt and road initiative', 'covid-19', 'governance', 'neoliberalism', 'international institutions', 'united nations', 'global governance', 'multipolarity', 'us foreign policy', 'multilateralism', 'regionalism', 'liberalism', 'liberal international order', 'democracy', 'nato', 'european union', 'russia', 'ukraine', 'europe', 'brics'.
- Green Cluster (Top):** Includes 'liberal international order', 'democracy', 'nato', 'european union', 'russia', 'ukraine', 'europe', 'brics'.
- Blue Cluster (Right):** Includes 'multipolarity', 'us foreign policy', 'multilateralism', 'regionalism', 'liberalism', 'liberal international order', 'democracy', 'nato', 'european union', 'russia', 'ukraine', 'europe', 'brics'.
- Purple Cluster (Bottom):** Includes 'terrorism', 'empire', 'cold war', 'war', 'geopolitics', 'imperialism', 'diplomacy', 'international relations', 'china', 'india', 'soft power', 'belt and road initiative', 'covid-19', 'governance', 'neoliberalism', 'international institutions', 'united nations', 'global governance', 'multipolarity', 'us foreign policy', 'multilateralism', 'regionalism', 'liberalism', 'liberal international order', 'democracy', 'nato', 'european union', 'russia', 'ukraine', 'europe', 'brics'.

 VOSviewer

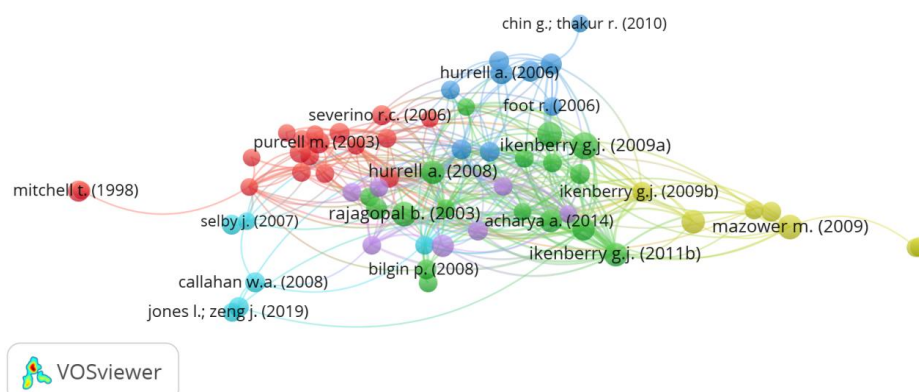


The research paper displays a graph showing the significance and relationship between key topics. There were 59 keywords that appeared more than 30 times, resulting in 1029 connections with a total connection strength of 3181. The network formed five clusters, each represented by a different color. The size of the colored circles corresponds to the frequency of the keyword's appearance. The thickness of the lines connecting the keywords indicates the strength of their relationship - the thicker the line, the stronger the correlation between the two words.

The investigation focused on the use of terms related to international order and China. The first cluster (red) includes 16 elements such as united nations, sovereignty, power, legitimacy, international society, international law, international institutions, human rights, governance, globalization, global order, global governance, diplomacy, cosmopolitan, and climate change. In this cluster, "international order" is the most frequently used term, with 52 links and a total link strength of 309. The second largest node (blue) in the network is China, indicating its significance in the research topic. The third cluster includes 12 items related to world order, soft power, neoliberalism, international relations, India, global south, development, COVID-19, China, BRICS, Belt and Road Initiative, and Africa. The second cluster (green) covers 13 items such as US foreign policy, regionalism, populism, multipolarity, multilateralism, liberalism, liberal order, liberal international order, identity, hegemony, globalization, foreign policy, and crisis. The fourth cluster (yellow) focuses on democracy, European Union, Europe, EU, NATO, Russia, security, Ukraine, and United States. Lastly, the last cluster (purple) discusses key issues including cold war, empire, geopolitics, imperialism, Japan, nationalism, new world order, terrorism, and war.

Bibliographic coupling of documents

Figure 5



Source: Author (s)

Referencing two documents with the same reference is known as bibliographic coupling (Zainuldin& Lui, 2022). If two articles have a sizable number of similar citations, that



indicates a strong coupling strength (Jain et al., 2021). As a result, there is a good chance that articles referencing the same references will have content overlap. According to (Koseoglu et al., 2016) and (Zainuldin & Lui, 2022), it provides an active approach to analyzing the topic's intellectual structure. To obtain the knowledge clusters in our cross-listing experiment, we therefore used bibliographic coupling. Cluster construction requires a minimum of 115 times the threshold level because many publications have been cited together. In the final eight clusters, there were 64 entries.

Cluster 1: Foundational Theories and Early Research

The largest network node is Cluster 1, which is indicated in red (see Figure 5). The red cluster centers around foundational theories and seminal works, with "Mitchell T. (1998)" as a prominent document. This cluster likely includes key early research that has significantly influenced the field. The documents here may discuss core theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and pioneering studies that set the stage for subsequent research. The strong internal connections suggest that these works are frequently cited together, indicating their foundational importance in establishing the basic principles and concepts within the field.

Cluster 2: Comprehensive Reviews and Key Theories (Late 2000s - Early 2010s)

The second largest network in the dataset is Cluster 2, which is indicated by the green tint. The green cluster features comprehensive reviews and key theoretical contributions published in the late 2000s and early 2010s. Notable documents include "Ikenberry G.J. (2009a, 2009b, 2011b)" and "Acharya A. (2014)". This cluster likely delves into discussions on global governance, institutionalism, and international political theories. The documents within this cluster are highly interconnected, suggesting that these works are pivotal in synthesizing existing knowledge and proposing new theoretical insights that have shaped contemporary understandings in the field.

Cluster 3: Mid-2000s Theoretical and Empirical Studies

Bubbles in the colour blue are used to symbolize Cluster 3. The blue cluster consists of documents primarily focused on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies conducted around the mid-2000s. Key documents in this cluster include works by "Hurrell A. (2006, 2008)", "Foot R. (2006)", and "Chin G.; Thakur R. (2010)". The topics covered likely involve international relations, governance, and policy studies. The cluster's interconnectedness reflects a rich body of research that builds on shared theoretical underpinnings and addresses common empirical questions, contributing to the development and refinement of theories during this period.



Cluster 4: Emerging Trends and Specialized Research

The yellow cluster includes more recent or specialized documents, with "Mazower M. (2009)" as a key work. This cluster likely addresses emerging trends or niche areas within the broader field. The topics may involve newer theoretical approaches, specific case studies, or contemporary issues that reflect ongoing developments and shifts in research focus. The connections within this cluster indicate that these documents are exploring cutting-edge ideas or responding to recent developments in the field.

Cluster 5: Regional and Security Studies (Mid to Late 2000s)

The purple cluster comprises a mix of theoretical and empirical studies from the mid to late 2000s, with key documents like "Bilgin P. (2008)" and "Rajagopal B. (2003)". The research in this cluster likely deals with regional studies, security issues, and specific geopolitical events. The documents are interconnected, suggesting that they share common themes and contribute to a cohesive body of literature that addresses regional dynamics and security concerns from various perspectives.

Cluster 6: Cultural, Social, and Interdisciplinary Research

The cyan cluster focuses on cultural, social, and interdisciplinary aspects, with key documents such as "Callahan W.A. (2008)", "Selby J. (2007)", and "Jones L.; Zeng J. (2019)". This cluster likely explores cultural analysis, social impact studies, and interdisciplinary research that bridges multiple fields. The interconnectedness within the cluster indicates a shared interest in understanding the social and cultural dimensions of the broader field, contributing to a more holistic and multifaceted perspective.

These cluster headings and explanations provide a structured overview of the different thematic areas represented in the bibliographic coupling diagram, highlighting the key focuses and contributions of each group of documents.

Scope for further study

A bibliometric analysis of world order identifies key areas for further research. Non-Western contributions from the Global South call into question Western-centric perspectives, underlining the importance of investigating how these voices impact global discourse. The growing impact of developing countries such as China, India, and the EU emphasizes the need of analyzing multipolarity using publishing trends to identify relevant scholars and themes. The roles of regional organizations in international stability and policy, as well as the intersections of technology, AI, and cybersecurity with governance, need to be addressed. The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed global priorities, emphasizing health security and global governance changes. These ideas can serve as a foundation for rigorous, future-oriented research.

[illegible]

Limitations of study

Conclusion

19



geographical regions, illustrating the truly globalized nature of research in this field. These collaborative networks not only highlight the interconnectedness of ideas but also underscore the diverse perspectives that enrich the study of world order dynamics. Moreover, this study identifies several thematic clusters that have emerged as focal points of research, including the role of emerging powers in shaping global order, the effectiveness of international institutions in addressing transnational challenges, and the implications of technological advancements on geopolitical landscapes. By synthesizing extensive literature into actionable insights, this analysis lays a solid foundation for further inquiry into how these themes will continue to shape the future of international relations and global governance. By illuminating key trends and identifying areas for future exploration, this study fosters ongoing discussions and advancements in our understanding of world order in the 21st century.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: NAVIGATING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the field of International Relations (IR) by reshaping diplomacy, security, and global governance. This article employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, systematically reviewing and synthesizing existing literature to analyse AI's applications and implications in IR. It explores AI's potential to enhance diplomatic decision-making through predictive analytics and automated negotiation systems, as well as its applications in cybersecurity and military technologies. The article also highlights the ethical and regulatory challenges posed by AI, such as algorithmic bias, weaponization, and disparities in global access to AI technologies. While AI offers innovative solutions for global challenges, such as climate change and public health, its integration into the global system demands robust international frameworks and ethical safeguards. Recommendations include promoting equitable AI access, fostering international cooperation, and leveraging AI for peacebuilding and sustainable development. This article contributes to the growing discourse on the intersection of AI and IR, emphasizing the need for responsible and inclusive global governance.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, International Relations, Diplomacy, Cybersecurity, Governance.

Resumo

A Inteligência Artificial (IA) está a transformar o campo das Relações Internacionais (RI), remodelando a diplomacia, a segurança e a governança global. Este artigo emprega uma metodologia descritiva-analítica, revendo e sintetizando sistematicamente a literatura existente para analisar as aplicações e implicações da IA nas RI. Explora o potencial da IA para melhorar a tomada de decisões diplomáticas através de análises preditivas e sistemas de negociação automatizados, bem como as suas aplicações em cibersegurança e tecnologias militares. O artigo também destaca os desafios éticos e regulatórios impostos pela IA, como viés algorítmico, militarização e disparidades no acesso global às tecnologias de IA. Embora a IA ofereça soluções inovadoras para desafios globais, como alterações climáticas e saúde pública, a sua integração no sistema global exige estruturas internacionais robustas e



salvaguardas éticas. As recomendações incluem a promoção do acesso equitativo à IA, o fomento da cooperação internacional e o aproveitamento da IA para a construção da paz e o desenvolvimento sustentável. Este artigo contribui para o crescente discurso sobre a interseção entre IA e RI, enfatizando a necessidade de uma governança global responsável e inclusiva.

Palavras-chave

Inteligência Artificial, Relações Internacionais, Diplomacia, Cibersegurança, Governança.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: NAVIGATING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought about transformative changes across various sectors, including healthcare, education, finance, and governance. In the realm of International Relations (IR), AI is emerging as a notable change, influencing how states interact, negotiate, and respond to global challenges. By automating complex processes, analysing vast amounts of data, and providing actionable insights, AI has the potential to enhance decision-making, improve diplomatic outcomes, and address pressing global issues such as climate change and pandemics.

However, these advancements come with significant challenges. The integration of AI into IR raises ethical dilemmas, such as algorithmic bias and the potential misuse of AI in autonomous weapons and surveillance. Moreover, disparities in AI adoption and technological capability among nations risk widening the global development gap, leading to unequal power dynamics in the international system. As such, the use of AI in IR is not merely a technological shift but a complex socio-political evolution that requires careful governance and collaboration.

This article employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, systematically reviewing existing literature and case studies. The ideas of other authors have been organized thematically into domains such as diplomacy, security, digital public diplomacy, cybersecurity, and global governance. This approach allows for a clear synthesis of theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and policy implications, while highlighting emerging trends and challenges (Fatai et al., 2023, p. 2030; Galliano et al., 2024, pp. 36-37).

AI in Diplomacy and Decision-Making

AI has begun to revolutionize diplomacy by introducing tools that streamline decision-making and enhance diplomatic outcomes. By processing vast datasets and providing actionable insights, AI is enabling diplomats and policymakers to respond more effectively to global challenges.



Predictive Analytics in Diplomacy

Predictive analytics is one of the most transformative applications of AI in diplomacy, enabling states to anticipate global challenges and take pre-emptive actions. By analysing large datasets, predictive models driven by AI identify trends and provide actionable insights, helping policymakers make informed decisions in complex international scenarios (Fatai et al., 2023, pp. 2032-2035).

Anticipating Crises and Conflicts

AI-powered predictive tools are particularly valuable in crisis anticipation and conflict prevention. By integrating historical data, social media trends, economic indicators, and real-time intelligence, these systems can identify early warning signs of potential crises. For example, the European Union's Early Warning System employs machine learning algorithms to monitor risk factors such as political instability, migration patterns, and economic shocks. This system enables timely interventions that mitigate the risk of escalation and reduce the humanitarian and political costs of crises (Galliano et al., 2024, pp. 40-42).

Enhancing Policy Formulation

Predictive analytics supports policymaking based on evidence by simulating the outcomes of various strategies. Through scenario modelling, AI allows diplomats to explore potential consequences of decisions in areas such as trade negotiations, conflict resolution, and climate agreements. For instance, AI models can simulate the impact of economic sanctions on a target nation's stability, enabling policymakers to choose strategies with the desired outcomes while minimizing unintended consequences (Bali & Rapelanoro, 2021, p. 28).

Case Studies in Predictive Analytics

The United Nations Global Pulse initiative exemplifies the use of AI in humanitarian diplomacy. By leveraging big data and predictive analytics, the program forecasts crises such as food shortages, disease outbreaks, and refugee movements, facilitating international aid coordination. Similarly, systems driven by AI have been used to identify patterns of disinformation campaigns that threaten democratic processes, allowing states to respond proactively (Manor, 2019, pp. 83-101).

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Despite its advantages, predictive analytics in diplomacy faces significant challenges. The quality of predictions depends heavily on the availability and accuracy of data. Incomplete or biased datasets can lead to flawed forecasts, undermining decision-making processes. Moreover, the use of predictive tools raises ethical concerns, such as privacy violations



and the potential misuse of predictive insights for coercive or manipulative purposes (Helbing, 2015, p. 12).

Another crucial challenge concerns the quality and representativeness of the data on which AI systems rely. In diplomacy and conflict prediction, biased or incomplete datasets can distort forecasts, leading to misguided or unjust outcomes. For instance, when predictive models rely predominantly on data from developed countries, they risk neglecting the political and cultural specificities of the Global South, thereby reinforcing existing inequalities in global governance (Montgomery, 2024, pp. 5–6). Helbing (2015, p. 12) similarly warns that the unchecked use of incomplete data may amplify algorithmic bias and erode trust in policy processes driven by AI. Ensuring transparency in data provenance and promoting human oversight are thus critical to maintaining legitimacy and accountability in decision-making assisted by AI.

Automated Negotiation Systems

Automated negotiation systems powered by AI are revolutionizing the way international agreements and conflict resolutions are approached. These systems utilize sophisticated algorithms to analyse data, evaluate stakeholders' preferences, and recommend optimal solutions. By enhancing efficiency and reducing bias, platforms driven by AI are proving to be valuable tools in diplomatic and multilateral negotiation processes (Katsh & Rabinovich-Einy, 2017, pp. 50-52).

Enhancing Multilateral Negotiations

In multilateral negotiations, where diverse interests and complex trade-offs often challenge consensus, AI systems provide a structured and efficient approach. Automated negotiation platforms analyse data from all parties, model preferences, and simulate possible outcomes to identify win-win scenarios. These tools have been particularly effective in trade negotiations, climate agreements, and disputes sharing resource, offering solutions that balance conflicting priorities (Bjola & Manor, 2024, pp. 1-6).

Data-Driven Decision Support

AI systems enhance human negotiators' capabilities by identifying patterns and generating recommendations based on evidence. For instance, an AI system might evaluate economic data, political alliances, and cultural dynamics to suggest negotiation strategies tailored to specific contexts. These platforms reduce the time required for data analysis, allowing diplomats to focus on high-level decision-making (Manor, 2019, pp. 83-101).

Case Studies in Automated Negotiation

One example of automated negotiation systems in action is the development of AI tools for trade dispute resolution in the World Trade Organization (WTO). AI algorithms evaluate historical data on trade conflicts, analyse the legal frameworks involved, and



propose resolutions that align with international laws and stakeholders' interests. Similarly, in environmental diplomacy, tools driven by AI tools have been used to facilitate agreements on carbon emissions by modelling the economic impact of various policy options for participating nations (Manor, 2019, pp. 83-101).

Mitigating Bias and Enhancing Transparency

By relying on data and algorithmic processes, automated negotiation systems aim to minimize the influence of human bias. These systems can enhance transparency in negotiations by providing a clear rationale for suggested outcomes, helping to build trust among parties. Additionally, they ensure that less influential states or parties have access to objective data-driven support, levelling the playing field in global diplomacy (Uslu, 2024, pp. 160-162).

Digital Public Diplomacy

Digital public diplomacy, driven by AI, has become a vital tool for states seeking to shape international narratives, engage with foreign publics, and influence global perceptions. By leveraging analytics and communication platforms driven by AI, governments can monitor sentiment, craft targeted messages, and respond dynamically to global issues in real time (Manor, 2019, pp. 83-101).

Sentiment Analysis and Public Opinion Monitoring

Tools powered by AI enable governments to analyse vast volumes of data from social media, news platforms, and online forums. Sentiment analysis algorithms assess public opinion, identifying trends, grievances, and areas of interest across diverse populations. For instance, during major international events or crises, governments can use AI to gauge global reactions and adapt their diplomatic messaging accordingly (Manor, 2019, pp. 55-56). These insights allow diplomats to align their strategies with public sentiment, fostering more effective engagement with international audiences.

Real-Time Engagement

AI enhances real-time engagement through chatbots and automated communication systems. These tools can respond promptly to public inquiries about policies, providing accurate and consistent information. For example, virtual assistants deployed by foreign ministries driven by AI can interact with citizens and foreigners alike, clarifying visa regulations, travel advisories, or foreign policy initiatives. This accessibility builds trust and transparency, enhancing a state's image on the global stage (Kosack & Fung, 2014, pp. 67-69).



Targeted Messaging and Influence Campaigns

Digital public diplomacy relies on AI's ability to segment audiences and tailor messages to specific demographics. By analysing behavioural patterns, AI tools help governments create personalized campaigns that resonate with target audiences. For example, in promoting climate policies or human rights initiatives, AI algorithms can identify influential social media users and craft messages that align with their interests and values. This precision amplifies the impact of diplomatic efforts, ensuring messages reach the right audiences at the right time (Bjola & Manor, 2024, pp. 1-6).

Case Studies in Digital Public Diplomacy

The use of AI in public diplomacy is exemplified by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, which employs AI tools to track online discourse and measure the effectiveness of its campaigns. Similarly, the U.S. Department of State has utilized AI to counter disinformation campaigns by identifying false narratives and promoting verified information through digital channels (Bontridder & Poulet, 2021, pp. 1-21).

AI in Security and Conflict

AI is increasingly playing a pivotal role in enhancing national and global security, as well as in addressing complex conflict scenarios. AI's capabilities in data analysis, predictive modelling, and automation are being harnessed to improve both defensive and offensive strategies in security and conflict management. However, its use also raises significant ethical concerns and risks, particularly regarding autonomy, accountability, and the potential for misuse in warfare (Chauhan, 2022, pp. 17-24).

AI in Military Strategy and Defense

AI is transforming military strategies by enabling faster, more accurate decision-making and enhancing operational effectiveness. Advanced AI systems are now being integrated into defense systems, from autonomous drones to cyber defense operations. Autonomous vehicles and drones equipped with AI can perform surveillance, reconnaissance, and even targeted strikes without direct human intervention, offering enhanced efficiency and reduced human risk in conflict zones (Négyesi, 2024, pp. 475-476).

For example, the United States and China have heavily invested in defense technologies driven by AI, including autonomous weapons systems and surveillance tools powered by AI. These systems can process large datasets to detect potential threats, such as troop movements or weapon deployments, faster than human analysts, providing significant strategic advantages (Chauhan, 2022, pp. 17-24).



AI in Conflict Prediction and Early Warning Systems

AI is also being deployed to predict and prevent conflicts before they escalate. Machine learning algorithms can analyse historical data, geopolitical patterns, and social media activity to detect early signs of unrest or potential violence. This predictive capability allows international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), to intervene before a conflict fully materializes, mitigating the loss of life and economic disruption (Henningesen, 2023, pp. 141-164).

For example, AI systems are used in early warning systems that monitor for social unrest, such as protests, civil wars, or political instability. These systems analyse data from various sources, including news reports, social media, and economic indicators, to predict where conflicts might arise. The United Nations' use of AI to monitor refugee flows or predict conflict hotspots in Africa is one example of this approach in action. These predictive tools enable timely interventions and the provision of humanitarian assistance before the situation deteriorates (Henningesen, 2023, pp. 141-164).

AI in Cybersecurity and Cyber Warfare

AI is increasingly central to the field of cybersecurity, where it is used to detect and respond to cyber threats in real-time. With the growing threat of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, AI systems are used to identify potential vulnerabilities in computer networks, prevent hacking attempts, and protect sensitive information. These systems can autonomously monitor network traffic, detect unusual behaviour, and deploy defensive measures more quickly than human analysts.

In the context of cyber warfare, AI is also used to launch sophisticated cyberattacks. Malware driven by AI can adapt and evolve to bypass security measures, making it difficult for traditional defense to counter such threats. The use of AI in offensive cyber capabilities, such as launching automated cyberattacks on enemy infrastructure, raises concerns about the escalation of conflicts in the digital realm.

For instance, the use of AI in the 2020 cyberattacks on major governmental agencies, such as the SolarWinds attack, demonstrates the increasing sophistication of cyber warfare tactics powered by AI. The attack, attributed to hackers backed by Russian, involved the use of AI to infiltrate supply chains and government networks, highlighting the vulnerabilities that AI can both protect and exploit (Jasper, 2022, pp. 5-6).

AI and Global Governance

AI is increasingly influencing the landscape of global governance, offering new tools for managing complex transnational issues such as climate change, global health, migration, and international trade. However, while AI has the potential to enhance global cooperation, it also introduces significant challenges regarding regulation, ethics, and the distribution of power on the global stage. Governments, international organizations, and non-state actors are working together to shape the future of AI governance to ensure that its benefits are equitably distributed, while minimizing risks and ensuring human rights protections.



AI in Global Policy Coordination

AI has the capacity to transform international policy coordination by facilitating the collection, analysis, and sharing of data across borders. Tools powered by AI can process vast amounts of data in real-time, helping governments and international organizations respond more quickly to global challenges such as pandemics, natural disasters, and environmental threats.

For example, climate models driven by AI are being used to predict the impact of climate change across different regions, guiding international efforts to mitigate its effects. These models allow the international community to better understand and anticipate the long-term consequences of environmental changes, leading to more informed negotiations in climate summits like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Pereira & Viola, 2020, pp. 15-16). Similarly, AI tools have been used in health governance to track and predict the spread of infectious diseases, facilitating coordinated global responses to pandemics such as COVID-19 (Kaur et al., 2021, pp. 40523-40525). By analysing data from various countries, AI systems can offer recommendations for targeted interventions and resource allocation, improving the effectiveness of global health governance.

AI and Multilateral Institutions

International organizations like the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), and World Health Organization (WHO) are exploring the use of AI to improve their operations, increase transparency, and enhance decision-making. AI can be used to streamline administrative processes, support decision-making driven by AI, and facilitate the monitoring of international agreements. The UN, for example, has invested in AI projects to strengthen peacekeeping and humanitarian response. AI is employed to monitor conflict zones, predict refugee flows, and assess the impact of sanctions or peace agreements. AI tools have also been used by the UN to combat misinformation and disinformation, analysing social media platforms to detect the spread of harmful narratives that could undermine peace efforts or create instability (Kertysova, 2018, pp. 60-62).

Similarly, AI can enhance global trade governance by helping institutions like the WTO predict market trends and evaluate trade disputes. By automating routine processes and offering advanced analysis, AI helps multilateral organizations become more efficient and adaptive in responding to fast-changing global challenges (Bjola & Manor, 2024, pp. 1-6).

AI in International Law and Regulation

The rise of AI poses new questions for international law, particularly in the areas of regulation, accountability, and jurisdiction. One of the key challenges for global governance is the establishment of international norms and rules for the development and deployment of AI technologies. Unlike traditional international treaties, AI



governance requires flexible frameworks that can keep pace with rapid technological advancements.

In this context, international collaboration is critical to creating consistent, enforceable standards for AI deployment. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) have already taken steps toward establishing guidelines and regulations for AI, focusing on areas such as data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and ethical AI use. For example, the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, proposed in 2021, aims to regulate AI systems with elevated risk by ensuring that they are transparent, accountable, and respectful of fundamental rights (Neuwirth, 2022, pp. 20-25).

While initiatives such as the EU Artificial Intelligence Act represent important progress toward regulating systems with elevated risk, they also expose the limits of current governance approaches. Neuwirth (2022, pp. 20-25) argues that although the Act prioritizes transparency and accountability, enforcement mechanisms remain fragmented and uneven across jurisdictions. Khalaileh (2023, pp. 25-27) stresses that the fast-paced nature of AI innovation challenges the ability of international law to adapt effectively. If regulatory frameworks remain fragmented, the result may be competing and incompatible approaches to AI governance, undermining efforts to build coherent international standards.

AI, Sovereignty, and Global Power Dynamics

AI also brings questions of sovereignty and power dynamics to the forefront of global governance discussions. So, countries race to develop cutting-edge AI technologies, the ability to control and regulate AI becomes a key source of geopolitical influence. Nations with advanced AI capabilities may gain economic, military, and diplomatic leverage, which could alter existing power dynamics in global governance.

For instance, the competition between the United States and China in AI development is not just a matter of technological innovation but also reflects broader geopolitical tensions. The control over AI technologies can affect a country's influence in international organizations, its ability to shape global norms, and its strategic interests in areas like cybersecurity and trade. As AI becomes a critical component of economic and military power, questions arise about how AI will impact state sovereignty, international law, and global cooperation (Grochmalski, 2020, pp. 7-9).

The introduction of AI in global governance requires balancing the interests of powerful states with the need for cooperation, inclusivity, and fairness. There must be mechanisms in place to ensure that AI is used to foster collaboration and collective action, rather than to reinforce inequality or exacerbate global tensions.

The Future of AI in Global Governance

Looking ahead, the integration of AI into global governance will likely continue to expand, creating both opportunities and challenges for the international community. AI has the potential to enhance cooperation on pressing global issues, including climate change,



health crises, and conflict prevention. However, its use also requires careful regulation and ethical oversight to prevent abuses and ensure equitable benefits for all.

International governance frameworks must evolve to address the unique challenges posed by AI. This will involve global dialogue, collaboration between governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society, as well as the development of robust legal and ethical standards. AI should not only be seen as a tool for enhancing governance but as an integral part of shaping the future of global cooperation in the 21st century (Imamguluyev, 2024, pp. 2938-2940).

Risks and Ethical Implications

While AI offers numerous benefits in various domains of global governance, security, and diplomacy, its application also carries significant risks and ethical dilemmas. The advent of AI technologies brings forth challenges related to weaponization, misinformation, inequality, and the erosion of privacy. These risks require careful regulation, ethical oversight, and international cooperation to ensure that AI is used responsibly and in ways that benefit all of humanity, rather than exacerbating existing global divides or threatening global peace and stability (Howard, Woolley, & Calo, 2018, pp. 85-87; Sedova et al., 2021, pp. 7-9).

Weaponization and Misinformation

AI's ability to rapidly process and generate content is a double-edged sword, particularly when it comes to weaponizing information and manipulating public perception. Technologies driven by AI, including bots, deepfakes, and automated content generation, can be used to spread misinformation and disinformation at an unprecedented scale. This poses severe risks to democracy, international relations, and social cohesion.

Bots generated by AI have been deployed to interfere in political processes, influencing elections, spreading propaganda, and deepening societal divides. For instance, AI bots were used in the 2016 U.S. election to amplify divisive narratives and influence public opinion (Howard, Woolley, & Calo, 2018, pp. 88-90). These campaigns are often designed to create polarization, sow distrust in democratic institutions, and undermine the integrity of electoral systems.

The manipulation of information through AI also extends to the creation of deepfake videos, which can be used to spread false narratives, discredit political figures, or incite violence. The ability to produce convincing, yet entirely fabricated, content with minimal resources presents a major challenge to verifying the truth and preventing the spread of harmful misinformation on a global scale.

In the context of international relations, misinformation campaigns driven by AI can be used to destabilize governments, interfere with diplomatic efforts, and even incite conflicts between states (Sedova et al., 2021, pp. 10-12). The weaponization of AI in the form of digital manipulation could become an increasingly common tactic in cyber warfare, posing a significant challenge to global security.



To address these threats, countries and international organizations must collaborate on developing frameworks to regulate the use of AI in information warfare, establish clear accountability for those who exploit AI for malicious purposes, and invest in technologies to detect and counteract misinformation generated by AI.

Beyond the general threats of bots and deepfakes, AI introduces more insidious risks of manipulation through personalized disinformation campaigns. Unlike traditional propaganda, systems driven by AI can tailor narratives to specific demographics, exploiting cultural and emotional triggers to maximize impact. For example, Manor (2019, pp. 83–101) notes that sentiment analysis powered by AI enables actors to identify societal grievances and then deploy targeted messages to exacerbate polarization. Bontridder and Poulet (2021, pp. 1–21) similarly highlight how automated influence operations undermine democratic institutions and destabilize international relations. These dynamics illustrate how disinformation campaigns powered by AI pose a direct challenge not only to national security but also to international cooperation and trust.

Inequalities in AI Access

While AI offers immense potential for addressing global challenges, there is a growing concern over the disparities in access to AI technologies between developed and developing countries. The digital divide is widening as wealthy nations and multinational corporations dominate the development and deployment of AI, leaving low-income countries with limited access to these transformative technologies. This inequality is creating further imbalances in global power and exacerbating existing development challenges.

In many developing nations, there are significant barriers to the adoption of AI, including limited infrastructure, lack of access to quality data, insufficient technical expertise, and inadequate financial resources. This creates a situation where only a few nations, particularly those in the Global North, can harness the full potential of AI, while the rest are left behind.

The unequal distribution of AI technologies risks perpetuating the existing global power dynamics, where technologically advanced nations can leverage AI for economic growth, military superiority, and political influence. In contrast, developing countries may be left with limited access to AI's benefits, further deepening inequalities in areas such as healthcare, education, and economic development (Montgomery, 2024, pp. 5-6).

For example, solutions in healthcare powered by AI, such as diagnostic tools and personalized medicine, could improve patient outcomes and reduce health disparities in developed countries. However, without proper infrastructure and access to these technologies, many people in low-income regions will be unable to benefit from these advancements. Similarly, AI's potential to drive economic growth through automation and data analysis may leave developing countries vulnerable to job displacement and economic stagnation if they are unable to keep up with technological innovation.

Addressing these disparities requires international cooperation, capacity-building initiatives, and the establishment of policies that promote the equitable distribution of AI



technologies. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has emphasized the need for global cooperation to build the necessary infrastructure, support education and skill development, and ensure that AI technologies are accessible to all countries, regardless of their economic status (UNESCO, 2024).

One potential solution is the creation of an international framework that ensures fair access to AI, fosters research collaboration between countries, and provides support for developing countries to build the necessary infrastructure to take advantage of AI technologies. This could include measures such as technology transfer, programs for building capacity, and equitable funding for AI research and development in the Global South.

Policy Recommendations

As AI continues to reshape global governance, international relations, and security, it is crucial to develop policies that maximize the benefits of AI while mitigating its risks. AI's potential to enhance global cooperation and address pressing challenges, such as climate change, public health, and conflict resolution, is immense. However, its impact can be equally harmful if not properly regulated. In this section, several policy recommendations are outlined to guide the development and deployment of AI in a way that ensures it serves humanity's best interests and fosters equitable and ethical global practices.

Establishing International Frameworks

Creating a unified framework for AI governance is essential to ensure the responsible development and use of AI technologies. While AI innovation is rapidly advancing, the legal and regulatory structures that govern its use remain fragmented, with different countries establishing their own standards, often without coordinated international oversight. This has created a scenario in which AI can be developed and deployed without consistent ethical, legal, or social considerations across borders.

The UN or other international bodies should take the lead in creating global frameworks for AI governance. These frameworks should include binding agreements on AI safety, ethical standards, data privacy, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that AI systems are used responsibly and equitably (UNESCO, 2024). A global treaty on AI could set guidelines for ensuring that AI development prioritizes human rights, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

The proposed framework should also focus on promoting inclusivity, ensuring that developing countries have a voice in the governance process and are not left behind in the AI revolution. International cooperation on AI could foster trust and create a collaborative environment to address transnational challenges such as cybersecurity, misinformation, and the ethical implications of AI in warfare (UNESCO, 2024).



Enhancing Transparency and Accountability

One of the key challenges with AI systems, particularly those in critical domains such as defense, healthcare, and diplomacy, is the opacity of decision-making processes. Many AI models are complex and operate as "black-box" systems, where even their developers may struggle to explain how the algorithms arrive at decisions. This lack of transparency is particularly concerning when AI systems are used in high-stakes areas, such as military operations, law enforcement, and foreign policy decision-making.

To address these concerns, governments should mandate the use of explainable AI (XAI) systems in these domains. XAI refers to AI systems designed to be transparent and interpretable, so their actions can be understood and explained to non-expert users (Khalaileh, 2023, pp. 25-27). By adopting XAI, governments can ensure that AI systems operate in ways that are understandable, justifiable, and accountable. This will help mitigate the risks of unintended consequences, bias, and algorithmic errors, while fostering trust among the public and international stakeholders.

For example, in the defense sector, XAI can help ensure that military AI systems, such as autonomous weapons or intelligence gathering systems, operate within ethical and legal frameworks. Similarly, in diplomacy, XAI could help explain the reasoning behind foreign policy decisions made with the assistance of AI, ensuring that they are transparent and aligned with international law and norms (Khalaileh, 2023, pp. 28-30).

Promoting Capacity Building in Developing Nations

The global digital divide poses a significant challenge to the equitable adoption of AI technologies. While developed countries have access to advanced AI tools and infrastructure, many developing nations lack the resources, technical expertise, and infrastructure to integrate AI into their governance and economic systems. This inequality risks further marginalizing these nations, limiting their ability to benefit from AI's potential in areas like healthcare, education, and economic development.

To address this gap, developed countries should prioritize technical and financial assistance to help developing nations integrate AI technologies. Initiatives like the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), which aims to support AI development through international collaboration and capacity building, are a step in the right direction. GPAI provides a platform for countries to collaborate on AI policy, ethics, and research, while also ensuring that developing nations have the resources and support, they need to implement AI solutions (Jariwala, 2024, pp. 1-7).

Efforts on building capacity should focus on developing local AI expertise, building the necessary digital infrastructure, and ensuring access to the data and tools required for successful AI adoption. Furthermore, international cooperation can help create training programs, digital literacy initiatives, and collaborative research projects that enable developing countries to leapfrog technological barriers and fully participate in the global AI ecosystem (Jariwala, 2024, pp. 1-7).



Leveraging AI for Peacebuilding

AI's potential to prevent conflict, promote stability, and contribute to peacebuilding efforts should be actively pursued by international organizations and governments. AI can be a powerful tool for early warning systems, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction, especially when integrated with existing peacekeeping operations.

AI can be leveraged for conflict prevention by analysing large datasets from social media, news outlets, and government reports to detect early warning signs of political instability, ethnic tensions, or humanitarian crises. Predictive models powered by AI can help diplomats and peacekeepers act pre-emptively to defuse conflicts before they escalate. For example, AI could help identify patterns of violence in conflict-prone regions, enabling international organizations like the UN to deploy peacekeeping forces or humanitarian aid swiftly.

In addition, AI technologies can contribute to conflict resolution by facilitating dialogue between opposing parties, analysing negotiation dynamics, and suggesting potential compromise solutions. Automated negotiation platforms, powered by AI, can analyse the preferences and positions of different stakeholders in peace negotiations, providing diplomats with insights on how to bridge divides and reach a mutually agreeable solution (Carneiro, Novais, & Neves, 2014, pp. 170-172).

Finally, AI can assist in post-conflict reconstruction by helping governments and international agencies to rebuild infrastructure, improve governance, and promote social cohesion. Tools driven by AI can optimize resource allocation, provide insights driven by data for rebuilding efforts, and assess the effectiveness of various peacebuilding programs (Carneiro, Novais, & Neves, 2014, pp. 173-175).

Conclusion

AI is undeniably a transformative force in the field of International Relations, bringing new opportunities and challenges in areas such as diplomacy, security, and governance. The potential for AI to enhance decision-making, improve conflict resolution, and promote effective governance is vast. Predictive analytics, automated negotiation systems, and digital diplomacy are just a few examples of how AI can significantly reshape the way states interact and manage global affairs.

However, as AI technologies advance, their integration into the global order must be approached with caution. Ethical concerns, such as the risk of weaponization, misinformation, bias, and the widening digital divide, demand careful consideration. These challenges highlight the need for robust regulatory frameworks that ensure AI is developed and applied in ways that are transparent, equitable, and aligned with human rights.

Furthermore, inclusivity is paramount. Wealthier nations or corporations should not dominate the global AI landscape. Instead, international cooperation must be emphasized, ensuring that developing countries have access to AI technologies and the resources needed to integrate them into their own governance structures.



Interpreting AI through established theories of international relations also enriches our understanding of its role in global politics. From a realist perspective, the competition between the United States and China over AI development illustrates how technological leadership translates into geopolitical power. A liberal lens, by contrast, highlights the potential of international organizations such as the UN, WTO, and UNESCO to foster cooperation and collective governance of AI. Constructivist approaches, meanwhile, draw attention to how AI technologies shape norms, perceptions, and identities in diplomacy and global governance. These perspectives confirm that AI is not merely a technological tool but also a political phenomenon that both reflects and reshapes power, cooperation, and legitimacy in the international system.

By fostering collaboration between nations, international organizations, and the private sector, and by establishing clear and inclusive policies, states can unlock AI's full potential to promote peace, prosperity, and global stability. As AI continues to evolve, it will undoubtedly shape the future of international relations. With careful oversight and a commitment to ethical principles, AI can be a powerful tool for building a more just and harmonious world.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE: ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF UNEQUAL ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIAL MOBILITY

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Abstract

The digital divide differentiated by inequalities in access, skills, and social usage of technology has become a significant obstacle towards social mobility, further compounding the current disparities in economic, social, and education realms. The aim of this research is to explain how the lacking digital resources are more burdensome for the impoverished population, denying them opportunities to elevate their economic status. The exploration addresses the components of the digital divide, namely: access to devices, technology skills, and the actual use of the equipment, showing at the same time how far-reaching impact these relationships have on education, employment, and economic development. Students from underdeveloped regions are not able to gain entry in online platforms that give digital learning materials, resulting in a greater gap in the level of education. Likewise, low literacy levels in regard to use of modern technology as well as discrimination against those who do not have such technology discourages people from engaging in the new economy thereby creating disparities in employment and income. Overall, the digital divide worsens the existing inequalities of developed and developing countries. While developed countries enjoy the advantages of well-advanced digital systems, most developing countries are still even battling to login with the internet denying them an opportunity to be active players in the global innovational digital economy. To illustrate these divisions and their significance for inequality at global level, case studies and empirical data are used. The paper ends with a call for change stating local governments, the business community and international institutions should collaborate towards eliminating the digital divide. This paper highlights the importance of addressing digital inequities in order to achieve a more inclusive digital future.

Keywords

Digital Divide, Social Mobility, Digital Inequalities, Technology Access, Digital Literacy.



Resumo

A clivagem digital, diferenciada pelas desigualdades no acesso, nas competências e na utilização social da tecnologia, tornou-se um obstáculo significativo à mobilidade social, agravando ainda mais as disparidades atuais nos domínios económico, social e educativo. O objetivo desta investigação é explicar como a falta de recursos digitais é mais onerosa para a população empobrecida, negando-lhe oportunidades de melhorar a sua situação económica. A exploração aborda os componentes da exclusão digital, nomeadamente: acesso a dispositivos, competências tecnológicas e utilização efetiva do equipamento, mostrando ao mesmo tempo o impacto de longo alcance que estas relações têm na educação, no emprego e no desenvolvimento económico. Os estudantes de regiões subdesenvolvidas não conseguem aceder às plataformas online que disponibilizam materiais de aprendizagem digital, resultando numa maior disparidade no nível de educação. Da mesma forma, os baixos níveis de literacia no que diz respeito à utilização da tecnologia moderna, bem como a discriminação contra aqueles que não têm acesso a essa tecnologia, desencorajam as pessoas de se envolverem na nova economia, criando assim disparidades no emprego e no rendimento. Em geral, a exclusão digital agrava as desigualdades existentes entre países desenvolvidos e em desenvolvimento. Enquanto os países desenvolvidos desfrutam das vantagens de sistemas digitais bem avançados, a maioria dos países em desenvolvimento ainda luta para se conectar à Internet, negando-lhes a oportunidade de serem participantes ativos na economia digital inovadora global. Para ilustrar essas divisões e sua importância para a desigualdade em nível global, são utilizados estudos de caso e dados empíricos. O artigo termina com um apelo à mudança, afirmando que os governos locais, a comunidade empresarial e as instituições internacionais devem colaborar para eliminar a exclusão digital. Este artigo destaca a importância de abordar as desigualdades digitais para alcançar um futuro digital mais inclusivo.

Palavras-chave

Clivagem digital, mobilidade social, desigualdades digitais, acesso à tecnologia, literacia digital.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE: ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF UNEQUAL ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIAL MOBILITY

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Introduction

The digital divide has emerged as one of the most concerning issues in the 21st century as people and societies advance and strive to benefit from the web. It is possible to identify attempts on a global level to use technology, however, there is still an inadequate access to digital tools which prevents several communities from growing economically and socially (Warschauer, 2004). This phenomenon is pronounced for the low-income groups. This research seeks to analyse the underlying factors of the digital divide while focusing on its impact on social mobility and inequality around the world. In this regard, the study is expected to fill in the gaps and suggest measures that can reduce the existing inequity in the digital world.

1.1 Background of the Study

Technology has ushered in a new era that has transformed societal structures (Castells, 2009). Individuals can now communicate with one another more rapidly and efficiently. Digital tools have expanded the domains of governance, healthcare, education, and employment. However, not all individuals have benefited from these advancements. The disparity between individuals who own technological devices and those who lack them is referred to as the "digital divide." This division manifests in various forms, such as device ownership, internet accessibility, and technological proficiency. Financial constraints, inadequate system configurations, and a lack of leadership focus have exacerbated this disparity (Norris, 2001). This has excluded numerous individuals from the information. We must critically examine the persistent occurrences of this inequity. This encompasses the disparate access to technology that exacerbates existing inequities.

1.2 Definition of the Digital Divide

The term 'digital divide' entails inequalities in terms of possession, accessibility, and mastery in the use of technology. It is usually described in three categories: the Access Divide, which points out the lack of equity and equality in the possession of devices and internet; the Skills Divide, which indicates the different level of expertise of people in the use of digital devices; and the Usage Divide, which includes the theory of differences in the application of technology for socio-economic purposes and to what extent it is applied. These divides taken together define whether individuals and communities are included in the digital economy, education, and governance.



1.3 Importance of Social Mobility in Reducing Inequalities

Social mobility is the progress of societal agents or groups within socio-economic structures and is thus an important part of reducing equity gaps. The means through which technology can assist social mobility is in the field of imparting resources related to education, skills, and employment. Segments of society unserved by the technology will find themselves in much greater difficulties because of a lack of access to such forms of education. For instance, lack of availability of online educational resources has exacerbated the disparities in educational opportunities and fewer education services mean fewer job opportunities as well. Bridging the gap in digital resources should be made a priority in increasing social mobility while constructing a fair society in which access to opportunities is not determined by social, economic, or geographical factors (Warschauer, 2004).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Investigate the impact of the digital divide on education, employment, and economic development.
2. Examine global disparities between developed and developing nations in terms of digital access.
3. Propose actionable recommendations for bridging the digital divide to promote social mobility and inclusivity.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the primary components of the digital divide, and how do they interact?
2. How does unequal access to technology affect educational and employment outcomes?
3. What role does the digital divide play in perpetuating global disparities between developed and developing nations?
4. How can collaborative efforts between governments, businesses, and international organizations create a more inclusive digital ecosystem?

1.6 Research Methodology and Case Selection Rationale

This study employs a qualitative approach using a comparative case study methodology to scrutinize the impact of the digital divide phenomena on social mobility across different socio-economic and geopolitical contexts. The comparative approach helps to holistically understand the disparities regarding the availability of the digital resources, skills, and infrastructure and their educational, occupational, and economic outcome impacts across various societies. In order to maintain methodological rigor and increase the overall analysis of the inquiry, the three case studies—India, South Korea, and Sub-Saharan Africa—were selected according to a pre-determined set of criteria. First, the cases have



been chosen with regard to differing levels of digital exclusion which were measured using internet coverage, availability of ICT infrastructure, and digital literacy levels. Sub-Saharan Africa exemplifies acute digital deprivation; India reflects an intermediary position with substantial internal disparities; and South Korea represents a digitally advanced society with near-universal access (James, 2020). Second, the selection considers comparative developmental positioning, encompassing low-, middle-, and high-income economies enabling a gradient assessment of the impacts of the digital divide. Third, all cases are found to differ greatly in their policy and institutional responses to digital inequality, ranging from strong and sustained interventions in South Korea and uneven emerging initiatives in India and many Sub-Saharan countries (Couldry & Mejias, 2021). The integration of these criteria allows for an assessment of the quad reform factors of infrastructure, technology, policy impact, and their interactions with digital inequality and its multi-faceted socio-economic impacts. The analysis is based on a range of primary data such as official documents, and reports of socio-economic development. Such an approach enhances the practical scope of the investigation while at the same time increases the degree of theoretical applicability of the results to situations characterized by different levels of digital development of the society under study. The analysis of the programs is useful in that it offers a comparative perspective, but it is also clear within the study that the absence of longitudinal data is a major limitation. A number of initiatives, such as the Digital India Programme, are new and thus do not allow for an assessment of their lasting impacts on social mobility. This changing phenomenon limits the ability to make firm judgments about lasting benefits in other areas.

2. Components of the Digital Divide

2.1 Access to Devices and Infrastructure: The Foundational Divide

Proficiency towards the use of technology starts from the ownership of devices such as tablets, laptops, and smartphones, status along with a good connection to the internet services. The gap between the urban and rural areas encompasses the affordability of these devices and a properly developed infrastructure that provides connectivity, especially in the developing countries (Van Dijk, 2020). To exemplify, around big cities there may be strong well-functioning internet and broadband lines, while huts in rural areas are still struggling for strong lines. And social factors make matters worse, as those who earn little cannot buy the new technology, which widens even more the disparity between haves and have nots (Norris, 2001).

2.2 Digital Literacy and Technology Skills: Enabling Competence

Conditions of Enablement Owning an internet enabled gadget is not a sufficient condition to ensure full digital participation. The ability to competently utilize technology as mentioned, is a critical element of the divide. Having capabilities like internet and digital communications are fundamental yet multiple people are lacking even those (Helsper, 2021). Moreover, operating and analysing software, which are vital skills in the contemporary workplace, are considered 'advanced competencies' and once again, many people, unfortunately, are missing these advanced skills as well. In addition, generational divides often are part of the problem too, given that the elder population is notoriously



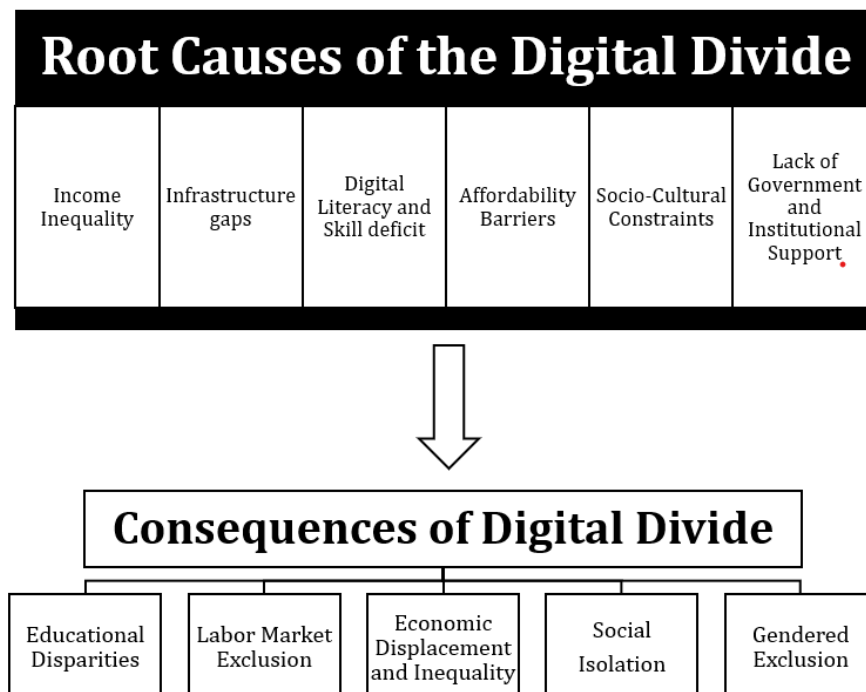
slow to adopt new apparatuses (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, Robinson., 2001). The problems posed are deep, particularly in the context of education and training strategies, ensuring that without such plans, the existing skill gaps would remain and so would the socioeconomic divides in communities and groups (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2022; Schou & Hjelholt, 2019).

2.3 Patterns of Technology Usage and Access: Unequal Benefits

The most glaring example of the digital divide is in relation to technology usage, and even if the skill set in using technology is taken into consideration, such disparities remain. For some people, technology is a tool for learning, acquiring new skills, or conducting business; for others, it is limited as entertainment tool (Gunkel, 2003). Gender and other social factors, such as discrimination against certain groups within society, tend to create barriers to achieving this goal and therefore technologies are not universally adopted. Furthermore, the relatively high price of more advanced digital services constrains their use among poor people (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2013). To address such gaps, technology users need that additional support in the form of equitable access and development of the basic skills needed to use the technology to the fullest extent (Pearce & Rice, 2017).

3. Impact of the Digital Divide on Key Areas

Figure 1





3.1 Education and Digital Learning Inequalities

Education is one of the most affected realms due to the divide, it is worth noting that it has become increasingly difficult to pursue any form of learning without the aid of some modern resources. In many countries, especially those that are underdeveloped, students do not have access to the basic aspects that would allow them to thrive in a digital learning environment which includes, computers, tablets, smartphones and internet connections. Consequently, during the COVID-19 pandemic as students were instructed to attend classes virtually, students who belonged from low-income families, or lived in rural areas were unable to participate in classes due to the lack of basic resources such as stable internet connection (Selwyn, 2016; Warschauer, 2018).

Barriers to accessing digital learning platforms go beyond just access to devices. Apart from the accessibility of devices, several other factors like, lack of sufficient locally relevant digital content, a poor rate of digital literacy education of teachers, minimal investment on the part of the government into school digital infrastructure create a vicious educational inequality cycle where tech driven economy skills and knowledge becomes unattainable to poor segments of society (Warschauer, 2004). Without removing these barriers, the aim of ameliorating the educational divide and thereby enhancing equal opportunities will remain a lofty dream.

3.2 Employment and Economic Disparities

The unemployment problem is aggravated by the absence of digital skills for a digitalized society especially where people lack any digital training. Digitization of the 21st century has made it a necessity that you are able to operate digital equipment and manoeuvre various online sites which is a core requirement for many jobs. Unfortunately, such training opportunities especially for the less privileged are very limited making skill acquisition difficult. Lacking these skills makes attaining well-paying jobs in the finance, technology, e commerce and other related high demands industries unattainable (Rainie & Anderson, 2017). Moreover, the digitally disadvantaged are discriminated in the employment arena. A very few employers often accept those who are qualified but do not possess the digital credibility, whereas, in times of selection, the ones who are more qualified are selected with the acceptance of possessing the required qualifications (Schradi, 2019). As a result, you are placed within a vicious cycle. For example, if a person cannot get into the digital economy, he/she will be further excluded. The situation is exacerbated in the developing countries where digital economies are too aspiring, but low literacy levels and poor infrastructure prevent a large chunk from entering such economies. Such economic displacement forebodes ill as they lead to inequality and reduce social mobility over time.

3.3 Economic Development and Global Disparities

Closely linked with economic development from the perspective of both national and international economic development, the digital divide has some vague propositions. There are nations developed socio-economically in all things technological. Such nations have the requisite digital infrastructure to enable levels and standards of education for



digital literacy from within their family groups (Castells, 2009). On the other hand, developing countries lack exactly what is required. More often than not, a great deal of this boils down to factors like lack of access to broadband internet, infrastructural development to enable the incorporation of digital technology, and that is on top of other aspects relevant to agriculture, healthcare, and education. That is where this inequality in access combines with practically equal levels of economic disparity between states. For instance, underdeveloped resource-based countries with poorly built digital infrastructure are unable to access the international digital markets or participate in global value chains. They are unable to take advantage of the recent technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain, and Big Data Analytics since it does not help increase productivity levels and support the country's needs for better public services, where the need arises for foreign investments to stimulate the market. Such a degree of deprived capacity, education, and technology leads directly to low levels of innovation and entrepreneurship in developing nations (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2013). Filling the distance made by lack of resources directing toward technology remains a formidable challenge approached toward attaining sustainable economic growth in which every state leverage technology.

4. Case Studies and Empirical Evidence

4.1 Analysis of Education Inequalities in Developing Regions

Among poorer parts of the world, the extent of educational inequalities caused by the digital divide is considerable (Selwyn, 2014). According to the UNESCO (2021) report, there were over millions of students globally who were affected by school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact was felt disproportionately by students from developing nations. As an example, sub-Saharan Africa had thousands of pupils who were excluded from having the opportunity to participate in remote learning due to lack of electricity. The case of India highlights another discrepancy. Rural areas were in dire need of resources when students attending urban areas made an entirely effective shift to remote learning. More than 80% of rural India households lack access to the internet, as pointed out by an annual report status about education (ASER) in 2021 which demonstrates millions of schools going children not having access to effective educational resources. Moreover, the absence of affordable devices deepened the disparity and escalated the already existing education gap between the rural and urban learners. Such case is a true depiction of the need to invest in equal access to resources and digital infrastructure in learning environments.

4.2 Employment Gaps as a Result of the Digital Divide

The International Labour Organization had a study in 2020 which shows how the divide caused by technological innovations widened the gap in employment opportunities, especially between developed and developing nations. Low-income countries had only 17% of the workers able to secure remote jobs while more than 40% of high-income countries' workers were able to land a remote job. These numbers are a representation of how the shift in availability of technology healthcare workers in less privileged countries are unable to enjoy the benefits of remote employment. In South Africa for



instance, broadband internet penetration is at a woeful 10%, denying most job seekers the ability to apply for jobs or take part in online skills development courses (Rainie & Anderson, 2017). This is also the case in Latin America, where women do not participate in the workforce as much as men due to skills training and devices being out of reach. These instances serve as a reminder of how the digital divide contributes to existing structural inequities in labour markets, further diminishing social mobility opportunities (Graham & Dutton, 2019; Castells, 2010).

4.3 Global Comparisons: Success Stories and Ongoing Issues

On a global scale, some countries have shown great improvement in addressing the digital divide while the challenge remains for other regions. South Korea represents a success story after almost all its citizens gained access to the internet, coupled with a strong digital literacy policy due to large government funding (Van Dijk, 2020). South Korean students have been able to get access to modern education materials through advanced government policies, which ensures the country has a technologically savvy population.

On the other hand, Nigeria and Bangladesh are still grappling with these issues. Over fifty percent of the Nigerian populace do not have dependable internet access, resulting in poor engagement with the digital sphere (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2013). In Bangladesh, there has been some progress in mobile connectivity but the low-income families cannot afford the devices and services, limiting their ability to use educational and employment resources.

These worldwide comparisons illustrate that even though investments in technology and policies can greatly help to solve the digital divide, socio-economic and physical barriers should be tackled in a structured manner for people to have the opportunity to access technology globally.

5. Drivers and Barriers to Bridging the Digital Divide

Figure 2

Country	Policy Intervention	Primary Focus	Funding Sources	Outcomes
South Korea	Digital Literacy & Broadband Expansion	Infrastructure, Literacy	Government investment	Near-universal high-speed internet.
India	Digital India & BharatNet	Infrastructure, Affordability	Government funding	Expanded rural broadband access.
United States	Emergency Broadband Benefit	Affordability, Access	Federal subsidies	Increased low-income broadband access.
Kenya	Rural Internet Partnerships	Infrastructure, Affordability	Government + international agencies	Improved rural internet penetration.



5.1 Policy Interventions and Government Initiatives

Existing governments can substantially contribute towards bridging the digital divide through specific policies and investment in infrastructure. Thus, many countries have developed national strategies to improve digital access and literacy (Norris, 2001). One such effort is the Digital India Initiative, which seeks to strengthen online infrastructure, enhance the connectivity of the population in India, and utilize technology to enable citizens' empowerment. As part of this program, government projects like BharatNet are indeed aimed at broadband connectivity to more than 250000 rural villages. In the same manner, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the United States set up the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which provides low-income families with subsidies to pay for broadband internet services and devices. In Kenya, the government joined efforts with certain international agencies to bring cheap internet solutions to rural parts of the country, which has vastly improved the level of access in these regions. These measures highlight the potential of government strategies in promoting digital inclusion. Yet, there are still many countries where scarce resources, red tape, and political volatility weaken these policies' potential effectiveness (Castells, 2009).

5.2 Role of Private Sector and Technology Companies

The need for a robust response from the private sector, and especially from technology companies, is even more crucial in providing solutions to the digital divide. Google, Microsoft and many other companies have created initiatives to address world connectivity. For example, Google's Project Loon employed the use of high-altitude balloons to offer internet services to remote places, while Microsoft's Airband Initiative works with local organizations to increase broadband coverage in rural areas of Africa and North America (Rainie & Anderson, 2017). The aforementioned factors, including investment by the private sector in low-cost technologies and digital skills training, have been remarkable. Let us take two examples, the corporate schools offered by IBM and Cisco which teach coding and related IT skills to those on the fringes of society. In some instances, private sector firms have also provided other devices like tablets and laptops to enhance usability. Still, profit motives and market-driven strategies may leave the poorest out, making it important for the private sector to take these steps within the context of broader social inclusion strategies.

5.3 Socio-Cultural and Economic Barriers

Social, cultural and economic barriers, however, still stand in the way of efforts aimed at addressing the digital divide owing to the existing technological and policy gaps. Biases directed towards the vulnerable, in the form of women, ethnic groups and the poor, serve to deepen the digital gap. For example, within the cultural context of many developing nations, women's access to technology is limited breaking the women's digital divide. A GSMA (2021) report notes that women from low to middle-income earning nations are less likely by 15% to use mobile internet as compared to men. The costs of devices and internet services are economic barriers that, to a great extent, affect the situation with digital divide. In contrast, these devices and connectivity is unaffordable for the general population in Nigeria and Bangladesh (Helsper, 2021). In addition, windows of



opportunity that these affected groups can avail is blocked by the insufficient levels of digital literacy. Overcoming these barriers requires a combination of policies aimed at improving education access or providing direct subsidies or countering discriminatory practices to expand equality of access to digital communication technology usage (Sen, 1999).

6. Collaborative Efforts for a Digital Future

6.1 Role of Local Governments in Digital Inclusion

Since local governments are nearest to the most impacted population groups, they are well placed to promote and implement solutions targeted to specific areas for improved digital inclusion. Enhanced accessibility has the potential to be achieved through local government investments in projects geared towards improving the digital infrastructure like the installation of high-speed internet, as well as for paying subsidies for the devices and for the connection. For instance, municipal governments in Barcelona and Stockholm city have instituted initiatives such as free public Wi-Fi and programs to promote digital literacy for disadvantaged groups, provided within the framework of smart cities (Castells, 2009). Local government is equally important to the integration of technology into the educational systems. KITE (Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education) in India is one example of how local governments could equip learners and instructors with relevant digital equipment and their training (Warschauer, 2004). Additionally, public information campaigns can help eliminate cultural barriers to technology use and motivate women and other rural populations to adopt new technologies. But, with limited budgets and poor administrative capacity, local governments often find it hard to accomplish their objectives which highlights the importance of achieving those goals through coordination from other levels of government.

6.2 International Institutions and Global Policies

Global institutions like the United Nations, World Bank and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) are immensely important towards building collaboration on a global level to address the existing digital divide. They assist different countries in increasing their digital reach by providing funding, expert guidance, and help in drafting policies. For instance, the focus of the United Nations sustainable development goal 9 targets infrastructure development and innovation, with a particular focus on the goal of providing affordable internet access for all citizens by 2030.

Partnerships such as the World Bank's Digital Development Partnership help developing countries improve their digital infrastructure, boost cybersecurity, and foster diverse digital economies (Norris, 2001). The ITU also works with its member countries to ensure universal connectivity and the basic requirement of digital literacy under its Connect 2030 Agenda. However, doing this is often hampered in regions roiled with conflict or that are politically fragile due to the global imbalances of funding and a lack of political willingness (Van Dijk, 2020). Increasing the collaborative efforts of national policies with international institutions can help augment the outcome of such initiatives.



6.3 Public-Private Partnerships in Technology Accessibility

Mobilizing resources, skills, and creativity from the public and private sector through PPPs helps reduce the digital divide swiftly. The combination of skills from governments and the private sector enables PPPs to address challenges like expensive infrastructure, lack of affordable devices, and low digital literacy. A great example is the partnership between Google and the Indian government under the Google Internet Saathi program, which trained over 30 million rural women in digital skills and provided them with tools to access the internet.

Furthermore, we can observe that the government has partnered with companies like Microsoft and Facebook to increase internet coverage in difficult areas. Both Microsoft and Facebook contributed in different but overlapping ways: Facebook created the spatially cheaper Express Wi-Fi program, while Microsoft focused on projects like the Airband Initiative, which aims to spread broadband access to remote areas in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Not only do these initiatives improve internet access, but they also foster economic development by employing local residents in their actualization. Despite their potential, public private partnerships are only as effective as the alignment between corporate goals and the public interest (Fuchs, 2014). Private companies focus more on profit margins while the government is tasked with making sure that these partnerships seek to include a higher number of people.

A cross-national comparative analysis of both successful and struggling initiatives reveals a more complex understanding of policy efficacy in relation to the digital divide. Take South Korea, for instance, whose government broadband expansion is often touted as a model of success due to extensive government spending, strategic public-private partnerships, and a comprehensive digital policy blueprint. On the other hand, India's BharatNet project is marred by chronic delays resulting from administrative backlogs, poor inter-agency coordination, and infrastructural issues relating to rural deployment. These two examples vividly highlight the burden of governance un-sustained by funding transparency and policy flexibility responsiveness at subnational levels. Moreover, while it may be argued that public-private partnerships enable agile scaling of digital infrastructure, their associated costs are frequently overlooked. The alternative, though, raises the flag that unregulated access models driven by profit can disproportionately marginalize other populations while commercially oversaturating non-essential services. Ignoring these changes within inclusion policies risks creating technically efficient algorithms but socially inequitable outcomes through a democratically unaccountable framework.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Policy-Level Recommendations

1. Universal Broadband Access

Decision-makers need to work on building broadband infrastructure such that it is affordable and accessible, especially in the rural areas. Like in South Korea and some parts of the European Union, universal broadband initiatives should be with the goal of treating internet connectivity as a public amenity. This requires investment in broadband



technology. To reach remote areas where cable infrastructure is impossible, satellites and fibre-optic networks must be put in place. These policies must set affordability targets and build incentives for broadband service providers to expand their coverage to the neglected areas.

2. Device and Internet Connectivity Subsidies

Governments should, for instance, establish subsidy programs to enable people from low-income families to pay for digital devices and the internet. These programs could facilitate offering low-cost laptops, tablets, and even mobile phones, as well as providing financial assistance for internet service plans. For example, voucher programs that subsidize the purchase of devices or discounted internet rates for low-income families would greatly enhance technology penetration. This would minimize the disparity in access to digital tools between the haves and have-nots.

3. Plans for Promoting Digital Equity

Digital equity plans should also define specific objectives, and targets for actions and programs that have clear timelines at the local and national levels. These plans should also have geographical based approaches that consider the gaps that exist in digital infrastructure especially for rural, remote, and economically disadvantaged places. Digital equity should be integrated into the development plans of countries, and will make sure no group is disenfranchised in the digital economy. The progress towards achieving the objectives and the policies put in place to bridge the digital divide will require regular monitoring, reporting, and modifications to the plans.

4. Public-Private Partnerships

In the area of resource mobilization and expertise, public-private partnerships are crucial for addressing issues of digital inclusion. The government should work together with private sector businesses, especially those in technology, in order to design and implement large projects that seek to enhance the availability of the internet and improve digital skills. These PPPs enable government to benefit from the innovation and funding available in the private sector while at the same time keeping the public concern in view. For instance, PPP can be successful when the governments and tech firms collaborate to build affordable internet infrastructure in the underserved rural locations or when they employ teachers and students in the digital training process. These partnerships can also encourage the development of cheap educational devices and digital tools.

5. Strengthen Data Protection Policies

The relevance of data protection and privacy together with cybersecurity cannot be overstated as digital platforms continue to evolve. It is the prerogative of governments to apply suitable measures and frameworks to guarantee that confidential consumer information is protected, particularly for user groups that are considered vulnerable. Legislations which comply with the privacy standards set by the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ought to be adopted in other jurisdictions (Zuboff, 2019). Equally important, cyber security regulations should be revised on a regular basis to keep up with new challenges and to increase confidence in the digital environment. Effective data protection will enable users to access the digital economy without fear of being exploited or fraudulent.



7.2 Educational Initiatives for Digital Literacy

1. Incorporate Digital Literacy into School Curricula

Every student is expected to be proficient with modern technologies therefore, digital literacy must be integrated into the school syllabus from the earliest years possible (Buckingham, 2008). Students not only have to learn how to use technological devices but also how to analyse the information presented to them and interact in a healthy manner with the online community. This entails teaching students how to properly exercise digital citizenship, remain safe online, and abide by the principles of technology use. Moreover, schools should also have practical programs where students learn how to use computers and software applications, as well as the internet. Such endeavours will help to prepare the future generations for participation in the digital economy and enhance their ability to leverage technology positively for their personal and career development.

2. Teacher Training Programs

Teachers' use of technology is an important factor when considering how best to integrate digital literacy instruction in the teaching. Government and educational institutions need to run professional development programs for teachers to broaden their understanding of the use of digital tools and methodologies. This training has to go beyond just administrative uses of technology, to include digital tools for teaching and learning processes. Teachers must have the requisite skills to support students to use technology for research, communication, and other creative activities. With proper training, teachers will be able to use their professional skills to engage students and promote critical thinking through the use of technology.

3. Accessible Digital Learning Platforms

Governments and educational institutions need to make an effort on making education digital learning platforms that are accessible to every student regardless of their socio-economic status. These platforms ought to include a variety of educational resources such as textbooks, videos, and tutorials all in different languages as well as different types of media. Equally important is the screen technology for disabilities, where students can simply have all written material read out to them. Also, these platforms ought to be lower end device friendly. These new platforms might serve as online learning centres which provide both formal and informal education to everyone regardless of their age enabling them to learn new skills as new opportunities become available.

4. Promote Public Access to Learning Tools

Access to digital materials is a challenge for numerous students who cannot afford them; in order to address these issues, public learning tools should be made available at social institutions like public libraries and community centres. Furthermore, Public Access Places should allow students and other users to access computers, tablets, and other resources with high-speed internet so that they can enhance their education and build skills. Such centres could also arrange workshops in which use of digital devices could be taught which would enable more people to access education digitally. This would in turn provide opportunities to those who do not have the necessary resources to learn new skills.



5. Scholarships and Grants for Digital Access

To provide equal opportunity for all students, it is essential to combat the imbalance of access to modern technology and the internet by providing financial support for students in need (Sen, 1999). As well as governments, private companies can also help by providing grants and low interest loans to underprivileged students, so that they can obtain devices or internet connections. These funds should be limited to students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds or those belonging to the underprivileged sections of the society. These initiatives will provide opportunities for the underprivileged sections of the society and work towards a more equal education.

7.3 Grassroots Innovations and Community-Based Solutions

1. Community Digital Literacy Campaigns

Digital literacy campaigns centered on basic internet and computer skills along with online safety need to be initiated by local governments in conjunction with local organizations. Such initiatives need to be tailored around the needs of the communities with a focus on disadvantaged groups including the elderly in rural areas, and women (Tapscott, 2009). With the assistance of established community leaders and organizations, these campaigns can be optimized to reach the illiterate population. For instance, the use of workshops, mobile learning centres, and community radio can promote the training of essential digital skills and garner appreciation of its importance.

2. Empowering Local Entrepreneurs in Technology

Local entrepreneurs have the potential to play an important role towards bridging the digital divide. There is a need for NGOs and governments to support programs that assist the growth of local technology startups, especially those that cater to affordable and relevant technological needs (Fuchs, 2014). As an example, local entrepreneurs can manufacture inexpensive smartphones, establish solar powered internet access points, and create applications designed to resolve region-specific issues. This type of aid not only encourages innovative strategies in local business problem solving but also ensures that digital solutions meet the specific needs of the community.

3. Creating Internet Networks That Are Community-Centric

Sometimes, areas where conventional internet services tend to ignore, community-based internet networks fill that gap. These internet systems are usually created and managed by local citizens through resource sharing as mesh networks or through community-owned wireless systems (Van Dijk, 2020). Such systems are crucial in rural and remote areas where affordable internet is not accessible. They should be encouraged and supported by the Government through financial, technical, and regulatory assistance. These community-driven local efforts will be key in reaching those populations that are mostly without internet services.

4. Ensuring Inclusivity within Digital Solutions

The importance of developing programs tailored for the requirements of social groups with greater barriers to use such technologies ' digital solutions is paramount to ensure that all members within the society are able to access such programs. Programs aimed



at increasing digital access should give preference to the inclusion of women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and other underprivileged groups (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2013). For instance, it is necessary to create easy-to-use digital content for persons with disabilities, to train women in technology, or construct other digital tools for refugees. Such measures help build inclusivity while fostering equal measures in access to technology as well as meeting the cultural limitations.

5. Collaborative Resource Sharing Platforms

In an effort to augment bridging the digital gap, community and business models can be structured towards creating 'device, internet access, and skills sharing' platforms that can help those who need them the most. For example, pedagogic device donations can be made through businesses and individuals seeking to give away old or unused devices to schools, libraries, or community centres. Such platforms could also include sharing educational materials like e-books, online courses, and software tools as well, diminishing the opportunities gap between the affluent and marginalized. Promoting the community to be part of these initiatives can foster a sense of responsibility and unity towards overcoming digital divide.

8. Conclusion

To summarize, the absence of equal access to technology continues to act as an impediment to social equity, affecting the availability of educational, job, and health services. The evidence illustrates that the lack of access to technology, the skills to use it, and the necessary infrastructure is a complex issue that stems from socio-economic and spatial considerations. These issues have to be solved through a combined effort by the entire world together with the appropriate actions from governments, businesses, and community leaders so that everyone irrespective of their class has access to the means and knowledge needed to be active users of technology. Going forward, it is important for subsequent works to analyse the current interventions aimed at increasing digital inclusion, develop new solutions to increase coverage, and determine the effects of enhanced access to technology on the previously disadvantaged groups in the society. Evidence-based strategies for closing these gaps are required in order to promote inclusiveness and sustainable development in the digital age.

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INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INTO MARITIME VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: ENHANCING GLOBAL COMPETENCE IN THE INDUSTRY

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Abstract

As the global maritime industry faces increasing complexities due to geopolitical shifts, economic dynamics, sustainability challenges, and digital transformations, maritime vocational education must adapt to prepare professionals for these evolving demands. This analysis was carried out to explore how international relations (IR) perspectives, which encompass political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors, are integrated into maritime education programs. Previous research has highlighted the need for such integration but has also identified gaps in the practical application and systematic incorporation of global perspectives into curricula. The objective of this study was to assess the current state of IR integration in maritime education, focusing on how it influences curriculum design, professional competencies, and global collaboration. The research sought to answer how maritime education can better prepare students for the globalized maritime industry through a multidimensional approach to international relations. Using qualitative methods, including interviews with maritime professionals, educators, and graduates, this study examined the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders in maritime education. The results revealed that while there is some recognition of the importance of global perspectives, their integration remains fragmented, with significant gaps in digitalization, sustainability, and international collaboration. The findings underscore the need for stronger global partnerships, practical training opportunities, and curriculum reform to better align educational outcomes with industry needs. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how maritime education can evolve to meet the challenges of a rapidly globalizing and technologically advancing maritime sector.

Keywords

International Relations, Maritime Education, Vocational Training, Global Competence, Sustainability.

Resumo

À medida que a indústria marítima global enfrenta complexidades crescentes devido a mudanças geopolíticas, dinâmicas económicas, desafios de sustentabilidade e transformações digitais, a educação profissional marítima deve adaptar-se para preparar profissionais para essas demandas em evolução. Esta análise foi realizada para explorar como as perspetivas das relações internacionais (RI), que abrangem fatores políticos, económicos, sociais, culturais e ambientais, são integradas nos programas de educação marítima. Pesquisas anteriores destacaram a necessidade dessa integração, mas também identificaram lacunas na aplicação prática e na incorporação sistemática de perspetivas globais nos currículos. O



objetivo deste estudo foi avaliar o estado atual da integração das RI na educação marítima, com foco em como isso influencia a elaboração do currículo, as competências profissionais e a colaboração global. A investigação procurou responder como a educação marítima pode preparar melhor os estudantes para a indústria marítima globalizada através de uma abordagem multidimensional das relações internacionais. Utilizando métodos qualitativos, incluindo entrevistas com profissionais marítimos, educadores e graduados, este estudo examinou as experiências e perspectivas das partes interessadas na educação marítima. Os resultados revelaram que, embora haja algum reconhecimento da importância das perspectivas globais, a sua integração permanece fragmentada, com lacunas significativas na digitalização, sustentabilidade e colaboração internacional. Os resultados sublinham a necessidade de parcerias globais mais fortes, oportunidades de formação prática e reforma curricular para melhor alinhar os resultados educativos com as necessidades da indústria. Esta investigação contribui para uma compreensão mais aprofundada de como a educação marítima pode evoluir para enfrentar os desafios de um setor marítimo em rápida globalização e avanço tecnológico.

Palavras-chave

Relações Internacionais, Educação Marítima, Formação Profissional, Competência Global, Sustentabilidade.

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INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INTO MARITIME VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: ENHANCING GLOBAL COMPETENCE IN THE INDUSTRY

MARUDUT BERNADTUA SIMANJUNTAK

Introduction

The maritime industry plays an integral role in the global economy, serving as the primary avenue for the transportation of goods and raw materials across international waters. It is a multifaceted sector, deeply influenced by political, economic, strategic, social, and environmental factors (Pu & Lam, 2021; Toriia et al., 2023; Zaderei, 2020). As the industry continues to evolve, driven by globalization, digital advancements, and an increasing demand for sustainability, the workforce must adapt to meet these emerging challenges. The complexity of the maritime sector, along with the rapid pace of technological change and the growing emphasis on sustainable practices, requires an overhaul of how maritime professionals are trained. Traditional maritime education has long focused on technical skills, such as navigation, engineering, and port management, which, while crucial, no longer suffice in preparing professionals to navigate the interconnected and evolving global landscape. Today, maritime professionals must possess not only technical expertise but also an understanding of the political and economic forces that influence international shipping routes, trade agreements, and maritime regulations (Tvedt et al., 2018; Zavalniuk et al., 2021). They must be equipped with the skills to engage with diverse cultures, manage sustainable practices, and leverage emerging technologies. As such, there is a growing need for a more integrated and multidimensional approach to maritime education, one that incorporates international relations perspectives into the curriculum. This approach would not only enhance the technical competencies of maritime professionals but also prepare them for the challenges posed by globalization, environmental concerns, and technological innovation.

This research explores how international relations, with its focus on political, economic, strategic, social, and environmental dimensions, can be incorporated into maritime vocational education. It focuses on the importance of integrating these perspectives to enhance the quality and relevance of training programs for the maritime sector, particularly in an era marked by rapid digitalization and increasing calls for sustainability. While existing literature often addresses the technical and regulatory aspects of maritime education, there is a significant gap in understanding how broader, interdisciplinary approaches can be effectively incorporated into vocational curricula. The aim of this research is to fill this gap by examining how such integration can be achieved and what impact it may have on the preparedness of future maritime professionals.



The research will draw on the perspectives of maritime professionals, educators, and graduates, seeking to understand how international relations and other multidisciplinary perspectives can contribute to the development of more comprehensive and effective vocational training programs. By examining the intersection of international relations, digitalization, and sustainability within the maritime education system, this study aims to provide actionable insights into how maritime curricula can be restructured to address the needs of a rapidly changing global industry. Ultimately, this research seeks to offer a framework for reimagining maritime vocational education, ensuring that students are equipped not only with the technical expertise required for the industry but also with the broader knowledge and skills needed to navigate the complex and interconnected world in which they will operate.

Through this exploration, the research will examine how vocational education can foster a more holistic approach to the training of maritime professionals, integrating knowledge from diverse fields and addressing the challenges posed by globalization, environmental sustainability, and digitalization. This study is motivated by the belief that the maritime industry of the future will require professionals who can think critically across multiple dimensions and who are prepared to work in a global, dynamic, and sustainable maritime environment. The research will thus contribute to the development of maritime education, ensuring that future professionals are not only equipped to meet the demands of the industry but are also prepared to lead the sector towards a more sustainable and interconnected future. In light of these considerations, the primary research focus of this study will be on exploring how international relations, as a comprehensive and interdisciplinary field, can be used to enrich maritime vocational education and training. The aim is to create a framework that addresses the multifaceted challenges of the maritime sector while fostering the development of future professionals who possess the skills, knowledge, and competencies required to navigate the rapidly changing global landscape.

Literature Review

The evolution of maritime education has increasingly become a focal point in discussions on the future of the global maritime industry. As the industry grapples with numerous challenges related to globalization, digitalization, sustainability, and international relations, the need for a more holistic, multidimensional approach to maritime education is becoming ever more apparent (Baylon & Santos, 2011; Chen et al., 2017; Lau & Ng, 2015). This literature review critically examines existing research on maritime education, focusing on the integration of international relations (IR) approaches, the role of digitalization and sustainability, and the competencies required for future maritime professionals. The review also identifies key gaps in the current knowledge and discusses the theoretical framework that will guide this research.

The Need for a Multidimensional Approach to Maritime Education

The traditional framework of maritime education has long been centered on the development of technical skills, including navigation, marine engineering, and port



operations. While these areas of expertise are undeniably crucial, they no longer suffice in preparing maritime professionals to navigate the increasingly complex globalized environment. Researchers and educators alike have increasingly called for the integration of broader interdisciplinary perspectives into maritime education (Albayrak & Ziarati, 2012; Kim & Park, 2019; Lau & Ng, 2015). International relations approaches, in particular, are gaining attention for their potential to enrich the curriculum and prepare students to better understand the political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions that affect the maritime industry. However, the inclusion of these perspectives within maritime training programs remains limited.

The literature on this subject reveals a growing recognition of the importance of incorporating international relations into maritime education. For example, scholars have argued that a comprehensive understanding of international trade agreements, geopolitical tensions, and environmental policies is essential for professionals working in maritime sectors such as shipping, logistics, and port management. The interplay between political factors, such as trade policies and maritime security, and economic factors, including global supply chains and financial regulations, significantly impacts the operations of maritime companies. Furthermore, social and cultural dimensions, including issues of labor migration, seafarer welfare, and cross-cultural communication, play an increasingly important role in the management and operation of maritime industries (Pallis, 2017). Despite this recognition, however, the integration of international relations into maritime curricula is still in its infancy.

In the context of maritime vocational education, there exists a critical gap in the literature regarding how IR approaches can be effectively woven into the fabric of the curriculum. While some studies have examined the role of IR in higher education for maritime professionals, the focus remains largely on theoretical frameworks rather than practical applications in vocational training. This presents a significant gap in research, as vocational education has distinct needs that are often overlooked in academic studies, particularly those centered on advanced degrees or professional training (Collier, 2015; Martin, 2015; Wu et al., 2017). Thus, there is an urgent need to bridge this gap by developing curricula that not only emphasize technical skills but also foster a deeper understanding of international relations and global maritime issues.

Digitalization and the Future of Maritime Education

In recent years, digitalization has emerged as one of the most transformative forces within the maritime industry. The adoption of advanced technologies such as automation, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT) has fundamentally altered how maritime operations are conducted (Laghari et al., 2021; Plaza-Hernández et al., 2021; Roesler et al., 2020). From autonomous vessels to smart ports and supply chain management systems, digital technologies are revolutionizing the efficiency, safety, and sustainability of maritime operations. Consequently, the need for maritime education to adapt to these technological changes is more pressing than ever.

A considerable body of literature discusses the impact of digitalization on the maritime industry, particularly in terms of how it affects operational processes, decision-making, and the management of resources. Many studies have focused on the technical training



required to operate and maintain these advanced systems, but fewer have explored how digital literacy and digital competencies should be integrated into maritime education. The digital divide, which separates countries, regions, and institutions with varying levels of access to digital technologies, further complicates the issue. While some maritime institutions are quick to adopt digital tools, a few others, particularly in developing countries, still lack the infrastructure and resources to implement these changes effectively. Moreover, the existing research on the impact of digitalization on maritime education often focuses on specific technical skills, such as proficiency in using new software or understanding the principles behind autonomous ships. What is less discussed is the broader pedagogical shift required to integrate digitalization into maritime curricula. Digital tools offer not only a new method of teaching but also a new mode of engaging with the world's increasingly digitalized maritime industry (Gavalas et al., 2022; Plaza-Hernández et al., 2021; Toriia et al., 2023). In this context, the literature reveals a gap in research on how digitalization can be used not only for technical training but also to enhance students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, which are essential for navigating the complexities of global maritime operations.

Furthermore, the intersection between digitalization and sustainability remains underexplored in the literature. While there is substantial research on the environmental impact of maritime operations, especially with regard to reducing carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that address how digital tools can facilitate sustainable practices in the maritime industry. Digitalization offers potential solutions to many sustainability challenges in the maritime sector, such as optimizing fuel consumption, reducing waste, and improving resource management. Yet, there is little emphasis on how to teach these concepts within vocational training programs, particularly at the level where hands-on practical training is the norm.

Sustainability and Maritime Education

Sustainability has become a central issue in many industries, and the maritime sector is no exception. Given the environmental challenges posed by shipping emissions, waste management, and resource depletion, maritime professionals must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to address these concerns. While much of the sustainability discourse in maritime education has focused on policy-level changes, regulatory compliance, and environmental management, less attention has been given to the pedagogical approaches needed to teach sustainability at the vocational level. Existing research underscores the importance of embedding sustainability into maritime training programs to ensure that the next generation of maritime professionals is equipped to meet the sector's environmental challenges (Christodoulou-Varotsi & Pentsov, 2008; House & Saeed, 2016; Young, 1995). However, there is a significant gap in understanding how sustainability can be integrated into vocational education effectively. Many studies focus on technical solutions to sustainability challenges—such as the development of alternative fuels, emission control technologies, and green ship designs—without considering the broader educational implications. What is needed is a framework that connects these technical aspects with a more holistic understanding of sustainability, including environmental, economic, and social dimensions. This will require



a shift from teaching sustainability as a standalone subject to embedding it across various aspects of maritime education, including logistics, navigation, and marine engineering.

Furthermore, there is a lack of research on how sustainability can be taught in a way that encourages critical thinking and problem-solving among students. Many current educational practices in the maritime sector rely heavily on rote learning and technical instruction, which may not be sufficient for fostering the deeper understanding required to tackle sustainability challenges. Research is needed to explore innovative teaching methods that promote active learning, encourage the application of sustainability principles to real-world scenarios, and enable students to understand the broader socio-economic implications of their decisions in the maritime sector.

Identifying Gaps in Current Knowledge

While significant strides have been made in examining the impact of digitalization and sustainability on the maritime industry, the integration of international relations perspectives into maritime education remains underexplored. The majority of existing research tends to focus on technical, operational, and regulatory aspects of the industry, with little attention paid to the broader geopolitical, economic, and social factors that shape maritime operations. This is particularly concerning given the increasing interconnectedness of global markets and the growing complexity of international trade and shipping (Comtois & Slack, 2017; Paulica et al., 2013; Toriia et al., 2023). By focusing primarily on technical skills, maritime vocational education may fail to prepare students for the multi-dimensional challenges they will face in the real world. Moreover, the intersection between digitalization, sustainability, and international relations in maritime education has not been adequately addressed. The integration of these themes presents an opportunity to create a more holistic, interdisciplinary curriculum that reflects the complexities of the modern maritime industry. There is a need for research that examines how vocational training programs can be designed to foster a deeper understanding of these interconnected issues, equipping students with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the global maritime landscape.

Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by a multidimensional framework that integrates theories from international relations, sustainability, and digitalization. The theoretical lens of international relations will help to contextualize the global factors that impact the maritime industry, emphasizing the interconnectedness of political, economic, and cultural factors. The theory of sustainability education will inform the research on how sustainability can be embedded into vocational training programs, while the theory of digital literacy will guide the exploration of how digital technologies can be used to enhance both technical and non-technical competencies. This framework will provide a comprehensive approach to understanding how vocational education in the maritime sector can be restructured to address the challenges of the 21st century.



Method

This research adopts a qualitative research design, which is particularly suited to exploring complex, multifaceted phenomena within real-world contexts (Katz, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Saldana, 2014). Given the study's aim to understand the experiences and perspectives of maritime professionals, educators, and graduates concerning the integration of international relations (IR) perspectives into maritime vocational education, a qualitative approach allows for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. Qualitative research is ideal for capturing the richness of individual experiences, interpreting social contexts, and exploring how people make sense of their roles and challenges within the maritime sector, particularly in the intersection of education, international relations, and industry practices. The data collection method chosen for this research is semi-structured interviews (Ploum et al., 2017; Ware, 2017). Semi-structured interviews are particularly effective in gathering in-depth, context-specific information, as they offer flexibility while maintaining a focus on key themes. The semi-structured format enables the researcher to ask pre-determined questions, but also to probe further based on the responses of the participants. This dynamic approach ensures that the participants have the opportunity to express their views fully, while allowing for the exploration of unexpected insights that may arise during the interview process.

The research participants consist of three distinct groups: maritime professionals, educators, and graduates. The maritime professionals include entrepreneurs, officers, and managers working within the port and shipping industries, as well as those who engage with international relations issues from a multi-dimensional viewpoint. These professionals bring practical insights into the challenges and opportunities they face when integrating political, economic, strategic, social, cultural, and environmental perspectives into their work. Their perspectives are vital in understanding how international relations influences decision-making within the maritime industry, particularly in the context of global trade, maritime policy, and the management of ports and shipping companies.

The second group of participants includes three lecturers who have expertise in maritime science and vocational training programs for seafarers. These educators not only possess deep knowledge in their respective fields but also have experience in integrating interdisciplinary approaches, such as international relations, into their teaching and research. Their perspectives provide valuable insights into how current educational practices address (or fail to address) the broader geopolitical, economic, and environmental issues shaping the maritime sector. Additionally, they can offer reflections on the challenges and opportunities involved in incorporating international relations into the curriculum, especially in vocational education settings.

The third group comprises four graduates who have applied their skills and knowledge in international port offices, global maritime companies, and other maritime-related industries. Their experiences in the industry provide a real-world perspective on how well their vocational education has prepared them for the challenges of the maritime industry, particularly in dealing with global issues and the interplay between various international relations dimensions. These graduates offer a unique viewpoint on the effectiveness of maritime education in preparing professionals to engage with the multifaceted issues confronting the maritime sector today.



Each participant group will be interviewed individually to gather detailed and personal accounts of their experiences. The interviews will be conducted in person or through virtual platforms, depending on the availability and preferences of the participants (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Padgett, 2016; Weinsheimer, 1985; Weisberg, 2016). The questions will focus on the participants' perspectives on the importance of international relations in the maritime industry, the integration of these perspectives into vocational education, the role of sustainability and digitalization, and their views on the future of maritime education. The interviews will be recorded (with participants' consent) and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data analysis will be conducted using thematic analysis, a widely used technique in qualitative research. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within the data. It is particularly effective for interpreting complex data and drawing out meanings from participants' responses. The process of thematic analysis will involve several steps: familiarization with the data, coding the data, generating themes, reviewing and refining the themes, and interpreting the findings. Thematic analysis allows for flexibility in analyzing both explicit and implicit meanings within the interviews, providing a rich and detailed understanding of the participants' perspectives.

A key advantage of thematic analysis is its ability to provide insights into the underlying attitudes, beliefs, and values that shape participants' experiences. In this research, thematic analysis will help identify key themes related to the integration of international relations in maritime vocational education, such as the importance of understanding global trade dynamics, the challenges of incorporating sustainability into training, and the role of digital technologies in shaping the future of maritime education. The analysis will also help to identify gaps in current educational practices and highlight areas where improvements are needed.

The rationale for using qualitative research and semi-structured interviews lies in the research's aim to explore subjective experiences and insights. This method allows for the capture of diverse perspectives from professionals, educators, and graduates, offering a comprehensive view of how international relations and other interdisciplinary approaches can be integrated into maritime vocational education. Additionally, qualitative methods provide the flexibility needed to adapt to the unique contexts and experiences of each participant, enabling the research to uncover rich, contextually grounded findings.

The chosen research method—qualitative research using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis—provides the depth, flexibility, and contextual relevance needed to explore the integration of international relations in maritime vocational education. This approach is well-suited to capturing the nuanced perspectives of maritime professionals, educators, and graduates, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions for enhancing maritime education in the face of global, technological, and environmental changes. The findings from this research will contribute valuable insights into how vocational training can evolve to meet the demands of the global maritime industry.



Results

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative data analysis conducted on the perspectives and experiences of maritime professionals, educators, and graduates. The data analysis is organized according to the key indicators, which are based on the integration of international relations approaches in maritime vocational education. These indicators are used to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity of international and global collaboration within maritime education and training. The analysis utilizes a scoring system, and the results are visualized through tables and descriptive interpretation.

Overview of the Indicators and Scoring

The research focused on five primary indicators that reflect the effectiveness of integrating international relations perspectives into maritime education and training. These indicators are as follows:

1. International Relations Integration in Curriculum: The extent to which international relations theories and practices are embedded in maritime training curricula.
2. Global and Regional Collaboration in Maritime Education: The effectiveness of partnerships between maritime educational institutions, international bodies, and the industry.
3. Digitalization and Technological Innovation in Maritime Education: The degree to which digital tools, platforms, and technologies are used to enhance maritime education and collaboration.
4. Sustainability and Environmental Awareness in Maritime Training: The focus on sustainability practices and environmental consciousness within the maritime curriculum.
5. Practical Application of Learning in Global Maritime Industry: The effectiveness of the vocational education in preparing graduates for real-world challenges in global maritime industries.

Each of these indicators is assessed on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents the lowest level of effectiveness and 10 represents the highest level of effectiveness. The overall score for each indicator was determined by analyzing the responses from maritime professionals, educators, and graduates.

Indicator 1: International Relations Integration in Curriculum

The integration of international relations perspectives into the maritime curriculum was evaluated based on the responses of educators and maritime professionals who were interviewed. The results show that while there is an awareness of the need to incorporate international relations into maritime education, the integration is still in its early stages.

- a. Educators' Perspectives: Three educators mentioned that while international relations is occasionally discussed in certain modules, such as in global trade and



maritime policy courses, it is not consistently incorporated across all courses. The integration often depends on the individual instructor's expertise and willingness to include global political, economic, and environmental factors.

- b. **Maritime Professionals' Perspectives:** Professionals working in international shipping and port management indicated that understanding international relations is crucial to navigating global trade, regulations, and maritime security. However, they expressed concern that the curriculum does not adequately prepare students for the dynamic political and economic realities of global maritime operations.

Table 1. Scoring for International Relations Integration in Curriculum

Indicator	Educators' Responses (1-10)	Maritime Professionals' Responses (1-10)	Average Score
International Relations Integration in Curriculum	6/10	7/10	6.5/10

The scoring of 6.5/10 reflects a recognition of the need for greater integration of international relations into the curriculum but also highlights the gaps that exist. This suggests a moderate level of effectiveness in the current integration, with room for improvement in terms of consistency across programs and courses.

Indicator 2: Global and Regional Collaboration in Maritime Education

The second indicator assessed the level of collaboration between maritime educational institutions, international organizations, and the global maritime industry. Respondents pointed to both positive developments and significant challenges in this area.

- a. **Educators' Perspectives:** Several educators mentioned that their institutions have partnerships with international maritime organizations and universities. However, these collaborations are often limited to specific research projects or short-term exchanges rather than long-term, structured partnerships. Many educators also pointed out that while regional collaborations are growing, global partnerships remain limited due to logistical, financial, and political barriers.
- b. **Maritime Professionals' Perspectives:** Maritime professionals involved in shipping and port management indicated that global collaboration in the sector has significantly enhanced operational efficiency and sustainability. They pointed out that partnerships with international bodies such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and regional port authorities have helped improve industry standards, but there is still a need for greater collaboration in educational initiatives.

**Table 2.** Scoring for Global and Regional Collaboration in Maritime Education

Indicator	Educators' Responses (1-10)	Maritime Professionals' Responses (1-10)	Average Score
Global and Regional Collaboration in Maritime Education	6/10	8/10	7/10

The average score of 7/10 reflects a more positive outlook on the role of collaboration, particularly from maritime professionals who directly benefit from these partnerships. Educators, however, identified challenges in extending these collaborations to the broader educational structure. Therefore, while collaboration exists, it is not as widespread or impactful as it could be.

Indicator 3: Digitalization and Technological Innovation in Maritime Education

The integration of digital tools and technologies into maritime education was a key focus, as digitalization plays an increasingly important role in both the operation of the maritime industry and its training programs.

- a. Educators' Perspectives: Many educators highlighted the increasing use of simulation software, online platforms, and digital resources to teach maritime students. However, some noted that while digitalization is present, it is often used in isolated pockets and is not fully integrated into the broader curriculum. There is also a significant gap in the availability of advanced digital tools in less-developed maritime education institutions.
- b. Maritime Professionals' Perspectives: Professionals in the field emphasized that digitalization has transformed the maritime industry, from navigation technologies and automated systems to digital platforms for managing supply chains. They acknowledged that while maritime education has made progress, there is still a significant gap in training students to handle advanced technologies such as autonomous vessels, blockchain, and artificial intelligence in maritime logistics.

Table 3. Scoring for Digitalization and Technological Innovation in Maritime Education

Indicator	Educators' Responses (1-10)	Maritime Professionals' Responses (1-10)	Average Score
Digitalization and Technological Innovation in Maritime Education	6/10	7/10	6.5/10

The average score of 6.5/10 reveals that digitalization is a growing trend in maritime education but is still far from being fully integrated into all aspects of training. There is a recognition that while technology is critical for the future of maritime operations,



educational institutions are not fully equipped to provide students with the skills needed to handle the most advanced digital technologies in the sector.

Indicator 4: Sustainability and Environmental Awareness in Maritime Training

Sustainability and environmental awareness are increasingly important in the maritime sector, particularly as the industry faces mounting pressure to reduce its environmental footprint.

- a. **Educators' Perspectives:** Educators reported that sustainability is gradually being incorporated into maritime curricula, especially in the context of environmental regulations and the need for green technologies in shipping. However, many respondents noted that sustainability is often treated as an isolated topic rather than being integrated across the entire curriculum. There is also a tendency to focus on compliance with international regulations rather than fostering a deeper understanding of sustainable practices.
- b. **Maritime Professionals' Perspectives:** Maritime professionals emphasized that sustainability is a top priority for the industry, especially in light of stricter environmental regulations and the push for carbon-neutral shipping. They noted that while education on sustainability is valuable, more emphasis needs to be placed on practical, hands-on training in sustainable technologies and practices.

Table 4. Scoring for Sustainability and Environmental Awareness in Maritime Training

Indicator	Educators' Responses (1-10)	Maritime Professionals' Responses (1-10)	Average Score
Sustainability and Environmental Awareness in Maritime Training	7/10	8/10	7.5/10

The average score of 7.5/10 reflects a fairly positive view of the integration of sustainability into maritime training. Both educators and professionals agree on the importance of environmental awareness, though there is a consensus that more emphasis is needed on practical applications rather than theoretical knowledge.

Indicator 5: Practical Application of Learning in Global Maritime Industry

The final indicator assessed how well maritime vocational education prepares students for real-world challenges in the global maritime industry.

- a. **Educators' Perspectives:** Educators acknowledged that while practical training is a core component of maritime education, there is a gap between what is taught in the classroom and the rapidly changing realities of the global maritime industry. They



suggested that more field-based experiences, internships, and industry partnerships are necessary to better prepare students for global maritime operations.

- b. **Maritime Professionals' Perspectives:** Maritime professionals emphasized the importance of hands-on experience in the maritime industry. They noted that while vocational education provides a solid technical foundation, there is a need for more exposure to real-world situations, such as dealing with international trade disputes, managing cross-cultural teams, and using advanced technologies in global logistics.

Table 5. Scoring for Practical Application of Learning in Global Maritime Industry

Indicator	Educators' Responses (1-10)	Maritime Professionals' Responses (1-10)	Average Score
Practical Application of Learning in Global Maritime Industry	7/10	8/10	7.5/10

The average score of 7.5/10 suggests that while there is a solid foundation of practical training, there is room for improvement in ensuring that students are fully prepared for the challenges of a globalized maritime industry. The emphasis on internships, industry collaborations, and exposure to real-world scenarios is seen as essential for bridging this gap.

Discussion

This research provides valuable insights into the integration of international relations (IR) perspectives into maritime vocational education. The findings reflect both the progress and challenges associated with incorporating these perspectives into training programs that aim to equip maritime professionals with the knowledge and skills required for navigating the increasingly complex global maritime landscape. In this discussion, we will explore the significance of the findings, compare them with existing research, identify the limitations of the study, and suggest avenues for future research.

Significance of the Findings

The primary significance of this research lies in its exploration of how international relations, a multi-dimensional field, can enrich and expand maritime vocational education. As global trade becomes more interconnected and the maritime sector faces new challenges such as sustainability, digitalization, and geopolitical shifts, it is crucial that maritime education reflects the broader context in which the industry operates. The findings of this study suggest that while there is recognition of the importance of international relations in the maritime sector, its full integration into vocational education remains incomplete.

International Relations in the Curriculum: The finding that the integration of international relations into maritime curricula is inconsistent is both significant and revealing. While



there are isolated efforts to incorporate IR perspectives, particularly in global trade and maritime policy courses, the overall lack of systematic and thorough integration reflects a gap in education systems. This gap is important because it suggests that while educators acknowledge the importance of these broader global perspectives, the existing curriculum has yet to adapt comprehensively to the evolving needs of the maritime industry. International relations—especially in its political, economic, and environmental dimensions—are central to understanding the complex and ever-changing global maritime environment. By incorporating these perspectives into the curriculum, maritime institutions would not only enhance the technical skills of their students but also equip them with the necessary knowledge to navigate the political and economic intricacies of international maritime operations.

Collaboration and Global Engagement: The research reveals that global and regional collaborations in maritime education are still in the early stages of development. While partnerships with international maritime organizations and universities are increasingly common, they tend to be short-term or project-specific rather than integrated into the broader educational framework. This finding highlights an area that is ripe for development. Stronger and more sustained collaboration between maritime educational institutions, industry bodies, and international organizations would likely facilitate the exchange of knowledge, research, and best practices, fostering a more holistic and well-rounded maritime education system. The lack of widespread global engagement in vocational training programs could limit students' exposure to international maritime practices and issues, which are critical in an era of globalization.

Digitalization and Technological Innovation: The findings also underscore the gap between technological advancements in the maritime industry and the application of these advancements in educational settings. While digital tools, simulation software, and online platforms are increasingly used in maritime training, the lack of integration of cutting-edge technologies like autonomous vessels, blockchain, and artificial intelligence into educational curricula highlights a major discrepancy. The maritime industry itself is rapidly evolving with these technologies, and it is imperative that training programs keep pace with these developments. Ensuring that students are adequately prepared to work with these innovations is crucial for their future success and for the overall competitiveness of the industry.

Sustainability and Environmental Awareness: Another critical finding is the recognition of the importance of sustainability and environmental awareness in the maritime sector. While there is increasing acknowledgment of the importance of green technologies and environmental regulations, sustainability education often remains confined to specific courses or topics. This fragmented approach is not sufficient in addressing the full scope of sustainability challenges that the maritime sector faces. The maritime industry is a major contributor to global carbon emissions, and its transition to more sustainable practices is not just a matter of compliance with international regulations but a crucial factor for its long-term viability. Integrating sustainability across all aspects of maritime education would equip future professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to drive this transition forward.

Practical Application of Learning: The research also suggests that maritime vocational education does provide a strong technical foundation but lacks sufficient practical, real-



world exposure to the challenges that graduates will face in the global maritime industry. Although students may acquire the necessary theoretical knowledge, there is a gap when it comes to hands-on experience in global maritime operations, especially in areas such as international trade management, cross-cultural communication, and the use of advanced technologies. The need for more internships, industry partnerships, and field-based training is evident, as these experiences allow students to apply their learning in real-world settings, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Comparison with Existing Research

When comparing these findings to existing research in the field of maritime education and international relations, several trends emerge that are both consistent with and divergent from previous studies. Much of the existing literature highlights the importance of incorporating international relations and global perspectives into maritime education, but like this research, it also identifies significant barriers to full integration (Demirel, 2020; Fitriani et al., 2023; Kidd & McCarthy, 2019). Research has consistently pointed to the slow pace of curriculum development in response to the rapidly changing global maritime environment. Many maritime institutions still focus primarily on technical skills and regulatory compliance, with limited attention paid to the broader geopolitical, economic, and environmental factors that shape the industry. This aligns with the findings of this study, which revealed that while international relations is acknowledged, its incorporation into the curriculum remains fragmented and inconsistent.

The findings also echo broader trends in higher education, particularly in vocational training, where there is a persistent gap between technological advancements and educational practices. Previous studies have highlighted the challenge of integrating cutting-edge technologies such as digital simulation tools, autonomous vessels, and blockchain into maritime education. This research similarly found that while some educational institutions are embracing these technologies, there is a significant lag in equipping students with the skills needed to operate in a highly digitalized maritime industry. In terms of sustainability, existing research has emphasized the growing importance of environmental awareness in maritime training (Balkin, 2006; Chircop, 2015; Zavalniuk et al., 2021). While regulations such as the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) greenhouse gas emissions standards are well-known within the industry, many educational institutions are still struggling to embed sustainability into their curricula in a comprehensive and impactful way. This study supports that view, noting that sustainability is often treated as an isolated topic rather than an overarching principle that should inform all aspects of maritime education.

Limitations of the Study

While this research provides valuable insights, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample size of the study was relatively small, consisting of only three educators, three maritime professionals, and four graduates. This limited sample size may not fully represent the diversity of perspectives within the maritime education and professional community. A larger sample size would likely provide a more



comprehensive view of the current state of maritime education and the integration of international relations perspectives. Second, the study focused solely on vocational programs, and the findings may not be generalizable to other types of maritime education, such as undergraduate or graduate programs. Vocational education programs, which are more focused on practical skills and less on academic theory, may face unique challenges in integrating interdisciplinary subjects such as international relations. Future research could examine how international relations is incorporated into higher-level maritime education programs, where there may be greater flexibility to explore interdisciplinary topics.

Another limitation is the reliance on qualitative methods, which, while offering deep insights, may not always capture the full breadth of perspectives within the maritime sector. The study's use of semi-structured interviews provides rich data, but it is based on the perceptions and experiences of a small group of participants. Further research using quantitative methods, such as surveys, could help corroborate the findings and provide a more generalizable understanding of the state of international relations integration in maritime education.

Suggestions for Future Research

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, there are several directions for future research. One important avenue is to explore the barriers and challenges that maritime educational institutions face when attempting to integrate international relations into their curricula. Understanding the institutional, financial, and logistical hurdles to such integration will provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and industry stakeholders who seek to enhance maritime education. Future research could also focus on the impact of greater integration of international relations on students' learning outcomes and career readiness. Longitudinal studies that track graduates' careers over time could provide evidence of how well students are able to apply the global perspectives learned in their education to their professional roles in the maritime industry. This would help demonstrate the long-term value of incorporating international relations into vocational training.

Another area for future research is the exploration of digitalization in maritime education, particularly with regard to emerging technologies such as autonomous vessels, artificial intelligence, and blockchain. Future studies could investigate how educational institutions are preparing students to work with these technologies and whether there are gaps in training that need to be addressed. Lastly, as sustainability continues to be a major focus of the maritime industry, future research should investigate how educational institutions can more effectively integrate environmental sustainability into maritime curricula. This could include the development of new models for teaching sustainability, as well as research on how to ensure that students are equipped with the practical skills needed to implement green technologies and comply with international environmental standards.

The findings of this research suggest that while maritime vocational education is making progress in integrating international relations perspectives, significant gaps remain. The challenges of incorporating global political, economic, strategic, and environmental factors into training programs reflect broader issues within maritime education, which



continues to emphasize technical skills over interdisciplinary knowledge. Nevertheless, the growing recognition of these gaps provides an opportunity for reform. By expanding international collaboration, embracing digital technologies, and prioritizing sustainability, maritime education can better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of a globalized and rapidly changing industry. Future research should continue to explore these issues, providing further insights into how maritime education can evolve to meet the demands of the 21st-century maritime industry.

Conclusion

This research highlights the growing importance of integrating international relations perspectives into maritime vocational education, emphasizing the need to address political, economic, strategic, social, cultural, and environmental factors in training programs. The findings reveal that while there are ongoing efforts to incorporate these global perspectives, their integration remains inconsistent and fragmented across maritime education curricula. Key areas such as digitalization, sustainability, and global collaboration are still underdeveloped, with significant gaps in preparing students for the challenges of a rapidly changing and interconnected global maritime industry. The research indicates that although maritime vocational education provides strong technical training, it lacks sufficient exposure to real-world global maritime operations and interdisciplinary knowledge. Enhanced collaboration with international maritime organizations, more internships, and field-based experiences are essential for bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. Furthermore, the full integration of digital technologies and sustainability into curricula is necessary for equipping future maritime professionals with the skills needed to navigate both technological advancements and environmental challenges. This study provides a foundation for further research on the barriers and opportunities for improving the incorporation of international relations into maritime education. By addressing these gaps, maritime education can better prepare students for the complexities of the global maritime industry, ensuring the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the sector in an increasingly interconnected world.

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TAIWAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN US-CHINA COMPETITION

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Abstract

Taiwan (the Republic of China, ROC) has become a focal point of international security in the ongoing US-China competition. China (the People's Republic of China, PRC) has increasingly sought to isolate the Taipei administration from the global community by restricting its access to international organizations and reducing the number of its diplomatic allies. This article explores the effectiveness of the United States in counterbalancing China's coercive actions against Taiwan in international organizations. It further examines the historical evolution and future prospects of Taiwan's international presence—particularly the role of diplomatic language and interpretive maneuvering surrounding UN General Assembly Resolution 2758, as well as Beijing's promotion of its "One China Principle" in contrast to the more ambiguous "One China Policy" adopted by many countries. Drawing on a close examination of historical and contemporary government documents from China, Taiwan, the United States, and the United Nations, this study investigates the international political and economic narratives advanced by these governments and UN bodies. Ultimately, it assesses the strategies of the United States and the ROC in seeking "meaningful participation" for Taiwan within the UN system and beyond.

Keywords

China, Taiwan, the United States, the United Nations, meaningful participation, international organizations.



Resumo

Taiwan (República da China) tornou-se um ponto focal da segurança internacional na competição em curso entre os EUA e a China. A China (República Popular da China, RPC) tem procurado cada vez mais isolar a administração de Taipé em relação à comunidade global, restringindo o seu acesso a organizações internacionais e reduzindo o número de seus aliados diplomáticos. Este artigo explora a eficácia dos Estados Unidos em contrabalançar as ações coercivas da China contra Taiwan nas organizações internacionais. Além disso, examina a evolução histórica e as perspectivas futuras da presença internacional de Taiwan — particularmente o papel da linguagem diplomática e das manobras interpretativas em torno da Resolução 2758 da Assembleia Geral da ONU, bem como a promoção de Pequim do seu «Princípio de Uma Só China», em contraste com a mais ambígua «Política de Uma Só China» adotada por muitos países. Com base numa análise aprofundada de documentos governamentais históricos e contemporâneos da China, Taiwan, Estados Unidos e Nações Unidas, este estudo analisa as narrativas políticas e económicas internacionais avançadas por esses governos e órgãos da ONU. Por fim, avalia as estratégias dos Estados Unidos e da República da China na busca de uma «participação significativa» para Taiwan dentro do sistema da ONU e além dele.

Palavras-chave

China, Taiwan, Estados Unidos, Nações Unidas, participação significativa, organizações internacionais.

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TAIWAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN US-CHINA COMPETITION¹

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Introduction

The so-called “reunification” with Taiwan represents the ideological endgame of the Communist Party of China (CPC). From the Party’s perspective, this would mark the culmination of a long journey of national recovery, or “national rejuvenation,” following the historical “Century of Humiliation” (The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and The State Council Information Office, People’s Republic of China, 2022). To that end, China has steadily developed and intensified a coercive strategy towards Taiwan, employing a combination of diplomatic, economic, military, and legal measures. This strategy includes a sustained campaign to isolate Taiwan internationally by pressuring other states and international organizations (IOs) to exclude the democratic, “self-ruled island” (*The Economist*, 2025) from global platforms. These efforts reflect a broader ambition not only to assert China’s territorial claims but also to challenge the existing international order—making Taiwan a central issue in cross-Straits relations and a focal point in the wider context of US–China strategic competition.

This article focuses on the Sino-American contention in the context of China’s comprehensive and coercive anti-Taiwan strategy. The two authors examine Beijing’s maneuvers which aim to promote the “One China Principle”—as opposed to the ambiguous “One China Policy”—as well as to strip Taiwan of its remaining “diplomatic allies” and exclude it from international organizations. Drawing on a close study of historical and contemporary government documents, speeches, and statements from China, Taiwan, the United States, and the United Nations (UN), the two scholars analyze the counter-measures taken by the United States to help Taiwan stand up to China’s pressure and (re)join or gain “meaningful participation” in a wide range of international organizations. Finally, the article illustrates the consequences of China’s coercive actions for Taiwan, the United States, and the international community—particularly the like-minded democratic countries.

¹ The views and opinions expressed in this paper are of the authors and they do not represent their affiliated institutions or governments.



The Two Chinas?

The history of the “Taiwan issue” goes back to the times of the Chinese Civil War (1927-49) between the nationalists headed by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the communists under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong. After a brief interlude for a united front against Japan, the war ended with the victory of the communist forces and the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949. In early December, Generalissimo Chiang and approximately two million Kuomintang (KMT) soldiers evacuated to the island of Taiwan. Until his death in 1975, Chiang remained an autocratic president of the Republic of China (ROC), whose jurisdiction shrank to the islands of Taiwan (Formosa), Pescadores, Kinmen, Matsu, and several others. Since 1949, both governments in Beijing and Taipei have claimed that they are the only legal representation of the whole of China. As a result, the Chinese civil war led to the *de facto* creation of two Chinas—although both leaderships have categorically rejected such narratives.

On the one side of the Taiwan Strait, President Chiang has never abandoned the pursuit of retaking the mainland—thus, he developed a plan of invading the PRC known as the Project National Glory, which was never executed. Today, however, the democratically elected authorities of Taiwan do not actively claim their rights to the mainland. Nonetheless, the ROC Constitution still, at least in theory, applies to pre-war China—later amendments only introduced a division between the “Free Area,” *i.e.*, the territories under Taipei’s jurisdiction, and the “Mainland Area” (Laws and Regulations Database of The Republic of China [Taiwan], 2005). In other words, the amended ROC Constitution technically does not forsake ROC’s historical claim of sovereignty over the mainland.

On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, Beijing has maintained that Taiwan is a province of the PRC. The so-called “reunification” has thus become one of the most important elements of President Xi Jinping’s idea of the “Great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (National Development and Reform Commission, People’s Republic of China, 2023). It appears that the use of the term “reunification” in English is a deliberate narrative device employed by Beijing, as the prefix “re-” suggests that the mainland and Formosa were once united.² This framing implies that the PRC’s mission is merely to restore the *status quo ante bellum*—that is, the situation prior to the Chinese Civil War (Łuszczkiewicz and Mendis, 2023a, p. 41-42). It should be clarified, however, that for most part of its history, the island of Taiwan had not been politically or legally a part of China—it was not until 1684 when Taiwan came under the rule of the Qing Dynasty (Trojnar, 2015, p. 44). This lasted only till 1895, when China ceded Formosa and Pescadores to Japan “in perpetuity and full sovereignty” (Denby, 1895). Furthermore, the Republic of China, established after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, never ceased to exist—since 1949, the ROC has simply continued to operate on the island of Taiwan.

To advance the so-called “reunification” mission, Beijing has consistently promoted its narrative of the “One China Principle,” in contrast to the usually more ambiguous “One China Policy.” According to Beijing officials, “there is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory, and the Government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China” (The Mission of

² However, in Chinese, the most commonly used term, 统一 *tongyi*, means simply “unification” (Cody 2019).



the People's Republic of China to the European Union, 2022). China has been insisting on the adoption of this definition worldwide. To that end, it has promoted a narrative according to which "One China Principle" is a globally accepted norm (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines, 2024). Indeed, there are countries that have officially endorsed it; however, reportedly only 51 countries—not 180 as claimed by Beijing—adhere to its "One China Principle" (Yang and Hetherington, 2023).

One of the countries which coined its own definition of the "One China Policy" is the United States: Washington *recognizes* the PRC as the sole legal government of China, yet merely "*acknowledges* that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China" (italics added for clarity and emphasis) (Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China [Shanghai Communiqué], 1972). In other words, the United States does not *recognize* Taiwan as a part of the PRC—it only confirms that Washington is *aware* of Beijing's claim (Green and Glaser, 2017). Some countries and organizations, however, have never defined their "One China Policy"—such as the European Union (EU), which has obligated all of its member-states to adhere to "One China Policy," although it has never clarified its meaning (Brown, 2022)

The major consequence of the PRC-ROC bifurcation is that other states may now recognize—and maintain diplomatic relations with—only one government, i.e., either Beijing or Taipei. The issue of dual representation has thus become a challenge to international organizations.

The United Nations: Switching from Taipei to Beijing

In the aftermath of the World War II, the United Nations was established in October 1945 to prevent future conflicts, maintain international peace and security, and allow dialogue among all countries regardless of their ideological or economic position. At the United Nations Conference on International Organization, which took place in San Francisco between April 25 and June 26, 1945, the ROC became one of the founding members of the UN.

Interestingly, however, the PRC's narratives in this regard seem to omit certain aspects of China's participation in the conference. The official website of the Foreign Ministry of the PRC reads that "a founding member of the United Nations and one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China made important contributions to the founding of the United Nations. In June 1945, the Chinese delegation, which included Dong Biwu, a representative of the Communist Party of China, signed the Charter of the United Nations" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, n.d.). Indeed, Representative Dong was a Communist Party member who signed the UN Charter. The Foreign Ministry of the PRC did not clarify, however, that the "Chinese delegation" was in fact the ROC delegation of Chiang Kai-shek's representatives. Reportedly, it was Washington that pressured the ROC leader to include a CPC member in the UN delegation (Tang, 2016, p. 144).

For the next two decades, the representatives of the ROC were installed in the so-called UN "China seat" (Carter, 2020). In other words, the PRC—established barely four years



after the San Francisco conference—did not have its representation in the UN for more than 20 years.

With the so-called US-China “ping-pong diplomacy” and the gradual normalization of Sino-American relations, the geopolitical situation changed diametrically in the 1970s. The Beijing-Washington *détente* encouraged UN member-states to modify their position on the Chinese representation at the United Nations and its associated bodies. In 1971, the UN General Assembly considered a number of draft resolutions and proposed amendments. The United States opted for dual representation, *i.e.*, keeping a representation for the ROC and granting a separate seat to the PRC at the same time (Office of the Historian, US Department of State, 1973). Eventually, however, at its plenary session on October 25, 1971, the UN adopted Resolution 2758 on the Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations. It mandated

to restore all its rights to the People’s Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations, and to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it (United Nations, 1971).

In short, the resolution placed Beijing in the “China seat” and removed the ROC representation (Drun and Glaser, 2022, pp. 11-12). From now on, the delegation of the PRC has been the only legitimate representation of China to the United Nations.

Soon after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and China’s opening to the world under President Deng Xiaoping, US President Jimmy Carter established diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1979 (Mendis, 2021). By default, the Sino-American rapprochement resulted in ceasing Washington’s official ties with Taipei. However, the United States maintained unofficial interactions with Taiwan. Most importantly, Washington guaranteed security of the ROC through the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, three US-China joint communiqués of 1972, 1978, and 1982, and the Six Assurances (Mendis and Wang, 2020b).

It is important to highlight that the 1971 UN Resolution neither affirmed nor denied the status of the Republic of China as a state. It did not even include the names “Republic of China” or “Taiwan”—it only placed the PRC in the UN “China seat” (Mazza and Schmitt, 2021, p. 9). In the next decades, however, the Beijing government has linked the resolution to its “One China Principle,” which states that Taiwan is part of the PRC. For example, Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi elaborated that the Resolution 2758 “resolved once and for all the representation of the whole of China, Taiwan included, within the United Nations and expelled Taiwan’s so-called representatives from the United Nations. It confirmed that Taiwan is a part of China, and also eliminated any room for creating ‘two Chinas’ or ‘one China, one Taiwan’” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2022). The ROC has numerous times condemned the PRC for “intentionally misinterpreting” the 1971 UN resolution (*Focus Taiwan*, 2022).



Taiwan's Shrinking Space on International Stage

Shortly after the proclamation of the PRC in 1949, only a few fellow communist states, including the Soviet Union and its satellites, switched their recognition from the ROC to the PRC. Over time, however, the numbers shifted—particularly after the 1971 UN resolution and the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the United States and China in 1979.

As of mid-2025, when the two authors submitted this article for publication, the number of diplomatic allies of the ROC went down to 12. This small group consists of 11 UN member-states and the Vatican City State (Mendis, 2020) (Liff and Lin, 2022). Among the most recent twists, Honduras changed its diplomatic position in March 2023—Tegucigalpa announced that from now on, it perceives Taiwan as an “inalienable part of Chinese territory” (Lin, 2023). Presumably, Beijing's trade and economic development offer to the Mesoamerican state outbid the prospects given by Taiwan—as suggested by President Tsai Ing-wen's comment that the Taiwanese government would not “engage in a meaningless contest of dollar diplomacy with China” (Office of the President, Republic of China [Taiwan], 2023). More recently, a few days after presidential election in Taiwan in January 2024, the ROC decided to sever diplomatic relations with the Republic of Nauru upon learning that the Pacific island-nation intends to terminate its diplomatic ties with Taipei in favor of Beijing.

China has tirelessly been trying to attract the remaining diplomatic allies of Taiwan. In the early April 2021, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu revealed that Beijing was tempting Paraguay—Taiwan's only “diplomatic ally” in South America—to cut diplomatic ties with the ROC in exchange for millions of doses of China-made Covid-19 vaccines. According to Wu, Taipei had been speaking to “like-minded countries” to handle the South American issue as the spike in coronavirus cases resulted in protests and calls for impeaching the Paraguayan president (*Reuters*, 2021). As reported by Minister Wu, India provided Paraguay with its own COVAXIN vaccines at the request of Taiwan; however, New Delhi denied it, claiming that it was a gift from the Indian government without any involvement of a third party (*Hindustan Times*, 2021).

For Taiwan, each loss of an “ally” further shrinks its space on diplomatic stage. Similarly, the number of states that may officially speak on behalf of Taiwan in the United Nations is decreasing, and their voice is weakening. Without a doubt, stripping Taiwan of its remaining diplomatic allies has become an important element of China's comprehensive isolation campaign against Taiwan, which led to the exclusion of the ROC from the UN in 1971 and, consequently, many other international organizations (Stokes, Sullivan, and Durkee, 2022, p. 1).

China's Anti-Taiwan Campaign in IOs

China's pressure has severely impacted Taiwan's ability to participate in a wide range of IOs. Following the adoption of Resolution 2758 by the UN General Assembly, the Taiwanese representation was soon removed from all UN agencies. In a domino effect, it also led to Taiwan's exclusion from many other IOs outside of the UN system. Notably, however, the ROC was not expelled from those organizations at once in 1971. For



example, the Lyon-based International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) took another 13 years to remove the ROC representation following the adoption of the UN resolution.

Moreover, Taiwan's expulsion from the UN did not preclude its access to all international organizations. The ROC has now a full membership in 45 intergovernmental organizations and their subsidiary bodies such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the World Organization of Animal Health, and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Furthermore, Taiwan has an observer (or other) status in 29 intergovernmental organizations and their ancillary bodies—including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as well as the committees of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Central American Integration System (Government Portal of the Republic of China [Taiwan], n.d.).

Intriguingly, Taiwan has also been able to join some new IOs since 1971. Nevertheless, the process has often been arduous and compromising, as Taipei authorities were often forced to agree to use a name other than the "Republic of China." The most well-known case is the World Trade Organization (WTO), where Taiwan was included as the "Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu (Chinese Taipei)" in 2002—barely 21 days after the PRC's entry (Charnovitz, 2006, p. 405).

From the legal point of view, (re)joining the United Nations and its agencies is not a lost cause for Taiwan. In recent years, the ROC authorities have been very active in their efforts to (re)gain meaningful participation in the UN family of specialized agencies. It should be clarified that many of them—like the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—do not require the UN membership to join. Additionally, the statehood is a prerequisite in various agencies; however, the UN Charter does not explain what it actually means to be a state (United Nations, 1945). It is also crucial to observe that neither the 1971 Resolution, nor any other UN document has defined the status of Taiwan.

Nonetheless, China seems to have been successfully blocking Taiwan's attempts to (re)join the UN system. Beijing has been able to put pressure on IOs and influence their policy positions on Taiwan due to several factors. *First*, China managed to insert a vast number of its nationals in the UN and its affiliated family of organizations at various levels. As of 2019, there were over 1,300 Chinese citizens employed as a regular staff of the UN system (United Nations Digital Library, 2020). *Second*, Beijing has been successful in promoting Chinese nationals to senior ranks across the UN funds and programs, its principal organs, and other UN-affiliated IOs (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2022). *Third*, Beijing has been widely seen as backing non-Chinese who are particularly supportive of Beijing's agenda. For example, WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of Ethiopia has been considered by many to be an outspoken advocate for the Chinese government's epidemiological response following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (Collins, 2020). Concurrently, the World Health Assembly (WHA), the decision-making body of WHO, has not been issuing an invitation to Taiwan since 2016, even during the Covid-19 pandemic—despite the fact that Taiwan was the first country to inform the UN agency



about the suspicious virus transmissions originating from the Chinese city of Wuhan (Mendis and Wang, 2020a). In May 2022, the proposal sent by 13 WHO member-states (the then-diplomatic allies of Taipei) to allow Taiwan to join as an observer was not even included in the official WHA agenda (*Reuters*, 2022).

It is important to remember, however, that Taiwan used to receive an invitation to attend the WHA as an observer in the past. Between 2009 and 2016, Taiwan was allowed to participate in the Assembly as "Chinese Taipei" on an annual basis. Uncoincidentally, it was made possible during the presidency of Ma Ying-jeou (2008-16) from the KMT, which, at least in recent years, has been believed by Beijing to be more China-friendly than the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). As a result, when President Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP was elected in 2016, Taipei was yet again prevented from participating in the WHA. This situation has continued following the election victory of Lai Ching-te, former vice president during Tsai's second term, in January 2024.

Inserting trusted personnel across the IOs has reportedly allowed China not only to keep blocking Taiwan's access to IOs, but also to impact a wide range of UN activities, events, and narratives. Beijing is believed to have excluded Taiwanese nationals from scientific conferences co-sponsored by the UN and its specialized agencies, as well as to have edited UN documents to reflect its own preferences (*Asia Watch*, 2020). This accusation was based on the leaked information about a secret Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the WHO and PRC in 2005. Even though the content of the MoU itself was never made public, the leaked Memorandum on Implementation of the 2005 China-WHO Taiwan MoU was made temporarily available on WikiSource. According to the document, the MoU restricted Taiwan's access to the WHO and its facilities, and used the name "Taiwan, China" (McCuaig-Johnston, 2021). However, the Memorandum on Implementation disappeared from WikiSource in 2020 (Memorandum on Implementation of the 2005 China-WHO Taiwan MOU, 2005).

Moreover, the UN has been restricting NGOs from access and accreditation, if they fail to comply with Beijing's demands to revise the name "Taiwan" to "Taiwan, Province of China" on their websites and publications. One example was provided by Wikimedia Foundation's blocked accreditation to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2020 and 2021, as Beijing accused the foundation of spreading disinformation via the independent, volunteer-led Taiwan chapter (Wikimedia Foundation, 2021).

The Consequences of Taiwan's Exclusion from IOs: The Case Study of WHO

The reverberations of China's coercive strategies to exclude Taiwan from the UN system and other IOs are perhaps best evidenced by the events which followed the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thanks to a swift border closure and effective government-led strategies, Taiwan recorded lower Covid-19 infection rates than most other countries and has generally emerged as a success story in combating the novel and dangerous virus (Qin and Chang Chien, 2021) (Schleich, 2020) (Summers et. al, 2020). Furthermore, Taiwan has also been recognized worldwide as an aid donor thanks to its "Taiwan Can Help, and Taiwan Is Helping" campaign.



However, despite effective foreign assistance projects—which allowed Taiwan to gain positive attention of the international community—the island-nation reportedly faced a series of obstacles and complications, mainly due to China’s pressure. The most serious of them was the challenge to buy Covid-19 vaccines from abroad. Taipei openly accused Beijing of influencing a German firm producing Covid-19 vaccines and making it nearly impossible for Taiwan to buy vaccines directly (Chung, 2021). As a result, Taiwan had to initially rely on vaccine donations. Whereas the United States and Japan became the two biggest donors, the middle and small sized countries like Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland also made significant vaccine donations.

To bypass China’s influence, Taiwanese private companies were compelled to buy foreign-made vaccines on behalf of the Taipei government. Two of the world’s biggest technology manufacturers—Foxconn, which makes devices for Apple, and the giant semiconductor chip producer TSMC—as well as the Tzu Chi Foundation brokered agreements worth \$350 million for the BioNTech vaccine (Lewis, 2021). Moreover, soon after the outbreak of the pandemic, Taipei decided to develop its own Covid-19 vaccine—not only to demonstrate the country’s capabilities and technological advancement, but also to minimize the consequences of China’s practices and compensate Taiwan’s geopolitical vulnerability.

Without a doubt, exclusion from IOs and China’s growing international pressure have had far-fetched implications for Taiwan and its position on the international stage. Equally important, however, is the fact that Beijing’s *modus operandi* seems to have limited Taiwan’s options to contribute successfully to the global community. For instance, Taiwan was barred from participating in official WHO consultations on Covid-19, even though Taiwanese experts could have shared their experience from the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in that forum. The idea that supporting Taiwan’s meaningful participation in—and contribution to—the UN system might be in fact advantageous to the rest of the world was highlighted by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who attested on October 26, 2021 that “Taiwan’s exclusion undermines the important work of the UN and its related bodies, all of which stand to benefit greatly from its contributions” (Blinken, 2021). In a larger framework, Taiwan’s shrinking diplomatic presence also indicates China’s growing influences in IOs. Arguably, by tightening control over UN funds and shaping the language of international documents to its advantage, Beijing has gradually sought to reshape the international order from within (Mendis and Łuszczkiewicz, 2023b).

China’s influences in IOs have increased concurrently with the United States’ neglect of the UN agencies and decrease of Washington’s authority—especially in the Global South. Notably, the United States under President Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris-based UNESCO in 2019, and it was not until July 2023 that the Biden administration rejoined the organization (Mendis and Łuszczkiewicz, 2023a). Meanwhile, however, Beijing managed to use its financial leverage stemming from membership dues as it became the largest annual contributor in Washington’s absence (Mendis and Łuszczkiewicz, 2021b). Having returned to the White House after the Biden interlude, President Trump once again announced the US withdrawal from UNESCO, scheduled to take effect on December 31, 2026. It would also hand Beijing a pathway to further isolate Washington within the UN system and other multilateral frameworks of global governance.



Brussels' Support for Taiwan's Participation in IOs

From political and economic perspectives, Taiwan has gone a long way since 1971 when it was excluded from the UN. After a political transformation at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, the island-nation has been recognized as one of the most vibrant democracies in the world (Economist Intelligence, 2023). This successful, non-violent metamorphosis has brought the attention, sympathy, and support of many other like-minded democratic countries. The support for Taiwan's inclusion in international organizations has become particularly apparent and widely discussed in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic—as evidenced by the voices of the European Union and the United States which opted for Taiwan's presence in the WHO and other international bodies (*The Economist*, 2022). For example, the European Parliament in October 2021 recommended to

... strongly advocate for Taiwan's meaningful participation as an observer in meetings, mechanisms and activities of international bodies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); urge Member States and the EU institutions to support international initiatives calling for Taiwan's participation in international organisations; welcome again Taiwan's proactive cooperation with the international community in learning about the COVID-19 pandemic and finding the best ways to respond to it, and underline that this case has proven that Taiwan's contributions in the WHO would be an added value to the health and well-being of the citizens of all its members (The European Parliament, 2021).

The European Parliament went even further in 2024. With its unprecedented resolution of February 28 on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy, the EU Parliament concluded that “only Taiwan's democratically elected government can represent the Taiwanese people on the international stage” (The European Parliament, 2024). Essentially, the EU policy challenged China's narrative, according to which the Taiwanese people are represented internationally by Beijing. It was a landmark in signaling EU's support for Taiwan's international presence and “meaningful participation” in global institutions.

Washington's Less-Known Yet Global Legislation

The United States has similarly supported Taiwan's participation in international organizations—even though, as in the case of the EU, Washington does not formally endorse Taiwan's independence (Yeh, 2016). Over the years, the long-term support of the United States has been determined by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, in which—despite severing formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan—the American administrations guaranteed the continuation of good relations between Washington and Taipei in accordance with the “One China Policy.” More importantly, the TRA reaffirmed Washington's commitment to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character; thus, helping “to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the



security, or social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan” (Taiwan Relations Act, 1979).

In addition to the TRA, the Six Assurances and diplomatic cables that were declassified in 2020 became the cornerstone of unofficial US-Taiwan relations. However, the most significant development in Washington–Taipei relations occurred during the first Trump administration (Mendis and Łuszczkiewicz, 2021a, pp. 6–7), when the Taiwan Travel Act (2018), the TAIPEI Act (2019), and the Taiwan Assurance Act (2020) were enacted into US law (Mendis and Łuszczkiewicz, 2021).

With regard to the island-nation’s presence in IOs, the Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019 advocates for “Taiwan’s membership in all international organizations in which statehood is not a requirement and in which the United States is also a participant” as well as an “observer status in other appropriate international organizations” (Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019, 2020). Similarly, the Taiwan Assurance Act of 2020 expressed “support for Taiwan’s defense strategy of asymmetric warfare” and encouraged Taipei to increase its defense expenditures (Taiwan Assurance Act of 2020, in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020). It also reaffirmed US support for Taiwan’s meaningful participation in the United Nations, WHA, INTERPOL, ICAO, and other international bodies. Finally, the law also called for Taiwan’s inclusion in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNESCO, and other international organizations “for which statehood is not a requirement for membership.”

It is important to stress that all these US congressional acts may have consequences for other countries as well, depending on the character of their relations with Taiwan. The most explicit case is the TAIPEI Act of 2019, which provides the most unprecedented global consequences, as it technically gives the US authorities a prerogative to either reward or punish countries that either support or act against Taiwan. The TAIPEI Act declares that the US government should

- a) “consider, in certain cases as appropriate and in alignment with United States interests, increasing its economic, security, and diplomatic *engagement* with nations that have demonstrably strengthened, enhanced, or upgraded relations with Taiwan”; and
- b) “consider, in certain cases as appropriate, in alignment with United States foreign policy interests and in consultation with Congress, *altering* its economic, security, and diplomatic engagement with nations that take serious or significant actions to undermine the security or prosperity of Taiwan.” (Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019, 2020) (*italics added*).

In other words, the legislation authorizes US authorities to support or “punish” other countries by expanding or restricting diplomatic, economic, and security assistance based on their behavior toward Taiwan. Essentially, each country’s actions may be carefully examined as to whether its government undermines the “security or prosperity” of Taiwan, including the support for Taiwan’s international presence. However, despite having such a powerful legislation in hand, the question is to what extent Washington would want to weaponize it. As of mid-2025—when this article was submitted for publication—the future remains uncertain: with the ongoing trade war with China during



President Trump's second term, anticipating the dynamics of US relations with both China and Taiwan is akin to reading tealeaves.

Conclusion

Barring Taiwan from any form of participation in international organizations—whether through full membership or observer status—has been a core element of China's broader strategy of non-military coercion. This strategy seems to encompass cognitive campaigns related to the 1971 UN resolution and the "One China Principle," as well as efforts to strip Taiwan of its diplomatic allies. Arguably, these measures are designed to weaken Taiwan's international position while strengthening Beijing's influence in international organizations, enabling it to impose its own rules and reshape global governance.

As a result, Taiwan has faced numerous obstacles in its efforts to secure meaningful participation in—and contribution to—international organizations within the UN system and beyond. China's political, legal, and cognitive strategy is perhaps not as visible and spectacular as military maneuvers—for example, when then-US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August 2022 (Łuszczkiewicz and Mendis, 2023b; Łuszczkiewicz-Mendis and Mendis, 2024). Nonetheless, it may be argued that, so far, China's non-military *modus operandi* has proven highly effective.

Despite open declarations of support from the United States and the European Union, breaking the impasse in UN bodies remains, for now, a distant and uncertain prospect for Taiwan. However, it is not an entirely lost cause. An interesting precedent can be found in the case of Palestine, which launched a diplomatic campaign—known as "Palestine 194"—to secure international recognition of the State of Palestine and to obtain UN membership as the 194th member state (Schanzer, Goldberg, and Mark, 2022). Owing to the majority rule and the absence of veto power, Palestine became the 195th full member of UNESCO on October 31, 2011—despite strong opposition from the United States. A year later, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution granting Palestine the status of a non-member observer state at the United Nations.

As reflected in the EU resolution of 2024, some policymakers—especially in the like-minded democratic countries—maintain that the Taiwanese people are not, and should not be, represented by the PRC on the international stage; instead, they support Taipei's idea that 23 million citizens of the ROC should be represented only by the democratically-elected government of the island-nation (Taipei Trade Office in Fiji, 2024). However, as long as the *status quo*—one that helps to avoid a war but satisfies neither side—is maintained, the people of Taiwan will remain in a limbo.

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O IMPACTO DA INICIATIVA FAIXA E ROTA NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DO SUDESTE ASIÁTICO COM DESTAQUE AO CAMBOJA – A CONTINUAÇÃO DE UM “DESENVOLVIMENTO DEPENDENTE”?

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Resumo

Desde o seu surgimento, a Iniciativa Faixa e Rota (IFR) tem levantado muitos alarmismos. Isto é, há preocupações quanto ao uso da iniciativa, essa seria utilizada para a perseguição estrita dos objetivos nacionais chineses. Ao mesmo tempo, e devido a isso, traria consequências econômicas negativas aos Estados participantes, sendo muitas vezes reconhecida como uma armadilha econômica. Sob esse contexto, o presente artigo procura responder como o desenvolvimento dos países do Sudeste Asiático, em especial do Camboja, poderá ser impactado pela IFR. Haveria uma perpetuação de um modelo de “desenvolvimento dependente”? Para tal faz-se necessário compreendermos as principais dinâmicas no processo histórico de desenvolvimento dos Estados do Sudeste Asiático. E como a estratégia geoeconômica chinesa voltada ao Sudeste Asiático sob o contexto da IFR é implementada. Assim, utilizando-se de um modelo descritivo-analítico, através de pesquisa bibliográfica e da análise do caso do Camboja, pode-se dizer que as construções de infraestruturas no contexto IFR apresentam efeitos econômicos positivos no curto prazo para os países participantes no Sudeste Asiático que apresentam características semelhantes ao Camboja. Nesse sentido, os investimentos e construções de infraestruturas na esfera da IFR têm a capacidade de promover o crescimento econômico de Estados com baixos níveis de infraestruturas conectivas, dependentes de investimentos diretos estrangeiros e com uma governança debilitada. Logo, não parece existir uma armadilha como se é normalmente pensado, uma armadilha de dívida, mas sim uma possível “armadilha” a longo prazo. Na qual os Estados do Sudeste Asiático conectam-se cada vez mais a uma cadeia produtiva regional e aumentam as suas relações comerciais com a China. Assim, possivelmente dando continuidade a um modelo de “desenvolvimento dependente”, mas agora dependentes da China. Indo de acordo com os objetivos chineses para a região, uma ordem econômica regional centrada na China.

Palavras-chave

China, Sudeste Asiático, Iniciativa Faixa e Rota, Camboja, desenvolvimento dependente.

Abstract

Since its emergence, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has raised many alarms. That is, there are concerns that the initiative will be used to strictly pursue Chinese national objectives. At the same time, and because of this, it would have negative economic consequences for participating states, often being recognised as an economic trap. In this context, this article seeks to answer how the development of Southeast Asian countries, especially Cambodia, could be impacted by the BRI. Would there be a perpetuation of a model of 'dependent



development'? To do so, it is necessary to understand the main dynamics in the historical development process of Southeast Asian states. And how China's geo-economic strategy towards Southeast Asia in the context of the BRI is implemented. Thus, using a descriptive-analytical model, through bibliographic research and analysis of the case of Cambodia, it can be said that infrastructure construction in the BRI context has positive short-term economic effects for participating countries in Southeast Asia that have characteristics similar to Cambodia. In this sense, investments and infrastructure construction in the IFR sphere have the capacity to promote economic growth in states with low levels of connective infrastructure, dependent on foreign direct investment and with weak governance. Therefore, there does not seem to be a trap as is commonly thought, a debt trap, but rather a possible long-term 'trap.' In this trap, Southeast Asian states are increasingly connecting to a regional production chain and increasing their trade relations with China. Thus, they may be continuing a model of 'dependent development,' but now dependent on China. This is in line with China's objectives for the region, a regional economic order centred on China.

Keywords

China, Southeast Asia, Belt and Road Initiative, Cambodia, dependent development.

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O IMPACTO DA INICIATIVA FAIXA E ROTA NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DO SUDESTE ASIÁTICO COM DESTAQUE AO CAMBOJA – A CONTINUAÇÃO DE UM “DESENVOLVIMENTO DEPENDENTE”?

PAULO VICTOR BASÍLIO JERONYMO

Introdução

A China, reconhecida como uma potência em ascensão no cenário internacional, utiliza-se de sua vasta capacidade econômica, simbolizada pela Iniciativa Faixa e Rota (IFR), para avançar seus interesses nacionais. Isso tem provocado um crescente alarmismo tanto no meio acadêmico de Relações Internacionais quanto nas grandes mídias ocidentais. A visão predominante é de que a IFR seria um instrumento voltado exclusivamente para a promoção dos objetivos chineses, acarretando prejuízos econômicos para os países participantes, em vez de promover o desenvolvimento mútuo.

Assim, o artigo busca compreender quais são os potenciais impactos da IFR nas economias participantes do Sudeste Asiático, em especial no Camboja. Perpetuar-se-ia nesses Estados um modelo de “desenvolvimento dependente”? Para que seja possível responder essa questão, primeiramente se faz necessário compreender as principais dinâmicas do processo histórico de desenvolvimento dos países do Sudeste Asiático. E demonstrar como a estratégia geoeconômica regional chinesa direcionada ao Sudeste Asiático é implementada.

Argumenta-se que os potenciais impactos econômicos da iniciativa se mostrarão de maneira geral positivos. O uso da IFR como um instrumento de *statecraft* econômico negativo não parece favorável aos objetivos políticos chineses na região, a formação de uma ordem regional com a China no seu centro. Nesse contexto, a continuação de um modelo de “desenvolvimento dependente” parece ir ao encontro destes objetivos.

Este artigo considera que a região do Sudeste Asiático é composta pelos Estados-membros da Associação de Nações do Sudeste Asiático (ASEAN) e o Timor-Leste. Sendo selecionado o Camboja como estudo de caso. Uma vez que, é um dos Estados mais dependentes do financiamento chinês entre os países do Sudeste Asiático e apresenta baixos níveis de infraestrutura, como será demonstrado. Também, faz parte de um dos principais corredores econômicos da IFR, o Corredor Econômico China-Península da Indochina. Assim, apresenta grande potencial para o desenvolvimento, mas também se mostra mais vulnerável ao suposto *statecraft* econômico negativo da China. Para além disso, detém uma maior disponibilidade de estudos sobre, diferente do Laos, mesmo que esse apresente características semelhantes às descritas acima.



O presente artigo foi elaborado por meio da metodologia dedutiva, a seguir um modelo descritivo-analítico baseado em pesquisa bibliográfica. Sob uma lente crítica, esse artigo busca contribuir empiricamente para o estudo da estratégia regional chinesa.

Modelo de desenvolvimento do Sudeste Asiático

Como será demonstrado nesta secção, através de descrição histórica, o crescimento econômico na região do Sudeste Asiático de maneira geral foi atingido pela liberalização seletiva das economias nacionais ao investimento estrangeiro. Desenvolvendo com o passar do tempo, em sua generalidade, economias voltadas à exportação de manufaturas (Al-Fadhat, 2020: p. 178; Carroll, 2020: pp. 52-53). Mas, esse crescimento parece ter chegado a um estágio de estagnação. Diversos autores reconhecem a chamada "armadilha de renda média", ou "*middle-income trap*", no Sudeste Asiático. Atualmente, essa pode ser compreendida como consequência de estratégias de desenvolvimento desiguais, assentadas em princípios neoliberais e promovidos, principalmente, pelo Banco Mundial (Masina, 2018: p. 251). Nesse sentido, em geral, os países da região têm tido dificuldade em deslocar-se do trabalho intensivo e produções industriais de baixo valor agregado (Carroll, 2020: pp. 52-53; Masina, 2018: p. 251).

Entre 1945 e meados da década de 1970, as economias do Sudeste Asiático encontravam-se diretamente relacionadas as dinâmicas do pós-guerra, da Guerra Fria e de seus processos de descolonização. Nessa altura, os Estados da região tornam-se importantes locais de produção de manufaturados *offshore* para os países desenvolvidos, devido à oferta de mão de obra barata. Esse fenômeno, como será demonstrado, terá continuidade com o processo de globalização e a adoção de políticas de caráter neoliberal (Carroll, 2020: pp. 47-48). Os países da região, majoritariamente, tornaram-se suscetíveis a essa forma de integração econômica (dependente) em grande parte devido ao seu passado colonial. Assim, não ocorreu o desenvolvimento de suas indústrias nacionais, mas moldou suas economias de forma a servir principalmente aos europeus (Masina, 2018: pp. 267-268).

Antes da China passar a ter um papel relevante nas redes de produção regionais, o ator econômico de maior relevância regional era o Japão, contribuindo para a formação das redes produtivas do Sudeste Asiático, que mais tarde seriam aproveitadas pelos chineses. Durante as décadas de 1960 e 1970, desacelerando o passo a partir de meados dos anos 1980, se dá uma primeira onda de crescimento asiático. Coincidindo com uma primeira onda de expansão da divisão regional do trabalho, na qual empresas nipônicas dependiam da Coreia do Sul, Taiwan e Singapura para suas produções (King & Du, 2018: p. 815; Masina, 2018: p. 263).

Mas, devido ao aumento dos custos laborais passam a realocar para outros países da região as etapas produtivas de trabalho intensivo. Para além de que, agora os Quatro Tigres Asiáticos (Coreia do Sul, Hong Kong, Singapura e Taiwan) passam a fazer o mesmo, transferir suas indústrias de baixo custo para economias asiáticas em industrialização. Assim, novos países passam a integrar as cadeias produtivas regionais, como a China, Malásia e Tailândia. Desencadeando uma nova onda de crescimento asiático (King & Du, 2018: p. 815; Masina, 2018: p. 263). Nesse cenário, a região do Sudeste Asiático passa a receber grandes fluxos de investimentos ligados a uma



produção orientada para a exportação de manufaturas. Sendo características dessa o trabalho intensivo e componentes de baixo valor agregado (Masina, 2018: pp. 263, 265).

Esse processo foi altamente influenciado pela crise de 1970 após a abdicação do *gold standard* e o fim do sistema Bretton Woods, para além das crises do petróleo em decorrência do fim do padrão do dólar. O que isso gera é uma crise de lucratividade nos países desenvolvidos e um processo de estagflação, baixo crescimento e subida de preços. Assim, estes Estados começam a dar maior prioridade a competitividade global e não tanto ao desenvolvimento nacional, seguindo a lógica neoliberal (Carroll, 2020: pp. 48-49). Então, a globalização de frações de capital passam a ser privilegiadas pelas economias ocidentais, realocando suas produções industriais a Estados com mão de obra mais barata. Deste modo gerando as condições necessárias ao milagre econômico asiático na década de 1980 (Carroll, 2020: p. 48).

Este fenômeno se acentua durante os finais da década de 1980 com a segunda onda de expansão da divisão regional do trabalho, liderada pelos japoneses no Leste e Sudeste Asiático. Isso porque, as indústrias japonesas transferiram sua produção para países asiáticos em desenvolvimento. Para além do aumento de investimento direto estrangeiro (IDE) de saída, até 1987 grande parte dos IDEs nipônicos eram dirigidos a Indonésia, Singapura, Malásia, Tailândia e Filipinas (Carroll, 2020: pp. 49-51; Jones & Hameiri, 2020: p. 20; Masina, 2018: p. 263).

Logo, o que se evidencia é a ascensão das frações de capital internacionais em simultâneo com constituição do mercado mundial, em outras palavras, com a expansão da globalização econômica. Nessa conjuntura, os países do Sudeste Asiático, em especial a Malásia, Tailândia e Indonésia, ou ASEAN 3, desde a década de 1980, se veem sujeitos a adotarem uma postura que se ajuste a desse mercado global. Adotam, assim, uma postura neoliberal, passando a dar maior prioridade ao capital transnacional, processos de industrialização liderados por IDEs e liberalização comercial (Al-Fadhat, 2020: pp. 180-181; Masina, 2018: p. 254). Esta mudança de conduta se faz significativa para que os países e suas elites locais possam permanecer competitivos neste ambiente e prossigam com seus processos de acumulação de capital (Al-Fadhat, 2020: pp. 180-181).

Nesse âmbito, no decorrer das décadas de 1980 e 1990, os países do Sudeste Asiático em geral adotam uma economia orientada para a exportação de manufaturas. Também, se constituem zonas econômicas especiais de maneira a atrair investimentos internacionais (Gomez, Masina & Vignato, 2020: pp. 12-13; Jones & Hameiri, 2020: p. 203). Segundo, Gomez, Masina e Vignato (2020: p. 11) é durante a década de 1980 que os IDEs se tornam a fonte primária de integração econômica regional. Ademais, esta postura que vai de encontro com as tendências neoliberais também começa a se demonstrar no regionalismo do Sudeste Asiático, em iniciativas que buscam a desregulamentação do comércio e investimentos em setores competitivos e orientadas para a exportação, como a ASEAN Free Trade Area e a Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Jones & Hameiri, 2020: p. 203).

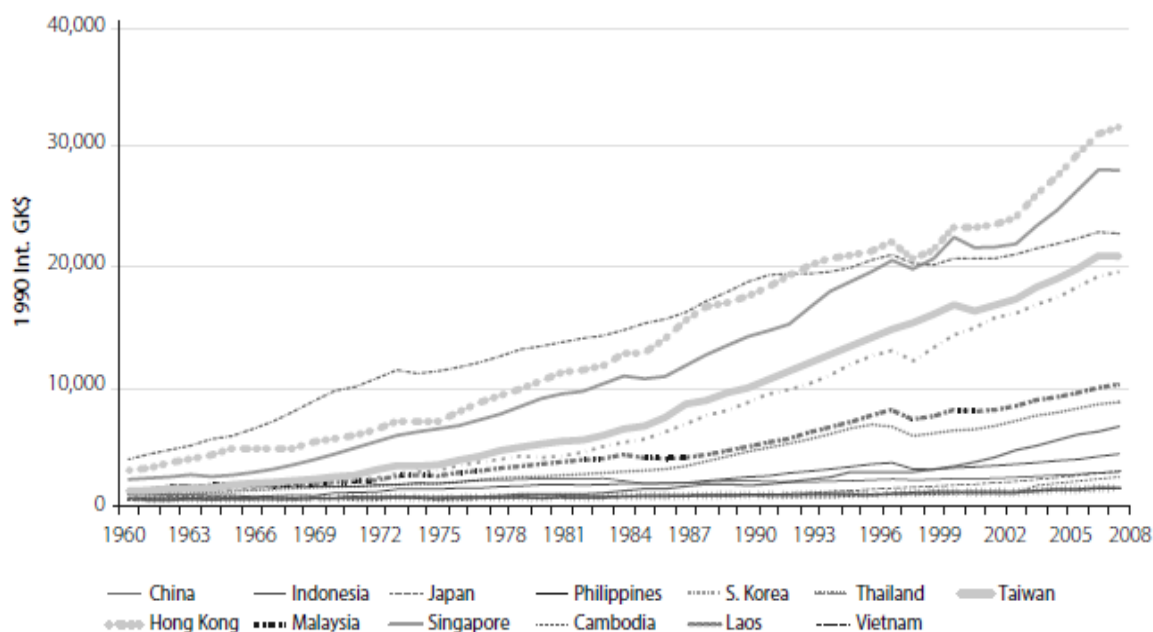
Durante os anos de 1980 e começos dos anos 1990 há uma grande quantidade de IDEs a entrar nos países do Sudeste Asiático, contribuindo para um amplo crescimento do Produto Interno Bruto (PIB) destes (Gomez *et al.*, 2020: p. 11). E durante a década de



1990, em geral, os Estados da Associação de Nações do Sudeste Asiático (ASEAN) cresceram rapidamente, elevando sua classe média. Porém, a qualidade de vida dos trabalhadores industriais não se mostraram melhores. Uma vez que, como já citado, estes passam a adotar o modelo de desenvolvimento neoliberal, dando maior ênfase ao lucro e não tanto ao bem-estar dos trabalhadores (Gomez *et al.*, 2020: p. 5).

Depois, ocorre a crise econômica asiática de 1997-98, decorrente da falência de instituições financeiras da Tailândia, que acaba por se alastrar aos demais Estados da região que liberalizaram suas economias. Isso teria representado o fim do milagre econômico asiático, mas o que se mostra a seguir é a continuação de padrões de crescimento em alguns países do Sudeste Asiático, em especial nos ASEAN 3 (Carroll, 2020: p. 54; Masina, 2018: pp. 253-254; Pitakdumrongkit, 2023: p. 63). Um crescimento considerado relevante dentro dos padrões internacionais, porém bem mais lentos do que aqueles experienciados pela primeira geração das “Economias Asiáticas Recentemente Industrializadas”, o Japão, Coreia do Sul, Taiwan e Singapura (Masina, 2018: pp. 253-254).

Figura 1. PIB per capita para países asiáticos selecionados, entre 1960 e 2008



Fonte: Masina (2018: p. 260).

Nesta conjuntura, mesmo com a crise, os Estados da região continuam a manter uma postura reformista pró-mercado. Em 2003, buscou-se regionalmente a liberalização das regras de investimentos e a construção da Comunidade Econômica ASEAN, favorável aos negócios internacionais (Carroll, 2020: p. 55). Esta industrialização através de IDEs, que ocorre principalmente nos ASEAN 3 e no Vietnã, depois dos meados dos anos 2000, é caracterizada por ligações bem limitadas com empresas nacionais. Grande parte das cadeias de fornecimento para produção orientada para a exportação encontravam-se sob



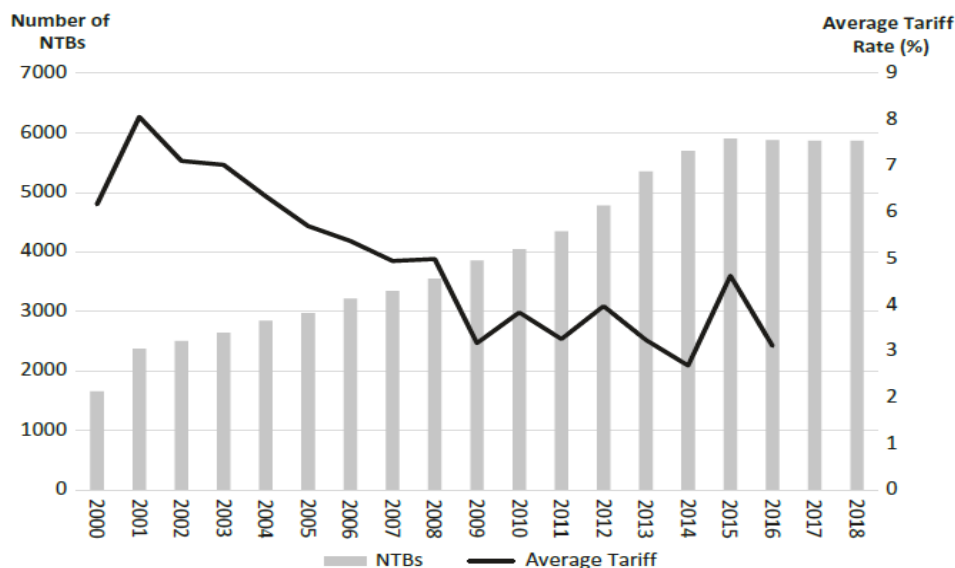
o controle de empresas estrangeiras. Além disso, a maioria dos componentes que agregam valor eram importados (Masina, 2018: p. 269).

Isso ocorre uma vez que as redes de produção regional no Sudeste Asiático são hierárquicas. Ou seja, empresas ou países parecem trabalhar ativamente para a prevenção da difusão de tecnologias para outras empresas ou países, os quais operam em níveis inferiores na divisão regional do trabalho, de maneira a se manterem mais competitivos (Masina, 2018: p. 258). Ao decorrer das ondas de expansão e crescimento asiático, as economias líderes deslocaram suas indústrias para economias inferiores. Aumentando seu valor produtivo nas cadeias de valor e mantendo espaços com baixos custos laborais (King & Du, 2018: p. 815).

Assim, a noção de que IDEs são grandes contribuidores nas transferências de tecnologias para países em desenvolvimento não parece se mostrar verdade. O que se mostra é apenas um impacto limitado dos IDEs nesse âmbito. Nesse sentido, políticas estatais de absorção tecnológica e modernização industrial parecem se mostrar mais importantes (Masina, 2018: p. 258). Logo, se faz necessário a intervenção estatal por meio de incentivos e restrições para que se encoraje o progresso tecnológico. O mercado solitariamente não consegue garantir investimentos apropriados para inovação industrial, afinal, o mercado visa antes de tudo a lucratividade. E investimentos buscando inovações em Estados em desenvolvimento apresentam demasiado risco (Masina, 2018: p. 259).

Porém, há desafios na implementação de políticas industriais estratégicas, não tanto técnicos, mas sim políticos. Políticas devem distinguir os interesses e partes envolvidas, direcionando incentivos e rendas para avanço tecnológico e desenvolvimento industrial nacional (Masina, 2018: p. 261). Mas, o problema que se mostra nos países do Sudeste Asiático, em especial os ASEAN 3, é a tomada do aparato estatal por interesses específicos de elites locais fazendo com que a busca por lucratividade (renda) influenciasse as políticas nacionais destes Estados (Jones & Hameiri, 2020: p. 217; Masina, 2018: p. 261). Essa preponderância das elites locais que proporciona o controle dessas sobre o modelo econômico de seus países se dá em grande parte pelo contexto do pós-Guerra Fria e o abandono do modelo "socialista" (Hughes, 2020: p. 112).

Assim, as elites ligadas ao aparato estatal, passam a seguir o modelo neoliberal de mercado frente ao contexto global, de forma a manterem-se competitivos no mercado global e consolidar seu poder internamente (Hughes, 2020: p. 112). Ou seja, forças dominantes do mercado passam a delinear o desenvolvimento industrial e os governos intervêm seletivamente em suas economias de forma a proteger os interesses destas elites. Há, assim, uma liberalização seletiva das economias nacionais, mas não tanto da política, visível no aumento de barreiras não tarifárias ao comércio, ao mesmo tempo que tarifas diminuem, ver Figura 2 (Jones & Hameiri, 2020: pp. 217-218; Masina, 2018: p. 261).

**Figura 2.** Tarifas médias e número de barreiras não tarifárias na ASEAN

Fonte: Jones & Hameiri (2020: p. 217).

Logo, pode-se dizer que muitos dos problemas enfrentados pelos Estados do Sudeste Asiático comumente identificados como a "armadilha de renda média" são oriundos de uma industrialização dependente que se desenvolve com a adoção do neoliberalismo (Masina, 2018: p. 262).

Neste contexto, apesar de indústrias de alta tecnologia fazerem parte das economias regionais, as suas produções representam somente uma pequena fração do valor. Assim, em sua generalidade os Estados do Sudeste Asiático situam-se como intermediários nas redes produtivas regionais. Afinal, esses países dependem de insumos estrangeiros de alto valor. Todavia, essa conjuntura beneficiou o desenvolvimento econômico orientado para exportação, já que havia uma ampla demanda de *commodities*, por conta do *boom* da manufatura chinesa. Ocorre uma alta demanda chinesa por insumos entre 2003 e 2011 aumentando os preços das *commodities* (Carroll, 2020: pp. 56, 59-61). Esse quadro de crescimento teve continuidade mesmo com a crise financeira de 2008, principalmente nos ASEAN 3, é entendida mais como uma consequência da crise global e da fragilidade das principais economias globais, do que consequência de suas próprias capacidades (Carroll, 2020: p. 59; Masina, 2018: p. 254).

É no período posterior da crise asiática, no começo dos anos 2000, que os chineses passam a ser mais atuantes nas economias do Sudeste Asiático. Em 2001, esta é admitida na Organização Mundial do Comércio e passa ser reconhecida como a "fábrica do mundo". Assim, a China passa a se mostrar como um relevante competidor para os Estados do Sudeste Asiático, tornando-se um fornecedor de mão de obra barata e de produção de baixo custo. Possivelmente dificultando o desenvolvimento desses países por sua ascensão como um espaço de fabricação de baixo custo, mas, ao mesmo tempo, cria-se uma alta demanda por *commodities*. Nesse cenário, os Estados do Sudeste Asiático integram redes de produção regionais, nas quais componentes são produzidos e



combinados em produtos em diversas localidades. Mas, agora a China encontrava-se numa posição mais central no contexto regional (Carroll, 2020: pp. 56, 59-60).

Para além disso, o papel mais ativo da China na economia do Sudeste Asiático se dá uma vez que essa escolhe por não desvalorizar sua moeda a seguir a crise asiática, aumentando seu nível competitivo nas exportações. Também, manifestou seu apoio a Chiang Mai Initiative, criando-se diversos acordos bilaterais de troca de moeda. A China, assim, proporcionou uma ajuda essencial para a recuperação destes Estados, fortalecendo os pilares da cooperação econômica regional (Cardoso, 2008: p. 96; Tong, 2021: p. 110).

Posto tudo isso, pode-se dizer que os países do Sudeste Asiático detêm em sua generalidade um desenvolvimento econômico orientado a exportação de manufaturas e apoiado pela mão de obra barata e intensiva. Consequentemente se tornando progressivamente mais dependentes do capital internacional, tecnologia estrangeira e dos mercados de exportação (Carroll, 2020: pp. 49, 52-53; Gomez *et al.*, 2020: p. 12). Sob esse contexto, que é agravado pela inabilidade dos governos nacionais de implementarem políticas de desenvolvimento industrial, estes países não são capazes de aprimorar tecnologicamente seus meios produtivos. Deste modo, mantêm-se em sua maioria como fornecedores de *commodities* para mercados estrangeiros, também, de produtos simples e de montagem final. Assim, se tornaram um armazém de produção de baixo valor agregado (Carroll, 2020: p. 53; Gomez *et al.*, 2020: p. 12).

Logo, no Sudeste Asiático, em especial no Camboja, Laos, Myanmar e Vietnã, a transição para uma economia de mercado foi direcionada por forças sociais preocupadas pela manutenção de seu poder político e controle sobre importantes ativos econômicos (Hughes, 2020: p. 113). Nesta transição, as elites domésticas investiram em sistemas de extração simples e protegidos pelo aparelho estatal, evitando a construção de bases industriais competitivas a nível internacional. O que seria arriscado no contexto de desenvolvimento tardio que se encontravam. Para além de que, os baixos custos laborais atraíram investimentos estrangeiros para determinados setores, particularmente o de vestuário. E mesmo que certos países tenham obtido maior sucesso na produção orientada para a exportação, como o Vietnã, suas indústrias continuam a ser dominadas pela mão de obra intensiva, dependentes de multinacionais e produção de baixo valor agregado (Hughes, 2020: p. 113).

Assim, talvez seja mais apropriado entendermos a condição no Sudeste Asiático não tanto como uma "armadilha de renda média", mas sim uma "armadilha de desenvolvimento dependente". Esses Estados encontram-se vulneráveis, uma vez que o processo de reorganização das cadeias produtivas regionais se mostrou constante, devido à procura por menores custos, movendo processos produtivos para diversos países. Também, pela sua dependência por IDEs, necessários para a manutenção de suas posições nesta cadeia regional. E, consequentemente, afetando os trabalhadores, afinal o trabalho intensivo também se mostra necessário para esta manutenção na cadeia regional e para competitividade internacional.

Logo, salários, condições laborais e direitos trabalhistas acabam por não se mostrar de grande interesse para as elites nesses Estados, afinal essas procuram permanecer competitivas dentro do mercado global e dar continuidade aos seus processos de



concentração de capital (Al-Fadhat, 2020: p. 180; Masina, 2018: p. 269). Nesse contexto, a adoção da lógica neoliberal e a expansão de um capitalismo financeiro em escala global, contribuiu para a degradação da condição trabalhista nestes países. A terceirização e precarização parecem se mostram características desse modelo, que funciona em um ambiente de competição internacional.

Estratégia Regional Chinesa no Sudeste Asiático e a Iniciativa Faixa e Rota

A China emergiu como uma das principais vencedoras da globalização, usufruindo da interdependência econômica e, por consequência, política que se intensificam através do processo de globalização, como pilares para o desenvolvimento de sua capacidade econômica (Cardoso, 2008: p. 54). Também, o país tirou proveito das relações econômicas transfronteiriças, globais e regionais, que ganham força com o processo de globalização, e das relações econômicas e redes produtivas regionais já estabelecidas pelas economias asiáticas mais desenvolvidas antes do aparecimento da Iniciativa Faixa e Rota (IFR). Dessa forma, a China ascende no mercado mundial e suas indústrias promovem-se dentro das cadeias de valor, consagrando-se como, segundo o Fundo Monetário Internacional (2025a), a segunda maior economia mundial em termos nominais na atualidade. Agora com essa grande capacidade econômica, esta passa a acentuar o uso de instrumentos econômicos de *statecraft*, o que é refletido pela sua atuação na IFR.

A IFR se mostrará como um importante instrumento para a continuação da perseguição dos interesses nacionais chineses. Ou seja, o desenvolvimento nacional como forma de evitar um novo século de humilhação e projetar-se internacionalmente como uma potência (Cardoso, 2008: pp. 17, 27, 72). A iniciativa se mostrará importante para a continuação do crescimento econômico chinês, que é a base de seu poder nacional, afinal responde às insuficiências internas do país, ao mesmo tempo que se demonstra como uma importante ferramenta na construção de uma ordem (econômica) regional, com a China no seu centro.

Como estratégia, a IFR busca incentivar o crescimento e integração econômica entre a China e as diversas regiões que fazem parte da iniciativa. Há pontos de ligação entre cada região e a China, que são agrupados em "corredores econômicos". Que por sua vez encontram-se conectados através de pontes terrestres, ferroviárias ou marítimas na Eurásia. Assim, há uma rota terrestre conectando a China à Europa e uma rota marítima que conecta o Mar do Sul da China (MSC) à Oceania e ao Oceano Índico, desse ponto conectando as costas asiáticas e africanas à Europa (Rojanaleekul, Pungchompoo & Sirivongpaisal, 2022: pp. 163-164; Tomé, 2021: p. 167). Assim, o desenvolvimento de infraestruturas é um dos principais pilares da iniciativa. Nesse contexto, o Corredor Econômico China-Península da Indochina é uma das principais regiões de conexão para a iniciativa (Rojanaleekul *et al.*, 2022: pp. 163-164).

O desenvolvimento desse corredor econômico visa ampliar o acesso chinês aos mercados regionais através do estabelecimento de redes ferroviárias que conectaram diversas províncias chinesas a países do Sudeste Asiático, nesse caso, Vietnã, Laos, Camboja, Tailândia, Malásia e Singapura. Além do elemento terrestre, há um componente marítimo



do corredor econômico e ligações entre ambos. Nesse sentido, há o desenvolvimento de ferrovias ligando os portos de Kuantan e Klang na Malásia, oferecendo uma passagem alternativa do Oceano Índico para o MSC, importante para diminuir os riscos associados ao conhecido "dilema de Malaca" (Rojanaleekul *et al.*, 2022: p. 164).

Outro importante aspecto da iniciativa é a cooperação industrial. Nesse âmbito, as conexões geradas pela iniciativa procuram estabelecer um processo produtivo fora da China. Dessa forma integrando mais ainda os países da região numa cadeia de fornecimento com a China. Ajudando, assim, com o problema de excesso produtivo chinês, especialmente nos setores de alumínio eletrolítico, ferro e aço. Nesse sentido, os fabricantes chineses teriam um acesso mais estável de recursos e mercados. Para além disso, a iniciativa auxilia no desenvolvimento de províncias menos desenvolvidas ao oeste e centro da China. Também, possibilita novos canais de escoamento para grandes reservas de moeda estrangeira e promove, de forma limitada, a internacionalização da moeda chinesa (Cai, 2015: pp. 837-838; Rojanaleekul *et al.*, 2022: p. 164).

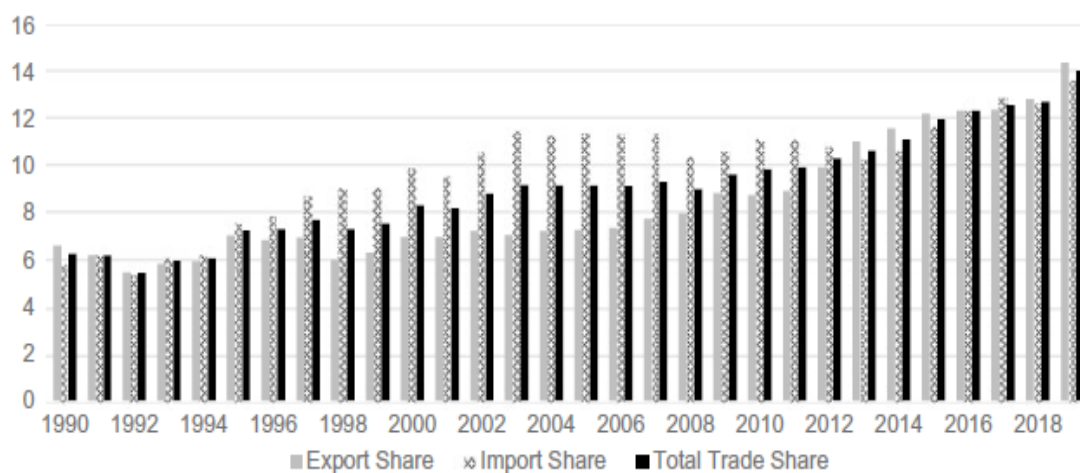
Logo, a IFR se demonstra importante para o aprofundamento das relações econômicas entre os países do Sudeste Asiático e a China. Nesse âmbito, os Estados Unidos da América e o Japão detêm maiores ligações nas cadeias de produção globais com a China do que com os Estados da Associação de Nações do Sudeste Asiático (ASEAN). De acordo com Taguchi e Zhao (2021: p. 149), isso ocorre pela carência de performance logística nos países da ASEAN, onde há insuficiência de infraestruturas conectivas e de transporte. A densidade da rede ferroviária dos países da IFR, incluindo o Sudeste Asiático, é baixa se comparada a média global de 8.48 km/1000 km². Nesse âmbito, países como o Camboja, Indonésia e Filipinas continuam a utilizar linhas ferroviárias construídas dentro de seus primeiros anos ou com ajuda de outros Estados (Wang, Lim, Zhang, Zhao & Lee, 2020: p. 293). É estimado um vácuo na infraestrutura do Sudeste Asiático na casa dos 8 trilhões de dólares (Cai, 2015: pp. 839-840).

Aqui a IFR detém grande relevância, afinal a construção destas infraestruturas têm a possibilidade auxiliar no fortalecimento das conexões nas cadeias produtivas entre os países do Sudeste Asiático e desses com a China. Consequentemente alargando a dependência econômica destes com a China. Afinal, estes países se interligam cada vez mais, fortalecendo uma ordem econômica regional com a China no seu centro. Aumentado a participação comercial chinesa no comércio total e no valor agregado estrangeiro nas exportações do Sudeste Asiático.

Assim, o que parece se demonstrar é a sutil aplicação do *statecraft* econômico pelos chineses. Nesse sentido, a influência econômica e, consequentemente, política se daria pelo aumento gradual da dependência econômica dos Estados do Sudeste Asiático à China. Logo, a IFR tratar-se-ia da continuação e intensificação da estratégia geoeconômica e das relações econômicas entre os países do Sudeste Asiático e a China. Para além de demonstrar o caráter pragmático e paciente da estratégia nacional chinesa, na qual os objetivos são colocados a longo-prazo (Cardoso, 2008: pp. 95-96). Essa progressiva dependência econômica dos Estados do Sudeste Asiático decorre do gradativo aumento da exposição econômica desses com a China, perceptível na participação comercial chinesa nestas economias, ver Figura 3. Segundo o Observatory of Economic Complexity (2025), em 2023 a China representou 18% do total das exportações e 27.4% das importações da ASEAN.



Figura 3. China – ASEAN – Participação nas exportações, participação nas importações e participação comercial total, 1990–2019



Fonte: Raghavan, Khan & Devadason (2021: p. 15).

As cadeias produtivas regionais de manufaturados estão conectadas através de um Estado, a China. Assim, os Estados do Sudeste Asiático podem ser expostos a choques econômicos partidos da China. A influência sínica nas cadeias produtivas regionais com o Sudeste Asiático e a exposição desses a China como fornecedor e mercado fica perceptível no crescimento da participação da China no valor agregado estrangeiro nas exportações da ASEAN¹ (Raghavan, Khan & Devadason, 2021: pp. 19-20).

Além disso, a exposição econômica da região também decorre através do constante aumento do investimento direto estrangeiro (IDE) da China no decorrer das últimas décadas. Porém, mesmo com constantes aumentos apenas três economias da ASEAN, Camboja, Laos e Myanmar, podem ser tidas como dependentes de IDEs chineses. Isso, quando se é considerado os padrões de fluxos históricos e o padrão de estoque atual (Tong, 2020: pp. 17-18), ver Tabela 1. Nesse sentido, a participação da China nos fluxos totais de IDE de entrada na ASEAN cresceu de 6% em 2010-2012 para 7.3% em 2021-2023. E empresas chinesas ainda se apresentam como o maior grupo de investidores no Camboja, Laos e Myanmar (ASEAN Secretariat, 2024: p. 21).

Ademais, há o fornecimento de ajuda econômica/financeira que se dá principalmente através "outros fluxos oficiais" (OFO) e não tanto através de "assistência oficial ao desenvolvimento" (AOD). E, assim como os IDEs, encontram-se muitas vezes ligados aos projetos de infraestrutura da IFR. Este tipo de ajuda econômica, OFO, dá maior importância ao desenvolvimento de infraestruturas e ao crescimento econômico. Para além de normalmente seguir o princípio de "não interferência nos assuntos internos". Por outro lado, as AODs, as quais os países ocidentais desenvolvidos dão maior preferência, priorizam os setores de governança, sociais e capacitação da sociedade civil. Comumente impondo maiores condições e seletividade, as quais expressam lógicas liberais de "boa

¹ O valor agregado chinês nas exportações cresceu em todos os países da ASEAN durante os anos de 1990 e 2018. No Camboja, de 2.2% para 25.7%; Indonésia, 3.5% para 18.2%; Laos, 2.5% para 10.7%; Malásia, 2.6% para 18.1%; Myanmar, 2% para 8.1%; Filipinas, 1.9% para 15.3%; Tailândia, 3% para 24.7%; e Vietnã, 5% para 22.8% (Taguchi & Zhao, 2022: pp. 131-132).



governança". Nesse contexto, a ajuda econômica da China apresentaria menos restrições impostas e seguiriam a lógica de desenvolvimento mútuo. Logo, favorecem os interesses políticos das elites locais, que não demonstram interesse nas agendas liberais democráticas, mas sim em proteger suas posições de poder. Ao mesmo tempo, a China se beneficia pela sua crescente influência econômica e política com essas elites (Rosser, 2020: pp. 300-302, 305).

Tabela 1. Participação da China no total de IDE interno do mundo, dos países em desenvolvimento e da ASEAN (%)

	China Weight in Inward FDI Flows			China Weight in Inward FDI Stock	
	High Growth Period	Post-crisis Period	BRI Period	2004	2017
World	1.9	5.7	9.8	0.4	5.7
Developing/transition countries (benchmark)	4.1	8.6	15.5	1.6	12.8
ASEAN	1.5	5.6	9.3	0.3	4.1
Brunei	0.3	1.6	39.3	0.0	3.6
Cambodia	11.4	28.9	24.9	4.3	26.2
Indonesia	1.3	5.2	9.0	0.8	4.2
Laos	40.0	172.2	84.7	2.4	100.0
Malaysia	0.2	2.6	10.9	0.3	3.5
Myanmar	16.3	30.3	12.5	0.3	19.9
Philippines	0.5	6.8	1.3	0.1	1.0
Singapore	1.6	4.0	8.3	0.1	3.5
Thailand	0.4	4.8	17.0	0.3	2.4
Viet Nam	1.4	3.6	6.2	0.8	3.8

Fonte: Tong (2020: p. 17).

Porém, os projetos de infraestrutura chinesa, nos quais é comum inclusão de trabalhadores chineses, são muitas vezes considerados armadilhas de dívidas e associados à corrupção e má governança. Esse ponto de vista é corroborado pela evidência de que grande parte dos países do Sudeste Asiático são compostos por regimes considerados não democráticos², subordinados às suas elites. Essas que tiram vantagens através dos acordos bilaterais com os chineses. Desse sentido, há receios quanto as potenciais repercussões nos níveis de dívidas provenientes dos projetos da IFR (Rosser, 2020: p. 308).

Estas podem contribuir para a perpetuação destes Estados como países subdesenvolvidos de média renda. Para além disso, podem ser citadas receios no âmbito securitário, relativo os objetivos chineses no Mar do Sul da China (MSC). Uma importante região no sentido estratégico e econômico, por se tratar de um local de importantes rotas comerciais e com importantes reservas de hidrocarbonetos e pescados. Fatores importantes para salvaguardar a continuidade do crescimento econômico chinês. Para

² De acordo com o V-Dem (2025), Laos, Myanmar, Vietnã são autocracias fechadas. O Camboja, Filipinas, Indonésia e Tailândia são autocracias eleitorais e, a Malásia é apontada como uma democracia eleitoral (Marina, Altman, Angiolillo, Fernandes, God & Lindberg, 2025: p. 14).



além de que a presença no MSC parece se demonstrar importante para a segurança nacional chinesa, grandes centros urbanos encontram-se nas costas. Nesse âmbito, com a globalização, fatores econômicos ganham uma grande importância securitária para os Estados e seus objetivos nacionais (Cardoso, 2008: pp. 113-116; Tomé, 2021: p. 162). Para além disso, pode-se dizer que a globalização coloca os Estados em contato uns com os outros e fortalece a relevância da economia e do comércio como fundamentos de poder. Ou seja, o MSC é uma região de extrema importância para a China no atual sistema internacional (Cardoso, 2008: p. 112).

Ademais, há preocupações quanto a possíveis *defaults* devido às taxas de juros presentes nos empréstimos chineses. Tanto as AODs e as OFOs chinesas são mais elevadas quando se comparados aos do Banco Mundial (Cheong, 2022: p. 8). Altas taxas de juros geram maiores possibilidades de um *default*, por isso credores chineses parecem dar preferência a colateralização como estratégia de mitigação de risco. Assim, os mutuários fixam como garantia algum ativo ou posse, por exemplo, exportação de *commodities* ou rendimentos futuros. Os chineses aparentam reconhecer as apreensões dos Estados quanto a uma possível armadilha de dívida. Assim, são oferecidas garantias e os interesses econômicos são colocados em um nível superior de relevância, quando comparados à tomada de ativos estrategicamente importantes (Cheong, 2022: pp. 9-11).

Seria contraditório com os interesses chineses na IFR de promoção do crescimento econômico, desenvolvimento nacional e formação de uma ordem (econômica) regional centrada na China se o propósito explícito dos empréstimos da China fosse a captura dos ativos dos mutuários por meio de armadilhas de dívida. Afinal, desestimularia ainda mais os países do Sudeste Asiático a fazerem parte da iniciativa.

Logo, a China aparenta se utilizar de instrumentos econômicos de *statecraft* para atingir fins políticos. Nesse sentido, esta parece preferir o uso positivo desses instrumentos, visando o longo-prazo, de maneira a ganhar influência com as elites dos Estados do Sudeste Asiático. Dessa forma, busca-se construir uma ordem econômica regional com a China no seu centro, através do progressivo aumento da exposição econômica dos países do Sudeste Asiático à China. Aumentado gradativamente a dependência econômica e, consequentemente, política destas elites e de seus Estados à China.

A Iniciativa Faixa e Rota e seu impacto no desenvolvimento do Sudeste Asiático: análise do caso do Camboja

Esta seção busca investigar quais são os possíveis impactos econômicos da Iniciativa Faixa e Rota (IFR) nas economias do Sudeste Asiático, através da análise do caso do Camboja. Os projetos de infraestrutura da IFR acabarão por gerar consequências econômicas negativas as economias participantes? Perpetuar-se-ia um modelo de "desenvolvimento dependente" nestes Estados? Nesta seção entende-se que não é necessário a distinção entre investimentos no âmbito da IFR e os demais investimentos chineses para a realização do estudo. Afinal, grande parte dos investimentos chineses no Sudeste Asiático antes da IFR destinava-se a projetos similares, como ferrovias e rodovias. Também, após 2017, o governo chinês incluiu quase todos os investimentos passados como elementos dos projetos da IFR (Hsueh, 2023: p. 1021). Ademais, o ganho de influência econômica e política pela China ocorre também através de outros



investimentos diretos estrangeiros (IDE), não apenas por meio de investimentos em nome da IFR. Logo, se torna quase impossível e teoricamente desnecessário diferenciar com clareza quais IDEs fazem parte da IFR e quais não.

De acordo com o Banco Nacional do Camboja, o país acumulou um total de 41 bilhões de dólares em IDE de 1993 até 2021. Desse total, a China representa 43%, um pouco mais de 18 bilhões de dólares. Seguida pela Coreia do Sul, representando 11% ou 4.9 bilhões de dólares (Pani & Tobing, 2025: p. 35). Também, de acordo com o American Enterprise Institute (2025), o investimento acumulado de investidores e construtoras chinesas entre 2013 e 2025 foi de 17.51 bilhões de dólares para o Camboja. Os setores de transporte e energia foram responsáveis por grande parte dos investimentos, representando 9.8 e 4.39 bilhões de dólares, respectivamente. Em conjunto, representam aproximadamente 81% do total de investimentos chineses no período.

Devido a este grande número de investimentos levantam-se questões acerca da dívida do Camboja. Assim, em relação à dívida externa total do Camboja, esta tem tido um aumento significativo devido aos projetos da IFR. Estima-se que mais de 41% da dívida externa acumulada do país, equivalente a 15% de seu Produto Interno Bruto (PIB), é mantida pela China. Também, a China se apresenta como o principal credor do Camboja, responsável por 41.7% do total da dívida externa do Camboja, chegando a 9.47 bilhões de dólares em meados de 2022 (Pani & Tobing, 2025: pp. 36, 43; Yu, 2024: p. 114).

Também, a dívida pública bruta, por porcentagem do PIB, foi de aproximadamente 26% ou 11.2 bilhões de dólares em 2023. Nesse âmbito, a dívida bilateral representa a maior parte da dívida externa total, cerca de 64%, mais da metade devido à China. Apresentando um baixo risco de superendividamento, mas vulnerável a choques nos passivos contingentes³ (Fundo Monetário Internacional [FMI], 2025b: pp. 15, 88; FMI, 2025c).

Esse influxo de capital estrangeiro impulsionou o progresso econômico do Camboja e mitigou as principais restrições de infraestrutura no país. O Camboja ocupou no Relatório de Competitividade Global de 2019⁴ a 106ª posição entre 141 economias, demonstrando uma baixa qualidade de infraestruturas, principalmente rodoviárias (Yu, 2024: p. 109). Segundo estimativas da PWC de outubro de 2022, para obter um crescimento sustentado e melhorar os padrões sociais e econômicos de sua população, o país necessitará de investimentos em infraestrutura de aproximadamente 28 bilhões de dólares até 2040 (Yu, 2024: p. 109). Nesse contexto, entre 2004 e 2021 a China financiou aproximadamente 101 projetos de desenvolvimento no Camboja, especialmente em infraestrutura rodoviária e de transporte (Pani & Tobing, 2025: pp. 36, 43).

Assim, o IDE chinês impulsionou de forma significativa o crescimento econômico do Camboja, tornando-o uma das economias com crescimento mais rápido entre os países da Associação de Nações do Sudeste Asiático (ASEAN) na última década. De acordo com o ASEAN Secretariat, com estatísticas de 2022, a taxa de crescimento médio do Camboja foi de 5.7% entre 2012 e 2021. Acredita-se que esse crescimento é resultado de um *boom* nas indústrias de vestuário e têxteis (Yu, 2024: p. 108), segundo o FMI (2025b:

³ Referem-se a obrigações financeiras possíveis ou incertas, cujo reconhecimento e valor dependem de eventos futuros que não estão sob o controle das empresas ou do governo.

⁴ Últimos dados disponíveis.



p. 43) a indústria têxtil tem se mantido consistentemente o maior impulsionador deste crescimento, explicando 21% do crescimento médio do PIB no período de 2010 a 2019. Também, o turismo e a construção de infraestruturas financiadas por IDE, tiveram um papel relevante neste crescimento (Yu, 2024: p. 108).

Estas informações vão de acordo com aquelas divulgadas pelo FMI (2025b: p. 15; 2025c), o crescimento real do PIB do Camboja foi de 5% em 2023, impulsionado principalmente pelo desempenho setor manufatureiro. Também, pela recuperação do turismo e a retomada das atividades em setores correlatos. Já em 2024, a forte recuperação do setor de vestuário, juntamente com o crescimento das exportações agrícolas e a melhora constante do turismo contribuíram para uma maior aceleração do crescimento econômico. Assim, ocorrendo um crescimento real do PIB de 6% em 2024.

Mas, há questionamentos sobre a governança do Camboja, que é movido economicamente por IDEs, em sua maior parte chineses. De acordo com o Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2025) o Camboja em 2024, encontrava-se na 158ª posição de 180 países. Também, de acordo com World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, em 2022⁵, o país encontrava-se em 141º. Refletindo desafios na governança e emprego da lei (Pani & Tobing, 2025: p. 44) Assim, os IDEs tem a possibilidade de contribuir para o acúmulo de capital e consolidação política da elite do Camboja, e não tanto para o bem-estar da população em geral (Pani & Tobing, 2025: p. 45; Yu, 2024: p. 113).

Afinal, o IDE chinês é caracterizado por um grande envolvimento estatal, priorização de setores estratégicos e uso de empréstimos concessionais muitas vezes vinculados a empreiteiros e fornecedores chineses. Esse modelo também é visível no desenvolvimento de infraestruturas no âmbito da IFR, na qual o financiamento é constituído de maneira a beneficiar empresas estatais chinesas. Assim, ao mesmo tempo, garantindo influência econômica e, consequentemente, política sobre os países beneficiários (Pani & Tobing, 2025: p. 37). O investimento estrangeiro tem a capacidade de exercer uma relevante influência sobre políticas locais gerando um ambiente favorável ao investimento. Nesse contexto, a dependência de IDEs fortalece estas elites, que se beneficiam desproporcionalmente desses investimentos, afinal possuem poder político (Pani & Tobing, 2025: p. 41).

Neste contexto, os chineses fazem investimentos substanciais de maneira a garantir acesso a recursos naturais, assegurando as necessidades de sua população. Há no Camboja reservas relevantes de petróleo e gás natural, assim como potenciais recursos minerais e terras agricultáveis. Nesse âmbito, os investimentos estrangeiros no Camboja foram e são essenciais para moldar a produtividade doméstica e estabilidade financeira do país. E a China se posiciona como o maior investidor. Assim, há uma relação de dependência em que o país central nesse contexto, a China, foca seus investimentos em matérias-primas, recursos naturais e agricultura, para assim suprir suas necessidades de consumo e produção internas. Ao mesmo tempo, cria oportunidades para direcionar a economia do Camboja, país periférico, para servir aos interesses nacionais chineses (Pani & Tobing, 2025: pp. 42-43).

⁵ Últimos dados disponíveis para o Camboja.



A China é o maior parceiro comercial do Camboja. Segundo estatísticas do Ministério do Comércio da China, o volume de comércio bilateral entre a China e o Camboja cresceu de 3.77 bilhões de dólares em 2013 para 13.67 bilhões em 2021. Nesse âmbito, a balança comercial se mostra favorável à China, que usufruiu de um crescente superávit comercial com o país de 2013 a 2021. A China foi o segundo principal destino das exportações do Camboja em 2021, representando 8.3% do valor total das exportações, e constituiu a maior fonte de importações do país, correspondendo a 33.9% do valor total importações (Yu, 2025: p. 107). Demonstrando a relação de assimetria entre ambos os Estados, país central e periférico, e a crescente dependência econômica do Camboja, que se encontra cada vez mais amarrado as cadeias produtivas regionais, que tem a China em posição de destaque.

Para além disto, o IDE chinês pode ter a capacidade de alterar as dinâmicas das atividades econômicas e empresas locais devido à presença de seus interesses comerciais. Lojas, vendedores e operadores turísticos cambojanos não conseguem competir com o crescente número de hotéis, cassinos, restaurantes e lojas de varejo de propriedade chinesa. Para além do que, turistas chineses, os quais são uma parcela relevante dos turistas, tendem a consumir produtos e serviços de seus conterrâneos. Assim, o efeito econômico de gotejamento ou *trickle-down* é limitado. Esse cenário se dá principalmente na região de Sihanoukville, uma Zona Econômica Especial sob o guarda-chuva da IFR (Pani & Tobing, 2025: pp. 37, 47; Yu, 2024: pp. 111, 113).

Ou seja, há um processo de marginalização econômica, novamente levantando preocupações de que os benefícios econômicos dos investimentos chineses favoreçam majoritariamente as elites chinesas e locais, excluindo o cambojano comum. Além disso, o rápido desenvolvimento conduziu um influxo de migrantes e trabalhadores chineses, para além do emprego de mão-de-obra chinesa nos investimentos na esfera da IFR, reduzindo as oportunidades de emprego para os trabalhadores locais e, possivelmente, suprimindo salários (Pani & Tobing, 2025: pp. 37, 47). Provavelmente aumentando o nível de desigualdade no país.

Logo, ainda que o investimento estrangeiro conceda benefícios de curto prazo, como na promoção do crescimento econômico e do desenvolvimento de infraestrutura, a dependência excessiva do capital estrangeiro promove um relacionamento desequilibrado, suscetível à influência econômica e política do país investidor (Pani & Tobing, 2025: p. 48). Ademais, a governança inadequada amplifica as consequências negativas da gestão do investimento estrangeiro. A governança debilitada do Camboja, reconhecida por altos níveis de corrupção, aplicação ineficaz da lei e priorização do financiamento estrangeiro, restringe o gerenciamento do investimento estrangeiro para a perseguição dos interesses nacionais. Assim, o Camboja tornou-se cada vez mais dependente dos investimentos chineses, sem a capacidade de controlar e mitigar seus impactos negativos (Pani & Tobing, 2025: p. 48). E mantêm-se como majoritariamente um país voltado a exportação de produtos de baixo valor agregado, o setor de manufaturados como o de têxteis continua a ser um dos principais condutores no crescimento do país (FMI, 2025b: pp. 43-44).

No entanto, considerando que o Camboja é um aliado próximo da China e que a construção de infraestruturas em larga escala desempenham um papel essencial no Sudeste Asiático no âmbito da IFR, não parece lógico a China conduzir o país à falência



em decorrência de seus projetos de infraestrutura. Isso geraria uma imagem negativa da IFR, o que dificultaria sua implementação futura, tanto a nível regional quanto global (Yu, 2024: p. 114). Além disso, não se faz necessário a China deter grandes níveis de influência econômica e política em todos os países do Sudeste Asiático. Uma vez que o consenso da ASEAN em relação a questões relativas ao Mar do Sul da China pode ser quebrado apenas por alguns, impedindo respostas conjuntas. Juntamente a isso, o desequilíbrio econômico e militar destes Estados em relação à China coloca essa em uma posição de vantagem.

Assim, parece que a IFR através da construção de infraestruturas, em sua maioria rodoviárias e de transporte, tem a capacidade de gerar efeitos econômicos positivos aos países participantes. Principalmente àqueles que apresentam baixos níveis de infraestrutura e são dependentes de IDE para seu desenvolvimento. Promovendo o crescimento econômico, possivelmente, em decorrência das melhoras logísticas e maior integração nas redes produtivas regionais. Porém, há a possibilidade de continuação da atual divisão do trabalho ao nível regional e global. Para além de haver a possibilidade da manutenção das desigualdades internas nos países, principalmente se houver elevados níveis de corrupção entre suas elites econômicas e políticas. Como é o caso do Camboja.

Considerações finais

A Iniciativa Faixa e Rota (IFR) liga localidades com características econômicas e políticas específicas, as quais detém relevância para a China devido ao seu posicionamento geográfico relativo no contexto da iniciativa. Logo, os projetos de infraestrutura são alocados a determinado país de acordo com o papel a ser desempenhado no contexto da IFR e de uma economia regional, a qual a China encontra-se numa posição de destaque. Em outras palavras, de acordo com o que é mais favorável para estratégia regional chinesa.

A China, que se situa numa posição menos dependente no cenário regional, parece ter exibido com o decorrer do tempo sua predileção pela utilização positiva do *statecraft* econômico como forma de influenciar politicamente os Estados do Sudeste Asiático. De maneira a fomentar e ampliar confiança, interesses comuns, demonstrar-se como um bom parceiro regional para o comércio e diminuir a percepção de ameaça econômica e securitária, principalmente em questões relativas ao Mar do Sul da China (MSC). Assim, os chineses promovem uma lógica de desenvolvimento pacífico em sua política externa regional. Uma vez que é necessário manter um ambiente externo pacífico e estável para o desenvolvimento de relações econômicas e para a perseguição de seus interesses nacionais, os quais são dependentes da manutenção do crescimento econômico. Logo, pode-se dizer que os chineses utilizariam de instrumentos econômicos buscando atingir fins políticos.

Considerável parte do Sudeste Asiático mostra-se carente de infraestruturas de transportes, afetando suas performances logísticas. Nesse âmbito, a IFR possui grande relevância, afinal a construção de infraestruturas conectivas podem contribuir para a melhora logística destes Estados. Potencialmente promovendo efeitos econômicos positivos, como demonstrado no caso do Camboja. Fortalecendo, assim, as conexões entre



os países do Sudeste Asiático e interligando-os ainda mais à China numa ordem econômica regional, na qual os chineses encontram-se em uma posição central. Assim, aumentando exposição comercial destes Estados à China pelo aumento da participação comercial e participação no valor agregado estrangeiro. Desse modo, ampliando a dependência econômica e, por consequência, política dos países do Sudeste Asiático à China.

Isto é, o desenvolvimento promovido pela IFR nos Estados do Sudeste Asiático se dá de tal maneira a auxiliar o fortalecimento de uma ordem econômica regional com a China em posição de destaque. Assim, ao que tudo indica os chineses usufruem das economias subdesenvolvidas regionais que dependem de investimento direto estrangeiro, das relações com as elites nacionais, das cadeias produtivas e de comércio regionais e globais, que já haviam sido estabelecidas antes da IFR, e das relações econômicas transfronteiriças que se fortaleceram com a globalização e a adoção do modelo neoliberal.

Posto tudo isto, caso a IFR fosse utilizada como um instrumento de *statecraft* econômico negativo, trazendo assim consequências negativas as economias do Sudeste Asiático, seria contraproducente com os interesses nacionais chineses. Desincentivando os Estados da região a participarem da iniciativa, evitando a construção de infraestruturas com influência chinesa. Dessa forma, indo diretamente contra a melhora de insuficiências internas da China e contra a formação de uma ordem regional. Assim, indo contra a presença chinesa no MSC, a crescente influência política da China para com as elites dos Estados em contacto com esse mar é importante para a gestão de conflitos e disputas nessa região. Nesse contexto, a China não precisa ter grande influência econômica e política sobre todos os Estados do Sudeste Asiático, visto que o consenso da ASEAN sobre o MSC pode ser rompido por alguns membros, como o Camboja, dificultando respostas conjuntas.

Logo, o crescimento econômico destes países parece fazer parte dos objetivos chineses no contexto da IFR, afinal este crescimento será em parte resultado da construção de infraestruturas conectivas. Mas, como foi descrito, é possível que a atual divisão do trabalho global se perpetue, dessa forma mantendo os Estados do Sudeste Asiático como economias orientadas para a exportação de manufaturas e um armazém de produção de baixo valor agregado. Contribui para isto, a necessidade da intervenção do Estado para que haja progresso tecnológico e desenvolvimento industrial. Porém, isso não parece ser de interesse das elites nacionais do Sudeste Asiático, as quais a governança inadequada aumenta os efeitos negativos da gestão do investimento estrangeiro.

Ademais, a grande dependência de capital estrangeiro favorece um relacionamento desigual, passível à influência econômica e política do país investidor. Logo, pode-se dizer que há a possibilidade da continuação de um modelo de "desenvolvimento dependente" nos Estados do Sudeste Asiático, principalmente aqueles que apresentam características semelhantes ao Camboja. Que passariam a tornar-se dependentes da economia chinesa, e não tanto das potências ocidentais. Favorecendo, assim, os objetivos nacionais chineses na região do Sudeste Asiático, que são colocados a longo prazo.



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RETHINKING CHINA'S GRAY-ZONE STRATEGIES: CASES FROM THE EAST CHINA SEA, SOUTH CHINA SEA, AND TAIWAN STRAIT

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Abstract

This paper investigates China's gray-zone strategies in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Taiwan Strait, addressing how China's use of non-military gray-zone strategies differs across these three maritime regions and what implications these variations hold for regional security. This study redefines gray-zone strategy as a country's attempt to change or influence another country's sovereignty rights or policies through governmental or non-governmental actions, which is different from military brinkmanship. It identifies five categories of non-military gray-zone tactics: narrative warfare, psychological warfare, legal warfare, mixing of civilian and military activities, and governmental jurisdiction warfare. Based on a comparative case analysis of the three areas, the study finds two key characteristics. First, China adopts military means for severe sovereignty violations while relying on non-military gray-zone strategies for lesser infringements to avoid escalation. Second, the greater the perceived impact on sovereignty, the more China employs riskier gray-zone tactics. In the South China Sea, China employs all five tactics to expand economic sovereign rights and create an order alternative to the U.S.-led liberal international order. In the East China Sea, it leverages narrative and jurisdictional tactics to undermine Japan's control while avoiding military confrontation. In the Taiwan Strait, psychological warfare dominates as China seeks to internalize the strait and domesticate Taiwan. Overall, the paper suggests collective, asymmetric responses targeting China's vulnerabilities to enhance deterrence and maintain regional stability.

Keywords

Gray-zone strategy, China, South China Sea, East China Sea, China, Taiwan Strait.

Resumo

Este artigo estuda as estratégias de zona cinzenta da China no Mar da China Meridional, Mar da China Oriental e Estreito de Taiwan, abordando como o uso de estratégias de zona cinzenta não militares pela China difere nessas três regiões marítimas e quais as implicações dessas variações para a segurança regional. Este estudo redefine a estratégia de zona cinzenta como a tentativa de um país de alterar ou influenciar os direitos ou políticas de soberania de outro país por meio de ações governamentais ou não governamentais, o que é diferente da política de risco militar. Ele identifica cinco categorias de táticas não militares de zona cinzenta: guerra



narrativa, guerra psicológica, guerra jurídica, mistura de atividades civis e militares e guerra de jurisdição governamental. Com base em uma análise comparativa de casos das três áreas, o estudo identifica duas características principais. Primeiro, a China adota meios militares para violações graves da soberania, enquanto confia em estratégias não militares da zona cinzenta para infrações menores, a fim de evitar uma escalada. Segundo, quanto maior o impacto percebido sobre a soberania, mais a China emprega táticas mais arriscadas da zona cinzenta. No Mar da China Meridional, a China emprega todas as cinco táticas para expandir os direitos de soberania económica e criar uma ordem alternativa à ordem internacional liberal liderada pelos EUA. No Mar da China Oriental, ela usa táticas narrativas e jurisdicionais para minar o controle do Japão, evitando o confronto militar. No Estreito de Taiwan, a guerra psicológica domina, à medida que a China busca internalizar o estreito e domesticar Taiwan. No geral, o artigo sugere respostas coletivas e assimétricas direcionadas às vulnerabilidades da China para aumentar a dissuasão e manter a estabilidade regional.

Palavras-chave

Estratégia da zona cinzenta, China, Mar da China Meridional, Mar da China Oriental, China, Estreito de Taiwan.

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RETHINKING CHINA'S GRAY-ZONE STRATEGIES: CASES FROM THE EAST CHINA SEA, SOUTH CHINA SEA, AND TAIWAN STRAIT

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Introduction: China's Gray-zone Actions

On June 17, 2024, the China Coast Guard (CCG), supported by maritime militia and the People's Liberation Army Navy, surrounded, rammed, and boarded a Philippine Navy inflatable boat while it was conducting a resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal. During the incident, CCG personnel used knives, bats, and axes to damage the Philippine boat, resulting in one Philippine navy serviceman losing his right thumb (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 2024). Although the Philippine government quickly squelched speculation that the event might invoke the 1951 Philippines–U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty (Gomez, 2024), continued CCG aggression in the South China Sea makes it increasingly likely that the treaty could be invoked in the near future. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos has stated that the treaty would “kick into action” if a “Filipino serviceman is killed because of an attack or an aggressive action by another foreign power” (Gutierrez, 2024).

Similar incidents have occurred in the East China Sea, where the CCG frequently patrols disputed areas claimed by Japan. The frequency of these patrols increased dramatically after Japan nationalized the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 2012, and hot pursuit events involving the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) have become almost routine. Beyond the South China Sea and East China Sea, the CCG has also extended its so-called law enforcement operations to the Taiwan Strait. On February 14, 2024, two Chinese fishermen died while fleeing from Taiwan's Coast Guard after being intercepted for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in waters under Taiwan's administration.¹ Subsequently, the CCG began patrolling prohibited and restricted waters around Taiwan's Kinmen Islands, claiming that these patrols constitute normal law enforcement.

These are aggressive actions by the CCG; however, China also engages in other tactics such as deploying maritime militia to surround disputed islets and sever their connections to other claimants, issuing fishing bans in disputed seas, and promoting historical rights narratives in the South China Sea. Such actions are considered gray-zone strategies. While they may not lead to war like direct military actions, they can incrementally change the status quo. The U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) in 2010 noted that many changes fall within this ambiguous gray zone, including military mobilization, economic warfare, and information warfare (Secretary of Defense, 2010). These gray-zone

¹ At around 1 p.m. on February 14, 2024, a Chinese speedboat carrying four people crossed the maritime boundary and intruded into the waters near Kinmen. When it refused inspection, Taiwan's Coast Guard pursued the vessel, during which the speedboat capsized, resulting in two fatalities and two survivors (Wu, 2025).



strategies have increasingly raised regional concerns. How can such actions be distinguished conceptually? Are there differences in China's gray-zone strategies across the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, and South China Sea? This paper first examines the literature on gray-zone strategies, arguing that the concept requires greater specificity to be meaningful. Furthermore, it contends that China is more likely to adopt gray-zone strategies in areas with multiple disputing states to maximize their "avoidance of war" effect. The comparison of the three seas supports this argument.

Gray-zone strategy: Origin and Literature

Gray-zone strategies are not a modern invention in the realm of national strategy. If one adopts a broad definition of strategies that operate between war and peace, such concepts can be traced back to ancient China. Sun Tzu, the renowned military strategist from the Spring and Autumn period, articulated in *The Art of War* that the highest form of strategy is to subdue the enemy without fighting, compelling surrender without deploying troops or attacking the enemy directly. In modern history, the Cold War exemplified gray-zone dynamics, as the United States and the Soviet Union avoided direct warfare yet engaged in proxy wars, psychological operations, infiltration, and arms races—tactics that fall within the broad spectrum of gray-zone strategies. The term "gray-zone" first appeared in an official U.S. government document in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, which noted that future challenges would increasingly emerge in ambiguous areas between war and peace. The report suggested that strengthening allies to respond to such challenges would reduce risks to U.S. forces and extend security to areas where unilateral action was impractical (Secretary of Defense, 2010).

In East Asia, Japan experienced a gray-zone crisis in September 2010 with the "Minjin Fishing Vessel 5179 Incident," when a Chinese trawler collided with a Japanese Coast Guard vessel near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Bau, Tso, & Liao, 2014). The Japanese government is aware that civilian or paramilitary forces are being used to change the status quo while compelling the targeted country to take the initiative in settling the situation through some form of force. These incursions blur the line between crime and defense, as well as between law enforcement and military activities (Pajon, 2017). Japan's 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines subsequently identified China's growing maritime activities—including coast guard and fishing vessel incursions—as gray-zone challenges involving sovereignty disputes short of outright conflict. Tensions escalated after Japan nationalized the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 2012, with frequent incursions by Chinese military aircraft and CCG ships attempting to establish a "new normal." Scholars have examined China's systematic use of such tactics. Holmes and Yoshihara (2012) argue that drawing from Mahan's sea power theory, China employs gray-zone strategies to expand maritime influence, as seen in the 2012 Scarborough Shoal standoff, where China used non-combat maritime militia vessels to occupy the shoal without conventional military force—an approach they term "small-stick diplomacy." Denny Roy (2015) similarly notes that China's tactics in the East and South China Seas are aggressive yet calibrated to avoid provoking direct military retaliation. Zhang (2019, pp. 119–120) describes China as a "cautious bully," noting that it uses



military coercion less frequently as it becomes stronger. This suggests that focusing solely on the growth of China's material capabilities cannot fully explain its behavior.

Mazarr (2015) provides a comprehensive analysis, asserting that China's gray-zone strategies aim to establish a China-led order in the South China Sea. He categorizes gray-zone tactics into six types by intensity: narrative warfare, denial of prosperity, civilian intervention, active infiltration, coercive signaling, and proxy sabotage. For instance, China uses narrative warfare to assert historical claims and economic measures to coerce rivals, while deploying civilian organizations to consolidate control, as in Scarborough Shoal. Mazarr warns that while these tactics may avoid immediate conflict, they risk increasing international tensions and escalating into war. McLaughlin (2022) argues that gray-zone operations are designed to "exploit or create legal uncertainties for a military or strategic advantage."

Beyond China, states like Russia also employ gray-zone strategies, such as annexing Crimea by infiltrating masked troops, installing a proxy government, and legitimizing annexation through a referendum. Chen Yong (2019) defines gray-zone strategies as competitions between states or between state and non-state actors within the spectrum between war and peace, highlighting their ambiguity and risk. Barno and Bensahel (2015) caution that such strategies, though non-traditional, can threaten core U.S. interests. Brands (2016) similarly describes them as coercive and aggressive tactics disguised as non-military conflict to alter the status quo, terming them "gray-zone conflicts."

Finally, Cheng and Hung (2019) argue that the challenges posed by gray-zone strategies stem not from the tactics themselves but from the power of the actors employing them. They contend that these strategies are ultimately peaceful forms of conflict resolution, echoing Sun Tzu's notion of winning without fighting. The case study of the Philippines also demonstrates that China's gray-zone strategies are intended to induce a sense of helplessness in other countries, causing them to either acquiesce or become numb to China's actions. Although the Duterte administration initially acquiesced, it later shifted its policy and responded to China's actions with greater resolve (de Castro & Chambers, 2022). Nonetheless, American scholars largely view these strategies as expressions of non-military coercion intended to change the international order. For example, a publication by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) notes that the U.S. Department of Defense has employed Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to deter China's gray-zone activities threatening sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific region, and has also partnered with the Philippines to publicly expose China's actions in the area as a way of countering its gray-zone strategies (Sheppard et al., 2019, pp. 27, 62).

Adjust Gray-zone Strategy

Revise definition

The literature on gray-zone strategies reveals that the most common definition refers to strategies that lie between war and diplomacy. These encompass military, economic, social, and political actions characterized by aggression aimed at expanding one's power to gradually change the status quo. Zheng and Hong (2019) summarize four characteristics of gray-zone strategies: revisionism, asymmetry, ambiguity, and



gradualism. In terms of objectives, gray-zone strategies seek to incrementally alter the status quo by leveraging asymmetries in capabilities and costs between themselves and their adversaries. This approach operates below the threshold of war, avoiding direct military retaliation and introducing ambiguity regarding whether a given action constitutes preparation for war and how it should be countered. Ultimately, gray-zone strategies yield gradual effects akin to "salami slicing," making it difficult for neighboring countries to respond effectively. However, Dai Zheng and Hong You-sheng's compilation of definitions and tactics indicates that the broad conception encompasses a wide array of actions, such that any move hindering another country's interests without declaring war may be labeled a gray-zone strategy. This broad definition dilutes the perceived security threat and opportunities for counteraction.²

Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between military and non-military tactics. Mixing military tactics with non-military ones under the same label risks diminishing the severity of military tactics and the significance of non-military ones. Military tactics should not be considered gray-zone strategies. While the term "gray-zone" originally aimed to capture strategies that breach peace without provoking war, military tactics are preparations for war and are likely to trigger escalation. Thus, they should be treated as strategies with the potential for war, rather than as gray-zone strategies.

Specifically, Russian General Valery Gerasimov's (2013) concept of "hybrid warfare" asserts that modern warfare increasingly employs unconventional and non-traditional forces, including private military companies and hybrid tactics, as a new norm of warfare. These are methods designed for war and carry a high potential to escalate into conflict. This is also why Patalano (2018) argues that the concept of gray-zone strategy adds little nuance to the existing literature on state warfare and strategy. That is, this kind of tactics are considered as methods for war and are possible to lead to war. Cooper and Shearer (2017) also argues that China's adoption of gray-zone approaches differs from Russia's hybrid warfare, as China focuses on accumulating influence through economic means and non-military tactics while deliberately avoiding direct combat.

This distinction also clarifies the difference between brinkmanship and gray-zone strategies. Brinkmanship involves using military tactics to demonstrate a willingness to go to war, aiming to persuade the target state that confrontation is approaching the threshold of armed conflict. In contrast, a state adopting gray-zone strategies signals that it does not seek war, instead employing limited non-military measures to change the situation incrementally without provoking strong objections. In summary, both strategies aim to avoid war, but brinkmanship involves military tactics and bluffing readiness for war, while gray-zone strategies reveal a lack of willingness to fight and prioritize non-military tactics.

Including military tactics under the umbrella of gray-zone strategies also diminishes the significance of non-military tactics. States may downplay an adversary's gray-zone moves, perceiving them as insufficient to warrant military concern, thereby enabling incremental salami-slicing changes to the status quo. Distinguishing military from non-military tactics helps spotlight gray-zone moves so that states can respond proactively.

² This section incorporates content from Liao (2022).



A precise definition of gray-zone strategies' objectives, timing, and tactics is necessary. This paper defines gray-zone strategies as a country's attempt to change or influence another country's sovereignty rights or policies through governmental or non-governmental actions, thereby redefining mutual strategic interests. The ultimate goal remains the preservation of national security and sovereignty within the traditional security domain, even if non-state actors are involved. These actions are driven by national motives aimed at securing state interests rather than private interests. While the executors of operations may include state or non-state actors, planning and command must originate from the state. Thus, non-state actors' independent actions that accidentally violate another state's sovereignty should not be considered gray-zone strategies.

Gray-zone Tactics

As for tactics, this paper argues that only non-military tactics constitute gray-zone strategies. Specifically, gray-zone tactics include narrative warfare, legal warfare, governmental jurisdiction warfare, psychological warfare, and mixing of civilian and military activities.

Narrative warfare refers to the contest for discursive authority, exemplified by China's invocation of historical rights to justify its maritime claims and territorial demarcation in the South China Sea. Legal warfare manifests in two forms: first, the use of domestic legislation to regulate the behavior of foreign actors; second, efforts to seize interpretive authority over international laws and customary norms. For instance, China has increasingly invoked its reading of UNGA Resolution 2758 to legitimize its One-China Principle and delegitimize Taiwan's status as a separate political entity in the international system. The third category, governmental jurisdiction warfare, is exemplified by the China Coast Guard's (CCG) law enforcement activities in disputed waters and the imposition of summer fishing bans in the South China Sea, both unilaterally asserting jurisdiction over foreign actors in contested areas. This category also encompasses denial of prosperity tactics, such as economic sanctions or trade quarantines to coerce a target state.

Psychological warfare includes espionage, active infiltration, proxy sabotage, and propaganda. Although these tactics have long existed in traditional diplomatic practices, they become gray-zone strategies when directed aggressively toward a specific adversary. For example, Russia's annexation of Crimea was preceded by an integrated campaign of psychological warfare: masked troops seized key strategic locations, a pro-Russian local government was installed through proxies, and a referendum was held to legitimize annexation. Lastly, mixing civilian and military activities involves utilizing civilian forces to hinder foreign operations or conceal military objectives. The facilities constructed by China in the South China Sea exhibit dual-use characteristics, extending its military projection capabilities. Through deploying maritime militia forces to encircle Scarborough Shoal, China ultimately established effective control over the disputed area.

This definition and typology align with Sun Tzu's classification of national strategy. In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu wrote: "The best warfare is to win by strategy, followed by diplomacy, then military action, and lastly, besieging cities." Ideally, a country influences or changes



another state's sovereignty rights or policies through cunning strategies, achieving objectives without deploying troops. The second approach involves diplomatic measures to disrupt alliances, the third entails military engagement, and the least desirable is direct territorial occupation. Thus, gray-zone strategies correspond to the first type: "winning through strategy," where the adversary perceives confrontation as too risky and success as unlikely, leading to the abandonment of resistance.

Based on this definition, gray-zone strategies are crucial for safeguarding national sovereignty. Understanding how a country can employ gray-zone strategies to protect its own interests and how it can respond to others' gray-zone strategies is essential for maintaining the status quo. When a state employs gray-zone strategies, its goal is to signal that confrontation carries significant risks, compelling the opponent to adjust policies accordingly. Effective responses should therefore focus on addressing the underlying objectives of such strategies rather than merely reacting to their methods, in order to mitigate risks and counter their impacts effectively.

Theorizing China's Gray-zone Strategy

China has actively employed gray-zone strategies in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years. However, the frequency and types of these strategies vary. The following sections examine the three maritime areas in the Indo-Pacific where China employs gray-zone strategies for different purposes, thereby shaping regional dynamics and destabilizing the status quo.

South China Sea: Struggle between Two Orders

Since the end of World War II, the U.S.-led order of free and open international seas has become the global mainstream. Although the United States has not ratified the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), its norms—such as the delineation of the high seas—continue to guide state conduct in maritime domains. In the South China Sea, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Taiwan assert overlapping maritime claims. China claims maritime rights within the so-called ten-dash line, effectively encompassing almost the entire South China Sea. Taiwan claims that Taiping Island (Itu Aba) qualifies as an island entitled to a 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), overlapping with claims by Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei.

China's gray-zone strategies in this area are highly diversified, encompassing narrative warfare, legal warfare, governmental jurisdiction warfare, psychological warfare, and the mixing of civilian and military activities. Narrative warfare involves reinforcing the legitimacy of historic rights within the ten-dash line through ancient maps and academic research (McLaughlin, 2022). Legal warfare includes reinterpreting international and customary law, such as asserting maritime delimitation rights through land reclamation and artificial island construction. China has also enacted domestic laws with extraterritorial implications—such as the Coast Guard Law, amended Maritime Traffic Safety Law, and the Outline of Military Non-War Military Operations—to expand the scope and scale of its forces' overseas activities. Following the promulgation of its Coast Guard



Law in 2021, which explicitly listed “safeguarding national sovereignty” as a purpose and authorized the use of weapons against foreign infringements, China further expanded its legal basis for enforcement. The law also grants the Coast Guard authority to expel or tow away foreign military or government vessels. In May 2024, the CCG issued Administrative Order No. 3, regulating enforcement procedures, thereby extending domestic legislation into the international domain.

Specifically, China's Coast Guard Law and Administrative Order No. 3 authorize coast guard patrols and boarding inspections to coerce other states, preventing them from exercising their sovereign rights and enabling China to conduct governmental jurisdiction warfare. This has resulted in numerous collisions between CCG vessels and fishing boats from other countries, such as Vietnam. The CCG also frequently patrols near the natural gas fields located within disputed EEZs of countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In particular, confrontations with Vietnam are common in the vicinity of the Vanguard Bank oil field (Sebastian, 2021). Psychological warfare includes covert command and funding activities to infiltrate foreign government agencies and sponsoring large networks of online trolls (“Little Pinks”) and hackers targeting government and private institutions. For example, on July 29, 2016, Chinese hackers infiltrated Vietnam's major international airports and broadcast messages declaring “the South China Sea belongs to China” (Hsu, 2016).

Finally, mixing civilian and military activities involves deploying large numbers of fishing vessels acting as maritime militia. Equipped with advanced satellite communications and water cannons, they surround disputed territories to demonstrate China's sovereignty. Such an action represents a gray-zone strategy that most closely resembles military operations.³ This tactic dates back to 1973 during the Paracel Islands dispute, when China dispatched armed “fishermen” (maritime militia) to land on the islands, eventually prompting naval clashes with South Vietnam (Xinhua News, 2017). This tactic has since evolved into what O'Rourke (2019) terms the “Cabbage Strategy,” which involves encircling disputed areas with layers of fishing vessels, coast guard ships, and naval warships to assert sovereignty claims and enable occupation without direct conflict.

The most successful example is Scarborough Shoal, where China established de facto control by deploying fishing vessels, then fisheries patrol ships under the pretext of protecting fishermen, ultimately blocking Philippine control (Bau, Tso, & Liao, 2014). China used similar tactics against Philippine resupply missions to the BRP Sierra Madre grounded at Second Thomas Shoal (Ren'ai Jiao). China initially deployed maritime militia vessels to surround the area, making it difficult for the Philippines to conduct resupply operations. This was followed by Chinese coast guard ships coercing Philippine government vessels to alter their course, with the apparent aim of forcing the Filipino troops stationed on the Sierra Madre to abandon the ship. In 2024, the CCG announced that it would impose control measures on Philippine vessels it deemed to have “illegally intruded” into the waters surrounding Second Thomas Shoal. The Philippine Coast Guard subsequently accused the CCG of damaging its supply vessels. On June 17, armed CCG personnel boarded a Philippine Navy resupply boat and injured Filipino naval personnel. Tensions between the two sides escalated until July 2, when Chinese and Philippine

³ Therefore, in 2019, the United States declared that it would regard maritime militia, coast guard, and navy forces as equivalent in its operational considerations (Sevastopulo and Hille, 2019).“



foreign ministers convened the 9th meeting of the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea (BCM), bringing about a temporary halt to the confrontation.

Overall, China's main objective in the South China Sea is to expand its sovereign rights and influence rather than physically occupy other claimants' territories. Although the claimant states in the South China Sea are individually weaker than China, their large number means that any rash use of military force by China could potentially trigger the formation of an anti-China coalition. The use of gray-zone strategies has thus become China's preferred approach in this region (Zhang, 2019). These tactics provoke less initial controversy and enable China to justify its actions incrementally, altering the status quo and international norms through a salami-slicing approach. Unlike the U.S., which upholds international law and a rules-based order as the foundation of South China Sea governance, China seeks to construct an order based on sovereignty principles and negotiations, thereby reshaping existing power dynamics. The contest for regional order between China and the United States thus continues.

East China Sea: New Normal

Relative to the South China Sea, the East China Sea has delimitation disputes involving only China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan (Park, 1975, 27). In 1974, Japan and South Korea signed two agreements concerning the continental shelf in areas where their maritime claims overlapped (Makoto and Becker-Weinberg, 2024). In 2001, China and South Korea signed the China-South Korea Fisheries Agreement, which established provisional measure zones in the Yellow Sea to be jointly managed by both parties. Although China and Japan reached the 2008 "Consensus on principles of the China-Japan East China Sea issue," which set out a cooperative framework for delimiting their Exclusive Economic Zones and for oil and gas development, the agreement lacked implementing details and thus has remained largely ineffective.

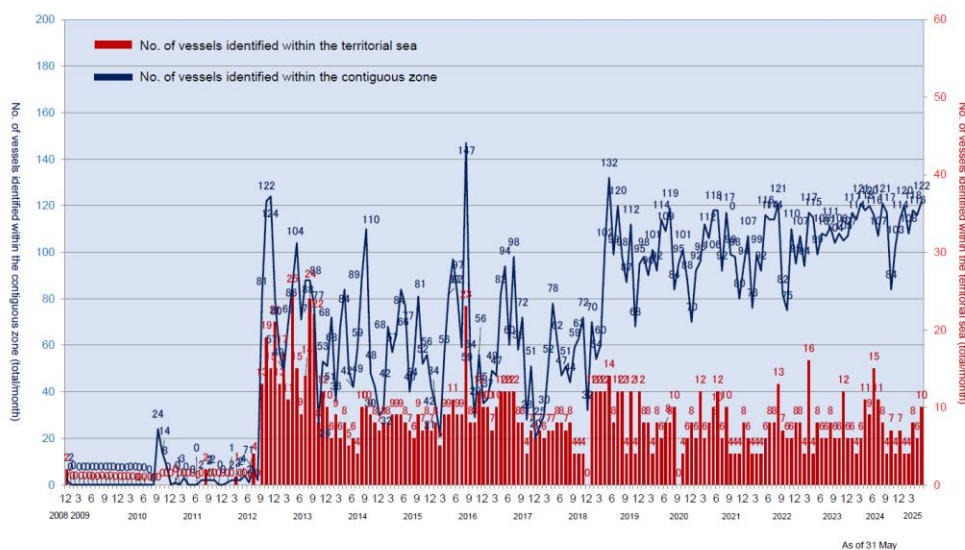
China's gray zone tactics in the East China Sea similarly involves allowing large numbers of Chinese fishing vessels to operate there, thereby expanding the scope of China's claimed fishing grounds, even at the risk of colliding with JCG vessels. For example, in the 2010 Minjinyu 5179 incident, the Chinese trawler Minjinyu 5179 collided with Japanese patrol ships and was subsequently detained by Japan. The incident ultimately ended with Japan expressing regret, which was regarded as a victory for China's claim of legitimate fishing rights (Bau, Tso and Liao, 2014). However, unlike its gray-zone tactics in the South China Sea, China has not employed large numbers of maritime militia vessels to encircle the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands or to obstruct Japan's exercise of administrative jurisdiction over them. Instead, it has relied on governmental jurisdiction warfare. In addition, China has justified its sovereignty safeguarding actions in the East China Sea by asserting sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and by invoking arguments such as the natural prolongation principle in its continental shelf delimitation claims.

Another gray-zone tactic that China employs in the East China Sea is governmental jurisdiction warfare, which is supported by legal warfare with extraterritorial effects through domestic legislation, such as the aforementioned Coast Guard Law and Administrative Order No. 3. Since Japan nationalized the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in



2012, CCG vessels have increased the frequency of their patrols in the East China Sea, even entering the territorial waters surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, as shown in Figure 1 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2025).

Figure 1. Trends in CCG and Other Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2025, https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page23e_000021.html

Despite Japan's protests and JCG efforts to drive them away, Chinese incursions have increased in both number and duration (Pajon, 2017).. Since November 2023, CCG has published statements on its official website, including titles such as "The China Coast Guard has lawfully managed and controlled Japanese vessels illegally entering the territorial waters of our Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands," asserting that its actions constitute legitimate law enforcement against Japanese vessels. These statements declare, "The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and their affiliated islands are China's inherent territory...We urge Japan to immediately stop all illegal activities in these waters (China Coast Guard, 2023)" reiterating China's claim of sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and demanding that Japan cease entering what it considers its territorial waters. In June 2024, four armed Chinese Coast Guard vessels entered the islands' territorial waters, prompting Tokyo to lodge a strong protest demanding their immediate withdrawal (Reuters, 2024). Later, the massive CCG 2901 vessel, one of the world's largest maritime law enforcement ships, sailed around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2024). In March 2025, the JCG reported that CCG vessels remained in the islands' territorial waters for a record 92 hours and 8 minutes (Kosuke, 2025). China's maritime law enforcement operations near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands have grown progressively more assertive.

In 2025, China erected a sea structure in the Yellow Sea within an area of overlapping claims with South Korea, off the Korean Peninsula's west coast. Although China claimed it was fish-farming equipment, it prompted concern from South Korea (Yim, 2025). China



has employed similar tactics in the East China Sea, prompting Japanese demands for explanation. Although China claims such structures are unrelated to sovereignty, they are viewed as potential gray-zone strategy tools, given their possible future use for radar systems or interference with foreign vessels' navigation.

China has employed gray-zone tactics in the East China Sea, including narrative warfare, legal warfare, and contests over governmental jurisdiction, to gradually undermine Japan's previously unchallenged dominance and to create the perception of joint administration with Japan. This strategy has eroded Japan's exclusive administrative control, establishing what has been termed a "new normal," although in practice Japan retains effective control over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.⁴ Overall, the so-called "new normal" in the East China Sea does not represent a stable state but rather a dynamic process in which China continues to strengthen its presence. Even the previously calm Yellow Sea has begun to experience ripples as a result. Indeed, China's gray-zone strategies are being used to gradually alter the status quo.

Taiwan Strait: Internalization

The Taiwan Strait issue is fundamentally different in nature from China's disputes in the East and South China Seas. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949, the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan have existed as two separate governing authorities. While China has exercised actual control only over the mainland, it has never abandoned its intention to unify Taiwan. In other words, China has consistently maintained that Taiwan is an integral part of its territory.

Beyond military exercises intended to intimidate Taiwan, China disseminates disinformation and seeks domestic proxies within Taiwan to directly influence public perceptions, thereby creating panic or achieving deterrent effects. For example, during U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022, numerous Taiwanese government and private sector websites were attacked or rendered inoperable. Additionally, screens at Taiwan Railways stations and convenience stores displayed statements insulting Pelosi (Tsai, 2022). Admittedly, such tactics are unlikely to yield immediate results during peacetime. However, once both sides enter a period of heightened tension or confrontation, these strategies could achieve what Sun Tzu described as defeating the enemy's will to resist before actual combat begins. Moreover, China may actively co-opt pro-China individuals in Taiwan to disseminate information detrimental to the Taiwanese government, thereby undermining internal cohesion.

Secondly, China has employed narrative warfare to emphasize the inevitability of Cross-Strait unification. It highlights the 1943 Cairo Declaration and the 1945 Potsdam Declaration, both of which stipulated that Taiwan would be returned to China, arguing

⁴ According to interviews conducted by the author in June 2024 with scholars at the National Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo University and Keio University, the Japanese government has integrated the real-time communication systems of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and the JCG, enabling the Coast Guard to receive timely intelligence regarding Chinese vessels. However, they also noted that if CCG ships refuse to leave, the JCG can do no more than monitor and shadow them, as taking further action could provoke a dispute. The scholars pointed out two main reasons for this dilemma: first, Japan lacks a plan for 24-hour continuous patrols; and second, the situation is still considered a law enforcement matter, thus not warranting U.S. involvement.



that the PRC, as the successor state, inherits this sovereignty, rendering the Taiwan issue an internal matter. However, internationally, countries such as the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Japan maintain that the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, which formally ended World War II, did not explicitly state that Taiwan should be returned to China. In recent years, China has further equated United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758—which granted the PRC China's seat at the UN—with its "One China Principle," underscoring its narrative that both sides of the Strait belong to one China. Moreover, China asserts sovereignty over Taiwan and treats the One China Principle as a precondition for diplomatic relations, requiring other countries to acknowledge that "Taiwan is part of China." Domestically, it has enacted the Anti-Secession Law, the National Security Law, and the Counter-Espionage Law, defining support for Taiwan independence as an act that endangers national security. Such measures imply an expansion of extraterritorial jurisdiction, signaling not only legal warfare but also potential enforcement actions constituting governmental jurisdiction warfare.

Following the "Kinmen 0214 Incident" in 2024, CCG vessels began driving away and attempting to board Taiwanese fishing boats operating within restricted waters designated by Taiwan. China also denied the existence of the long-standing tacit understanding regarding the median line in the Taiwan Strait. CCG ships, military aircraft, and naval vessels have repeatedly crossed this median line. Furthermore, in 2022 China conducted encirclement exercises around Taiwan to warn against its decision to host U.S. House Speaker Pelosi, with the designated exercise zones even including a small portion of Japan's claimed EEZ. In 2024, it carried out Joint Sword-2024A and 2024B exercises, followed by multiple encirclement drills starting in April 2025. The areas designated for these exercises have gradually moved closer to Taiwan's declared territorial waters, demonstrating China's intent to assert its control and jurisdictional authority in the surrounding areas.

Overall, the gray-zone tactics China employs in the Taiwan Strait are aimed at internalizing the Strait as China's inland waters and domesticating Taiwan such as narratives warfare, legal warfare, and psychological warfare. Since the Kinmen 0214 incident, although China has deployed more coast guard vessels to patrol and has increasingly crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait—thereby undermining the previous tacit understanding of separate administrative control over respective waters—it has not yet carried out actual boarding inspections or law enforcement operations. Regarding the Taiwan Strait, China primarily uses military means to demonstrate its position. Notably, in June 2025, China's aircraft carriers *Liaoning* and *Shandong* conducted an unprecedented simultaneous deployment into the Western Pacific, crossing the Second Island Chain. This demonstrated China's potential for long-range operations and served to shift international attention from the Taiwan Strait to the western Pacific.

Comparisons of the Three Cases

Based on the comparison of the above three cases, it is evident that due to differences in objectives and the number and strength of neighboring countries, China has adopted different approaches in its use of gray-zone strategies. Two key characteristics can be summarized.

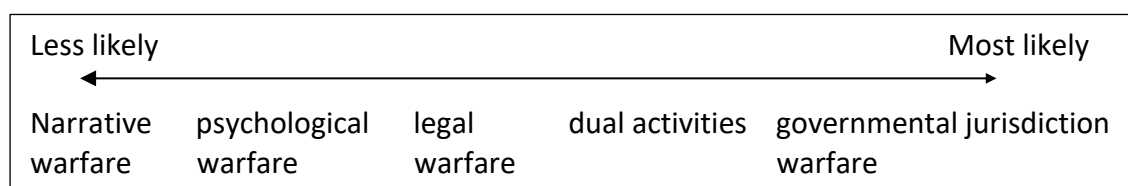


First, the frequency and type of gray-zone strategies that China employs in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Taiwan Strait vary according to its strategic objectives in each region. The greater level of the impacts on sovereignty, the less frequently gray-zone strategies are employed, and the more likely China is to resort to military means to signal its concern in the area. The greater the impact on sovereignty, the less frequently gray-zone strategies are employed, and the more likely China is to resort to military means to signal its concerns. That is, China tends to employ military means in response to issues it perceives as serious violations of its sovereignty, while adopting gray-zone strategies for situations it views as involving lesser infringements. In the Taiwan Strait, China relies less on gray-zone strategies and more on quasi-military actions, such as deploying over 500 missiles aimed at Taiwan, regularly sending military aircraft and naval vessels across the median line, and conducting military exercises that gradually approach Taiwan's territorial waters. In the East China Sea, the CCG accompanied by military vessels is the primary tool used to intervene in the status quo. In contrast, in the South China Sea, gray-zone tactics are effective for harassing other countries aiming to gradually change the status quo, while military means may provoke stronger resentment and lead to conflict, making them less preferable.

Specifically, China's objectives in the South China Sea are twofold: to assert economic sovereign rights and to establish an alternative order to the U.S.-led liberal international order. Physical occupation of the entire South China Sea is not its primary goal. Moreover, its opponents in the region are relatively weak and fragmented; none can individually challenge China's power, though their collective number exceeds that of China's opponents in the East China Sea and Taiwan Strait. To avoid provoking excessive reactions and escalation into military conflict, China is more inclined to employ gray-zone strategies. In the East China Sea, China's goals include preserving its sovereign rights and asserting sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. However, its opponent, Japan, is not weak and benefits from the protection of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Hence, to avoid war or confrontation with the U.S., gray-zone strategies are preferred, but more severe levels are employed to signal its serious concerns over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Lastly, China's goal in the Taiwan Strait is unification with Taiwan, for which it has never ruled out the use of force. Thus, gray-zone strategies are less emphasized, as China is willing to demonstrate its resolve to avoid losing Taiwan.

Secondly, regarding the likelihood of triggering military conflicts, the five gray-zone tactics identified in this paper can be ranked as shown in Figure 1. The greater the impact on sovereignty, the more China tends to employ gray-zone tactics with higher risks of provoking conflict. In contrast, when sovereignty is less affected, it prefers gray-zone tactics that are less likely to escalate into war.

Figure 1. Severity of Gray-Zone Tactics



Source: the author. Note: Dual activities refer to the mixing of civilian and military activities.



Given that China's objective in the Taiwan Strait is to achieve sovereignty over Taiwan, it remains prepared for the possibility of war, even if it does not anticipate immediate conflict, and thus does not hesitate to employ gray-zone tactics carrying a high risk of escalation. In the East China Sea, which also involves sovereignty disputes, China prefers employing high-intensity gray-zone tactics but seeks to avoid provoking military conflict due to the presence of the U.S.-Japan alliance. In the South China Sea, where multiple rival claimant states exist, China tends to employ gray-zone tactics that are less likely to provoke military conflict. By doing so, it allows different countries to interpret its actions in varying ways, increasing the likelihood of avoiding war (Liao, 2021, pp. 33–35).

Conclusions

Gray-zone strategies are not a newly emergent phenomenon. However, in recent years, they have re-emerged on the international stage due to Russia's annexation of Crimea and China's increasingly assertive and aggressive behaviors in the Indo-Pacific region. Nonetheless, including tactics with explicit military characteristics under the definition of gray-zone strategies risks obscuring the significance of non-military means within gray-zone operations, as well as their fundamental objective of avoiding open warfare. Therefore, this paper redefines gray-zone strategies as a country's attempt to change or influence another country's sovereignty rights or policies through governmental or non-governmental actions, thereby redefining mutual strategic interests. Based on a review of the literature, this study identifies five types of non-military gray-zone tactics, ranked according to their potential to trigger military conflict: narrative warfare, psychological warfare, legal warfare, mixing of civilian and military activities, and governmental jurisdiction warfare.

Based on this analysis, this paper examines China's use of gray-zone tactics in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Taiwan Strait, and identifies two key characteristics. First, China tends to employ military means in response to issues it perceives as serious violations of its sovereignty, while adopting gray-zone strategies in situations it views as involving lesser infringements. Second, the greater the impact on its sovereignty, the more China tends to employ gray-zone tactics that carry a higher risk of provoking conflict. In contrast, when sovereignty is less affected, it prefers gray-zone tactics that are less likely to escalate into war. These two characteristics can be attributed to the different objectives China pursues in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Taiwan Strait, as well as variations in the nature and capabilities of its opponents. Consequently, the effects produced by gray-zone strategies in these three regions also differ.

In the South China Sea, China's gray-zone strategies have produced evolutionary impacts on the international order. Although these tactics are non-military in nature, they implicitly signal the possibility of subsequent military action. Through such psychological deterrence aimed at undermining the adversary's will to resist, the actor can gradually alter the status quo in a 'salami-slicing' manner. For instance, despite winning the 2016 arbitration case on the South China Sea, the Philippines lost control of Scarborough Shoal due to China's gray-zone tactics. Yet former President Duterte publicly stated that the Philippines could not and would not confront China unless it meant going to war. In this sense, gray-zone strategies function as tools of coercive deterrence, seeking to replace



the U.S.-led liberal international order based on the rule of law with a China-led order grounded merely in rule by law.

It is noteworthy that in all three regions—the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Taiwan Strait—China's use of gray-zone strategies is underpinned by its expanding military capabilities. In the South China Sea, China has enhanced its effective control over disputed features through island-building, administrative measures, and resource extraction, using these as a foundation to actively reshape regional order in competition with the U.S.-led liberal international order, shifting the power configuration toward a new equilibrium. In the East China Sea, although a "new normal" of joint management between China and Japan appears to have emerged, this arrangement is neither symmetrical nor static. For instance, Japan Coast Guard (JCG) patrol vessels are not equipped with heavy weaponry such as cannons, whereas CCG vessels are, meaning the seemingly stable situation could tilt further in China's favor at any time. In the Taiwan Strait, the effects of China's gray-zone strategies are felt more as psychological deterrence against the Taiwanese public, as well as in establishing both the capability and legitimacy to exclude international intervention.

In light of this, while countries must handle and respond to China's use of gray-zone tactics with caution, greater attention should be paid to the underlying expansion of China's military capabilities and influence. When confronted with these near-harassment gray-zone tactics, countries should also consider responding with asymmetric or lower-cost measures that nonetheless are of great concern to China, such as increasing exchanges with Taiwan or enhancing Taiwan's international status. If such actions are taken by individual states, they may provoke Chinese retaliation. However, if countries act collectively to strengthen their relations with Taiwan, even minor progress could be enough to significantly unsettle China and shift its original strategic focus. In other words, rather than allowing China to address the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Taiwan Strait separately through distinct gray-zone tactics, a coordinated approach that targets China's vulnerabilities could prove far more effective in countering its use of gray-zone strategies.

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REBUILDING THE "ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY": A STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the US' National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS), announced by the Department of Defense in January 2024 as a strategic response to the evolving dynamics of global security. Amid growing competition among major powers - particularly from China and Russia - the NDIS aims to revitalize the US DIB through four strategic pillars: (a) enhancing supply chain resilience, (b) developing a high-quality and diverse workforce, (c) reforming procurement processes, and (d) strengthening international cooperation for economic deterrence. Employing a systemic-structural approach, the study integrates qualitative methods such as policy analysis, document analysis, interpretive techniques, and strategic forecasting to scientifically examine the objectives, implementation mechanisms, strengths, and limitations of the NDIS. While the strategy presents a robust and forward-looking framework, it also faces significant structural limitations, including (a) concerns about financial sustainability, (b) internal tensions between protectionist policies and global cooperation goals, (c) innovation bottlenecks, and (d) a lack of comparative analysis with the capabilities of "potential" adversaries. By addressing a notable gap in existing academic research, this paper provides in-depth insights into the NDIS. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how the US seeks to maintain technological superiority and strategic primacy in a turbulent international system marked by rising instability and complex security threats.



Keywords

Defense, strategic competition, National Defense Industrial Strategy, Department of Defense, United States.

Resumo

Este artigo fornece uma análise abrangente da Estratégia Industrial de Defesa Nacional (EIDN) dos EUA, anunciada pelo Departamento de Defesa em janeiro de 2024 como uma resposta estratégica às dinâmicas evolutivas da segurança global. Em meio à crescente competição entre as grandes potências - particularmente da China e da Rússia - a EIDN visa revitalizar a Base Industrial de Defesa dos EUA através de quatro pilares estratégicos: (a) aprimoramento da resiliência da cadeia de suprimentos, (b) desenvolvimento de uma força de trabalho de alta qualidade e diversificada, (c) reforma dos processos de aquisição, e (d) fortalecimento da cooperação internacional para dissuasão econômica. Empregando uma abordagem sistêmico-estrutural, o estudo integra métodos qualitativos como análise de políticas, análise documental, técnicas interpretativas e previsão estratégica para examinar cientificamente os objetivos, mecanismos de implementação, pontos fortes e limitações da EIDN. Embora a estratégia apresente uma estrutura robusta e visionária, também enfrenta limitações estruturais significativas, incluindo (a) preocupações sobre sustentabilidade financeira, (b) tensões internas entre políticas protecionistas e objetivos de cooperação global, (c) gargalos de inovação, e (d) falta de análise comparativa com as capacidades de adversários "potenciais". Ao abordar uma lacuna notável na investigação acadêmica existente, este artigo fornece perspectivas aprofundadas sobre a EIDN. As conclusões contribuem para uma compreensão mais profunda de como os EUA procuram manter a superioridade tecnológica e a primazia estratégica num sistema internacional turbulento marcado pela crescente instabilidade e ameaças de segurança complexas.

Palavras-chave

Defesa, competição estratégica, Estratégia Industrial de Defesa Nacional, Departamento de Defesa, Estados Unidos.

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REBUILDING THE "ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY": A STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

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Introduction

Global politics is currently witnessing a profound geostrategic transformation phase, marked by the reshaping of the power balance between major powers and the erosion of the foundation of the current international order (Levy & Singhal, 2025). The contemporary era is characterized by an unprecedented level of geopolitical instability since the end of the Cold War, with increasingly evident geostrategic fault lines across the global spectrum (Kiet & Hiep, 2025, p. 3). The Russia-Ukraine conflict has transitioned into a protracted conflict phase with extensive strategic consequences, as Russia accelerates the transformation of its socioeconomic structure to a wartime model and intensifies military campaigns in Ukraine (Global Conflict Tracker, 2025). Concurrently, the Middle East situation faces the risk of conflict expansion from the Israel-Hamas flashpoint into a comprehensive regional confrontation, with complex developments in the Red Sea, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran significantly increasing the risk of escalation into a regional-level conflict (Financial Times, 2024). In this context, China's rise under President Xi Jinping with increasingly evident geopolitical ambitions through "wolf warrior diplomacy" has reshaped the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region (Kiet et al., 2025). Beijing's robust military modernization combined with assertive "nine-dash line" claims in the East Sea, particularly regarding the Taiwan issue, has created urgent challenges to the US-led regional security architecture in this region (Soong, 2021; Kiet et al., 2024).

The intersection of these strategic competitive dynamics has prompted a systemic shift in how the Biden administration perceives and responds to the increasingly complex multi-dimensional security environment. To effectively address these geostrategic fluctuations and maintain superior military-technological positioning, the US Department of Defense (DoD) released the National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS) on January 11, 2024, as a comprehensive policy framework in efforts to restore the "arsenal of democracy" coordinated between the US and Western allies. The NDIS establishes a strategic vision and four priority pillars aimed at restructuring and enhancing the



resilience of the US Defense Industrial Base (DIB) against diverse and increasingly sophisticated threats from nations intending to end the US-led "rules-based" world order. This strategy builds upon the foundation of the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), while emphasizing a systematic and integrated approach in mobilizing DoD resources to *"build multifaceted partnerships with domestic and international stakeholders to strengthen the DIB, optimize logistics systems, and enhance the resilience of global defense supply chains against sabotage, infiltration, and technology theft"* (US Department of Defense, 2022). Entering his second term in 2025, President Donald Trump has not yet made substantial adjustments to the NDIS, and has even proposed cutting budgets in healthcare, education, and clean energy sectors to increase defense funding (Kapur, 2025). Simultaneously, President Donald Trump has implemented reforms in foreign weapons sales within the NDIS framework to improve rapid weapons transfer to partners (White House, 2025) - President Trump's actions demonstrate that the DoD will inherit and continue implementing the NDIS despite it being a strategy developed under President Joe Biden - whom President Trump claims left "a huge mess" for US.

Although the NDIS holds particular importance for the US as well as countries worldwide, the global academic database contains a research gap in conducting in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the content, impact, and potential limitations of the NDIS. Since the DoD released the NDIS in early 2024 until the present (May 2025), a review of all Scopus/WoS academic data through keyword search for "National Defense Industrial Strategy" has not revealed any in-depth international research analyzing this strategy. This research aims to fill this important knowledge gap through systematic analysis of NDIS content, assessment of its implications, and identification of fundamental advantages and limitations in this policy design. The research findings will not only enhance deep understanding of strategic directions in US defense technology, but also provide valuable insights for other countries in developing appropriate policy responses in a global security environment undergoing profound and comprehensive transformations.

2. Methodology

The research is designed on a systemic-structural approach through utilizing policy analysis methods to systematically examine the NDIS. Simultaneously, this research integrates document analysis and strategic interpretation and forecasting techniques to provide a scientific, logical research process for detailed assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the NDIS. The research design follows a structured analytical framework with three interconnected phases:

The first phase conducts an extensive and systematic literature review, focusing on key data sources. Specifically, the research collects and analyzes: (a) the original text of the NDIS and accompanying technical appendices; (b) supplementary official documentation from the DoD, including strategic reports, policy statements, and implementation plans; (c) policy messages from relevant US government agencies; and (d) in-depth analyses from the international security research community through media channels. This document synthesis methodology allows for building a solid knowledge foundation about



the internal components of the NDIS, the strategic-historical context of policy formation, and multidimensional assessments from global defense and security experts.

The second phase deploys policy analysis methods, combining interpretive techniques and document analysis to decode and evaluate the four strategic pillars of the NDIS. This process includes in-depth examination of: (a) the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework underlying strategic priorities; (b) specific policy implications and practical application capabilities; (c) implementation mechanisms and performance evaluation indicators; and (d) potential barriers in strategy execution.

The final phase focuses on comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness, feasibility, advantages, and limitations of the NDIS. This includes thorough examination of the strategy's alignment with broader US foreign security policy objectives, its potential impact on international defense cooperation, and its responsiveness to contemporary global security challenges, particularly in protecting allies in the European region and the Indo-Pacific region.

In general, this methodology ensures a rigorous, multidimensional, and highly systematic analytical process, allowing the research not only to capture the technical and strategic aspects of the NDIS, but also to assess the broader implications of this strategy for global security architecture in the context of ongoing power competition between major powers.

3. Results

3.1. Overview of the NDIS: Four Pillars for Sustainable Development of US Defense Capabilities in the Context of Global Strategic Competition

The NDIS represents a significant strategic shift in the US approach to the DIB through a comprehensive policy framework released on January 11, 2024 (Cook, 2024). This 59-page strategic document concretizes the foundational principles established in the NDS, reflecting a profound understanding of the systemic challenges facing the US defense industrial ecosystem amid rapidly changing international security conditions. Status assessments in the NDIS have identified structural weaknesses including bureaucratic system inertia, lack of flexibility in adapting to emerging technologies, and uneven investment in human resource development and supply chain optimization (Department of Defense, 2023). The core objective of the NDIS is to build an advanced, highly resilient, and rapidly adaptable defense industrial ecosystem, not only to effectively deter US strategic competitors but also to promptly meet increasing production demands in an increasingly unstable security environment (US Department of Defense, 2024a). Laura Taylor-Kale, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, who led the research team developing the NDIS, emphasized the strategic importance of this initiative:

We are implementing the NDIS with the goal of ensuring that the DIB not only continues to be the foundation for domestic national security, but also serves as a key tool in reassuring and supporting our global network of allies and partners (US Department of Defense, 2024a).



The NDIS shapes three key strategic objectives with specific implementation roadmaps: (a) Comprehensive modernization of defense and deterrence capabilities through focused investment in technological innovation, enhancing supply chain resilience, and promoting extensive international cooperation with strategic allies prioritized in the NSS. The strategy emphasizes engaging partner countries more deeply in the production and processing stages of essential materials, aiming to minimize dependence on potentially "confrontational" nations such as China, Russia, and other non-allied countries (American Economic Association, 2024); (b) Ensuring the DIB is optimized to effectively address national security challenges within the medium-term strategic timeframe of 3-5 years (Levantovskaia, 2024). This objective recognizes the increasingly complex and unpredictable geopolitical environment due to fluctuations from the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict and China's increasing military actions around the Taiwan Strait; and (c) Building and maintaining a modern, robust, autonomous, and rapidly adaptive DIB to effectively implement comprehensive deterrence strategy and consolidate the US's superior global position (Taylor, 2024).

The NDIS focuses on four strategic priorities, with each pillar encompassing specific priority areas along with expected outcomes and measurable outputs:

a) First Pillar: Building Flexible and Responsive Supply Chains

The NDIS establishes as its first key foundation the creation of a supply chain ecosystem with high adaptability and immediate response capabilities. This structure is designed to ensure continuous production capability of essential products, services, and technologies meeting military force requirements-not only for the present but also anticipating future needs-at optimal scale and reasonable cost (Industrial Base Policy, 2024). Implementing this model requires synchronized development of multiple multidimensional coordination mechanisms. To achieve this goal, the NDIS advocates building a comprehensive public-private cooperation system, in which risk-sharing and technology transfer mechanisms are systematically established, creating incentives for the private sector to invest in developing contingency capabilities and enhancing resilience after disruption events. Concurrently, this strategy proposes significantly increasing strategic reserves for critical systems and materials, while promoting supplier network diversification within the DIB, expanding diverse production methods, and implementing comprehensive solutions to effectively respond to cybersecurity threats targeting supply chains (Handfield, 2024). The totality of these measures aims to ensure "*flexible and timely responsiveness under all operational conditions and strategic scenarios*" (US Department of Defense, 2024a).

Complex developments from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, along with shifts in the balance of power between global powers-particularly US-China strategic competition-have clearly demonstrated that excessive dependence on specific supply sources can lead to serious disruptions in supply chains, directly affecting national security. In this context, the NDIS is promoting a comprehensive restructuring process of the supply chain system oriented toward diversification and risk distribution. This strategy includes developing manufacturing centers distributed across various geographical regions within US territory and strategic allied countries such as the EU, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Philippines; enhancing domestic production capacity for



critical components; and researching alternative materials for scarce strategic raw materials, especially rare metals and rare earth elements (US Department of Defense, 2024c).

Recent research data reveals an important reality regarding China's weapons production capacity: the country currently accounts for 5.8% of total global arms exports during the 2019-2023 period, making China the fourth largest conventional weapons supplier in the world, behind only the US, France, and Russia (Gunter and Legarda, 2024). Notably, Chinese weapons technology is gradually dominating markets in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia regions, while expanding influence into Central Asia and the Middle East. This phenomenon not only creates economic impacts but also changes the geopolitical landscape, directly affecting governments and defense industries of the US and its European allies. Facing strong and challenging development from China's weapons industry, the DoD is implementing a strategy integrating advanced technologies such as 3D printing, advanced automation, and industrial internet of things to significantly enhance flexibility and rapid response capability of the defense production system (US Department of Defense, 2024c). Research Director and Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center - Hamzawy (2025), has provided the insightful observation that conflicts between major powers in the current era will take the nature of prolonged wars of attrition, in which the ability to rapidly expand production capacity during crisis periods will play a decisive role in determining the final outcome of future conflicts. Therefore, developing a highly adaptable and rapidly expandable production system is not merely a strategic choice but a survival factor in maintaining military advantage and ensuring US national security in the new era of strategic competition.

b) Second Pillar: Developing Highly Specialized and Diverse Human Resources

The NDIS focuses on developing a special workforce that not only meets quantitative requirements but must also achieve high standards of professional quality while reflecting the inherent diversity of US society (Industrial Base Policy, 2024). This strategy is not simply an ordinary recruitment plan, but a comprehensive vision aimed at building an elite workforce capable of adaptation and innovation in the unprecedented rapidly developing defense technology environment. Drawing lessons from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the NDIS has identified the strategic priority of focusing on developing high-quality human resources particularly in advanced combat technology fields, including modern air defense systems, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology, and hypersonic missile systems. These fields have proven decisive importance in modern conflicts and require specialist teams with exceptionally high expertise.

Parallel to enhancing professional quality, the NDIS also emphasizes expanding recruitment scope toward traditionally untapped communities, especially women and ethnic minority groups (Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, 2024). This strategy aims not only to create a workforce more representative of the US demographic structure but also to comprehensively leverage diverse talent and perspectives from all sectors of society. Research shows that diverse working groups typically have more creative problem-solving abilities and deliver higher productivity in complex technical environments. Parameter, DoD's Talent Development Director, emphasized the urgency in attracting



young workforce with a strategic observation: *"If we don't bring more Generation Z members into this workforce, we will not be able to fulfill our mission"* (Shinego, 2025). This statement reflects deep concern about ensuring continuity and sustainability in defense workforce development, especially when facing the upcoming retirement wave of the current generation of senior technical experts.

To realize this vision, the US government has implemented a system of multifaceted collaborative initiatives between leading research universities, specialized technical training institutions, and businesses in the defense industry. Scholarship and internship programs have been significantly expanded in scale, creating opportunities for talented students to access the defense industry from the early stages of their professional training (Shinego, 2025). To address the shortage of high-quality human resources in the semiconductor field, the DoD has expanded \$11 million in funding to Purdue University during 2022-2027 to strengthen training for US's future microchip workforce, as Washington consumes approximately 50% of microchips produced worldwide but only about 12% of microchips are manufactured domestically (Vincent, 2022). Additionally, the SMART scholarship is a flagship program attracting high-quality human resources to work for the DoD; SMART has provided 1,419 scholarships, approximately 900 internships completed, and more than 1,000 scholars recruited into civilian work for the DoD (LMI, n.d.). This program has collaborated with more than 200 sponsoring facilities and more than 3,500 scholars, from pursuing degrees in key priority defense fields to employment with the DoD (LMI, n.d.). Notably, in early 2024, five days after the NDIS was released (January 16, 2024), the DoD announced the X-Force Fellowship program for undergraduate students, graduate students, and recent graduates to have opportunities to serve US by solving real national security problems such as hardware design and prototyping, software development, data analysis and visualization, technology reconnaissance, communications and marketing strategy, and defense policy research in collaboration with DoD experts (More House, 2024). This strategy not only helps nurture future generations of experts but also creates a direct talent pipeline from educational institutions into the defense industry.

An equally important aspect in the NDIS is the focus on enhancing skills for the existing workforce through specialized training programs on breakthrough technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and cybersecurity (Vincent, 2024). These pioneering technology fields not only shape the future of the defense industry but are also key factors in maintaining the US strategic competitive advantage internationally. Recent analysis reports from the DoD have indicated a concerning situation: *"These advanced technology fields are facing a serious shortage of highly specialized personnel, particularly in the context of increasingly intense strategic competition with rival powers"* (Congressional Research Service, 2024). This shortage not only puts pressure on current projects but also threatens the ability to develop and deploy advanced systems in the future. The human resource development strategy in the NDIS extends far beyond merely focusing on technical skills. It simultaneously emphasizes cultivating strategic thinking and the ability to rapidly adapt to the constantly changing security environment. In an era where threats develop at breakneck speed and are more diverse than ever before, the creative thinking ability and rapid adaptability of defense human resources become determining factors in the success of national security strategies. Therefore, the DoD believes that the success of the NDIS depends greatly on the ability not only to



attract but also to retain exceptional talent in an extremely competitive environment with the private sector, which often can offer more attractive compensation and more flexible working environments (Industrial Base Policy, 2024). This is a significant challenge requiring creative solutions in personnel policy, compensation mechanisms, and long-term career development for specialists in the defense sector.

c) The Third Pillar: Reforming the Defense Procurement System

NDIS focuses on comprehensive reform of the defense procurement system—a key element determining the adaptability and effectiveness of the entire national security ecosystem. NDIS emphasizes the urgency of developing new procurement methods with high flexibility, aimed at creating more responsive and dynamic capabilities while maintaining a balance between important factors such as operational efficiency, long-term maintenance capabilities, battlefield customization capacity, and compliance with necessary standardization for defense support platforms and systems (Industrial Base Policy, 2024). These flexible procurement models are expected to bring significant improvements throughout the entire development and deployment cycle of defense systems, focusing on substantially reducing the time from research to practical deployment, optimizing overall costs, and enhancing production scalability when necessary. Notably, NDIS also emphasizes designing systems with high interoperability between the US and its strategic allies from the initial design phase, while carefully considering factors related to potential future exportability (Alert, 2024). This strategy reflects the US' long-term vision in promoting international cooperation and enhancing interoperability between allied forces, a factor becoming increasingly important in modern military operations.

An important approach in NDIS is prioritizing procurement solutions based on commercially available technology when conditions permit. This method not only aims to promote innovation in the industry but also to significantly expand the supplier base for the defense industry (Tabler, 2024). Effectively leveraging technologies and solutions already developed and validated in the commercial market not only helps save significant financial resources but also substantially shortens the time to operationalize new systems—a factor of vital importance in today's rapidly changing security environment. To realize these ambitious objectives, the DoD is conducting a radical reform process regarding traditional procurement procedures—which have frequently been criticized for being cumbersome, inflexible, and no longer suitable for the pace of modern technological development (Wong et al., 2024). The limitations of the current system have been clearly reflected in the US Government Accountability Office (2024), which points out that *"the average time to develop and deploy a new weapons system—from initial research to actual implementation—typically ranges from 7 to 10 years."* This timeframe is too long and no longer appropriate in the context of the global security environment changing at a dizzying pace, especially when strategic competitors are continuously shortening their development cycles. To address these challenges, Ribeiro (2024) has examined and analyzed the NDIS's proposed series of synchronized reform initiatives, including:



- (1) Expanding and standardizing platform standards while enhancing interoperability between different systems, facilitating rapid integration of new technologies and minimizing dependence on specific suppliers.
- (2) Strengthening rigorous technical requirements to limit "scope creep" - one of the main causes of project delays and cost overruns in large-scale defense programs.
- (3) Prioritizing readily available procurement solutions when tactically feasible and reasonable, maximizing the use of technologies already proven in the commercial market.
- (4) Significantly improving DoD's access to intellectual property rights and technical data, enhancing efficiency in the procurement and maintenance of defense systems throughout their operational lifecycle.
- (5) Considering expanding and fundamentally reforming policies related to contract strategy, facilitating the adoption of new models of cooperation between government and the private sector.
- (6) Continuing to promote procurement process reform initiatives, eliminating unnecessary administrative barriers and optimizing decision-making processes.
- (7) Comprehensively updating defense industry mobilization agencies and plans, ensuring readiness to meet national security needs in all emergency situations.

These reforms reflect a turning point in the US approach to the defense procurement system, shifting from the traditional rigid, sequential model to a significantly more flexible, adaptive, and responsive system. This transformation not only aims to improve efficiency and reduce costs but also ensures that US armed forces are always equipped with the most advanced technologies in the shortest possible time, maintaining a strategic competitive advantage in an increasingly complex and challenging global security environment.

d) The Fourth Pillar: Building Economic Deterrence Capabilities and Promoting International Cooperation

NDIS emphasizes the strategic importance of developing fair and effective competitive market mechanisms to support the construction of a flexible DIB not only within the US but also extending throughout the network of strategic allies and close partners globally (Industrial Base Policy, 2024). The overall objective of this strategy is not simply to enhance defense production capacity, but to establish an integrated economic security system and comprehensive deterrence capability against countries identified as "hostile" or potentially threatening to the security of the US and its allies. The focus of this economic deterrence strategy is particularly aimed at the increasingly strong and deep Russia-China alliance, especially after the Russia-Ukraine conflict erupted in 2022. The strategic cooperative relationship between these two powers is not limited to the military domain but extends to many other areas including technology, energy, and trade-forming a multidimensional challenge to the national security interests of the US and its Western allies. The US Deputy Secretary of Defense - Kathleen Hicks, has emphasized the



strategic importance of NDIS in building effective deterrence capabilities: *"Developing and empowering this modern defense industrial ecosystem is key to integrated deterrence and building lasting advantages"* (Department of Defense, 2023). This statement reflects the profound recognition that in the modern world, deterrence capability depends not only on pure military strength but also on the combined strength of the entire economy and defense industrial ecosystem.

This strategy calls for a series of specific measures to strengthen economic-defense cooperation between the US and its allies, including establishing new economic security agreements and developing advanced mechanisms for technology sharing with partner countries (US Department of Defense, 2024a). These economic and technological constraints are not only intended to create direct economic benefits for the participating parties but also to create a powerful deterrent effect by making potential "hostile" countries face the prospect of being cut off from the international market system, advanced technologies, and innovation centers of the US and its allies—a consequence that could seriously damage their economic development and national security. In a strategic statement, Deputy Secretary of Defense - Kathleen Hicks further clarified the long-term vision and dual objectives of NDIS:

By aligning policies, investments, and activities internally and externally in a manner appropriate to specific competitors, our industrial ecosystem can enhance deterrence at maximum effectiveness. If deterrence fails, NDIS will position our industrial ecosystem to provide our warriors with the necessary capabilities—at the speed and scale—to defeat any nation attempting to harm the security of the US, our allies, and our partners (Department of Defense, 2023).

This statement reflects the two-fold approach of the strategy: both enhancing deterrence capabilities to prevent conflict before it begins and ensuring effective response capability in case deterrence fails. Through promoting extensive economic cooperation with the network of global allies and partners, the US not only creates an effective deterrence mechanism but also significantly reduces dependence on countries with the potential to cause tension or instability in providing critical defense-related materials and technologies (National Defense Transportation Association, 2024). Additionally, promoting economic-defense industrial cooperation with allies not only serves direct security objectives but also contributes to enhancing the soft power of the US internationally. The ability to create and maintain sustainable economic-defense alliances not only brings direct material benefits but also creates profound geopolitical influence, strengthening the US' leadership position in the international system.

In general, NDIS represents a comprehensive strategic approach to strengthen defense capabilities and enhance the competitive position of the US internationally. Through building flexible supply chains, developing high-quality human resources, reforming the procurement system, and promoting strategic economic partnerships, NDIS aims to establish superior technological advantages, strong production capabilities, and economic deterrence power against potential adversaries. This is a clear manifestation of the US'



determination to maintain its status as a military and economic superpower in the 21st century.

3.2. Comprehensive Assessment of NDIS

NDIS represents a significant strategic advancement in the DoD's multifaceted effort to restructure and comprehensively modernize the DIB, aimed at responding promptly and effectively to increasingly complex contemporary geopolitical challenges. In particular, this strategy has been shaped and developed by the DoD in the context of escalating security threats in both scale and nature due to China's powerful rise with ambitions to fundamentally change the current international order, the comprehensive Russia-Ukraine conflict with far-reaching impacts on European security architecture, and the urgent need to support Israel in addressing complex regional security threats, especially the conflict with Hamas (US Department of Defense, 2024a). In-depth analysis of NDIS reveals several notable strengths as well as limitations that need to be identified:

a) Strengths of NDIS

First, integrated and multidimensional strategic architecture: NDIS demonstrates an innovative strategic vision by not merely addressing individual issues but establishing a comprehensive and integrated systematic analytical framework, precisely identifying structural challenges to the defense industry and proposing synchronized, highly interconnected solutions. This strategy scientifically establishes four strategic priority pillars, encompassing the entire defense industrial ecosystem from supply chains, high-quality human resource development, procurement process improvements to enhanced international cooperation, all aimed at building a highly adaptable, modern, and sustainable defense industrial ecosystem. Notably, each strategic pillar has been systematically concretized by DoD policymakers into 25 specialized activity areas with specific objectives and clearly defined outputs, facilitating implementation and effectiveness evaluation (Taylor, 2024). This structure reflects comprehensive strategic thinking and a methodical approach to modernizing the DIB. Deeper analysis of the strategic structure reveals that each pillar has been designed with a logical and balanced architecture, including building flexible and highly resilient supply chains implemented through eight specialized activity areas; developing high-quality human resources carried out through five interconnected activity areas; comprehensive reform of the defense procurement process divided into seven systematic activity areas; and strengthening economic deterrence capabilities deployed through five specialized areas (Alert, 2024). This integrated vision not only addresses short-term issues but also builds a solid foundation for the long-term sustainable development of the defense industry, while creating flexible mechanisms to adapt to unpredictable fluctuations in the global security environment. This multidimensional and systematic approach has transcended the framework of traditional defense industrial strategies, which often focus on individual aspects while lacking an overall vision.

Second, strategic orientation promoting multinational cooperation: One of the outstanding strengths of NDIS is its breakthrough approach in emphasizing the strategic



importance of transnational alliance cooperation in building integrated defense industrial capabilities (Department of Defense, 2023). The strategy demonstrates profound and practical recognition that the US cannot unilaterally maintain and develop a DIB with sufficient capacity and scale to effectively respond to the increasingly complex global security challenge landscape of the future. Exemplary multilateral cooperation initiatives such as AUKUS and the "friend-shoring" model in building defense supply chains have opened strategic opportunities for technology transfer and substantive cooperation enhancement with strategic allied nations (Tabler, 2024). In particular, the AUKUS treaty with its two main pillars-nuclear submarine development and advanced defense technology cooperation-represents a breakthrough approach in sharing sensitive defense technologies with trusted partners. NDIS therefore plays a pivotal role in the overall foreign policy strategy of President Joe Biden's administration, aimed at rebuilding strategic trust and strengthening the global alliance network after the "America First" period under President Trump-a policy that significantly diminished trust and cohesion between the US and its traditional partners. This international cooperation aspect not only helps reposition the global leadership role of the US but also creates practical mechanisms for sharing the burden of technology development and defense production, while enhancing the flexibility and resilience of the global defense supply chain against geopolitical and economic shocks. The development of this defense industrial alliance network also creates an important strategic competitive advantage for the US and its partners in technological and economic competition with rival nations such as China and Russia.

Third, balanced approach in optimizing public-private partnerships: NDIS has demonstrated a multidimensional and balanced approach by acknowledging that the federal government cannot unilaterally address complex challenges in the defense sector, but requires synchronized mobilization and maximization of innovation potential and expertise from the private sector (Department of Defense, 2023). This strategy proposes building comprehensive public-private partnership models, not limited to financial investment but extending to advanced scientific research and breakthrough technology development. This multi-layered approach reflects deep and comprehensive awareness that the radical restructuring of the defense industry requires synchronized, active, and continuous coordination of both sectors within a long-term strategic framework. Private businesses and corporations possess continuously updated specialized knowledge repositories, rich practical experience, and diverse resources essential for effectively and sustainably realizing NDIS's ambitious objectives (Sax, 2024). This multidimensional cooperation model allows for optimal synthesis and enhancement between the government's policy planning, strategic direction, and stable funding provision roles with the private sector's inherent continuous innovation capability, optimal operational efficiency, and strong competitive drive (Howard, 2024). Particularly, NDIS has developed a balanced analytical framework in identifying priority areas for public-private cooperation, including: (a) Development of critical technologies such as artificial intelligence, advanced microelectronics, and new energy sources; (b) Expansion of production capacity in strategic areas such as precision ammunition, anti-aircraft missiles, and unmanned systems; (c) Strengthening the resilience of the defense supply chain; and (d) Developing high-quality human resources with specific skills necessary for the modern defense industry. On this basis, this systematic strategic linkage will create



powerful synergistic effects, thereby accelerating the comprehensive modernization process and significantly enhancing the competitiveness of the defense industry in an increasingly complex and challenging global geopolitical context.

Fourth, specific and feasible implementation plan: NDIS does not stop at identifying abstract strategic objectives and mere theory but has taken an important breakthrough step with DoD officially announcing a detailed comprehensive implementation plan on October 29, 2024, including a system of sequential, specific, interconnected deployment steps and quantitative efficiency evaluation indicators for each phase (US Department of Defense, 2024c). This strategic move demonstrates DoD's strong, clear, and consistent commitment to comprehensively recovering and synchronously enhancing the defense industrial capabilities of the US and allied nations in the face of increasing and complex challenges from the close Russia-China cooperation on a global scale. Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment William LaPlante has convincingly affirmed: *"The announcement of the National Defense Industrial Strategy marks a historic and important milestone in the multifaceted effort to systematically scale up and significantly enhance the resilience and resistance of the DIB in all situations"* (Perez, 2024). This detailed and comprehensive implementation plan will create a solid foundation for in-depth and multidimensional analysis of potential weaknesses in complex supply chains, strongly reinforcing cybersecurity systems throughout the defense industry sector, while establishing and perfecting a strategic reserve system for critical materials and resources using a scientific, systematic, and sustainable approach.

b) Limitations of NDIS

First, challenges regarding the sustainability of financial resources and budget allocation priorities: The successful implementation of NDIS requires large-scale and continuous investment over many years in both financial resources and high-quality human capital. However, careful analysis reveals that the current strategic framework has not yet established a detailed, comprehensive financial plan to ensure the necessary sustainable funding, especially in the context of intense competition with many other spending priorities in the federal budget structure. Maintaining a stable, adequately scaled, and continuous funding stream across multiple budget cycles will be a systemic challenge for the DoD. According to information from Laura Taylor-Kale: *"The recently signed and passed defense appropriation for fiscal year 2024 as well as the President's budget request for fiscal year 2025 includes billions of dollars for investment in supply chains including ammunition, maritime strike capabilities, submarine industrial base improvements and shipyards as well as workforce development initiatives"* (US Department of Defense, 2024b). This statement confirms that NDIS has been financially secured for the 2024-2025 budget cycle; however, the sustainability of the budget stream in subsequent phases remains a significant open question for the DoD, particularly as pressure from budget constraints increases due to competition from increasingly diverse and urgent domestic development priorities. Although details related to specific budget allocation plans may not be widely disclosed due to the sensitive nature of defense and national security, the absence of a clear long-term financial framework remains a significant structural weakness in the overall architecture of NDIS.



Second, internal conflict between "Buy American" protectionist policies and the goal of enhancing international cooperation: Although NDIS sets forth ambitions to promote extensive international cooperation in the defense industry, this strategy faces significant inherent barriers from "Buy American" protectionist policies-which prioritize domestic sources-and the stringent regulatory system for controlling exports of sensitive military technology. NDIS has acknowledged the challenges arising from complex US export control mechanisms, including the International Traffic in Arms Regulations and Export Administration Regulations (National Defense Transportation Association, 2024). However, the perspective reflected in NDIS that *"this acknowledgment is insufficient to neutralize the negative impact on strategic cooperation efforts with international allies and partners"* (National Defense Transportation Association, 2024) still fails to address the fundamental issue. In reality, the parallel existence of these two opposing policy systems creates genuine barriers to the ability to share and transfer technology with foreign partners-a key factor in building effective collective defense capabilities. The notable lack of interest from EU allies, reflected through limited media coverage and discussion about NDIS in mainstream European media channels, is clear evidence of the negative impact of these protectionist policies on the potential for substantive international cooperation (Taylor, 2024). Although NDIS has noted these challenges, the strategic document has not yet proposed sufficiently strong and feasible solutions to overcome existing legal and institutional barriers, creating a core weakness in the overall structure of the strategy.

Third, systemic challenges related to competitiveness and technology innovation transfer: NDIS has correctly identified structural challenges related to limited competition in the defense industry ecosystem and the "valley of death" phenomenon in the transition process from research to practical application for innovative technologies (Levantovskaia, 2024). The lack of substantive competition in the defense industry constitutes a structural barrier to innovation processes and economic efficiency. This limited competitive environment leads to the risk of forming monopolistic entities or those with few competitors, thereby creating negative consequences such as high costs, inconsistent product quality, and the absence of endogenous motivation for continuous improvement. Simultaneously, the "valley of death" phenomenon accurately describes the situation where advanced technologies encounter difficulties in bridging the gap between the experimental research phase and large-scale deployment, primarily due to a lack of effective commercialization mechanisms and necessary financial investment during this critical transition phase. NDIS needs to propose more breakthrough and comprehensive solutions to foster a healthy competitive environment and narrow the "valley of death", possibly through mechanisms such as encouraging supplier structure diversification or establishing targeted investment funds to support the deployment process of innovative technologies from laboratory to battlefield. If these structural challenges are not systematically addressed, the risk of increasing innovation stagnation, low productivity, and inefficient resource allocation will become increasingly serious. Unfortunately, the current version of the strategy has not yet proposed specific, strong, and feasible solutions to thoroughly address these core issues.

Fourth, lack of comparative strategic analysis with international competitors: An important weakness in the structure of NDIS is its excessive focus on building and developing US domestic defense industrial capabilities while significantly lacking strategic



comparative analyses with potential adversary nations such as China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and other competitor states (Handfield, 2024). In the contemporary geopolitical context, US rival powers, especially China and Russia, are implementing systematic efforts to significantly enhance their defense industrial capabilities. The defense industrial development strategies of these countries, along with investment trends, technological development trajectories, access to strategic material resources, and global markets, will have direct and profound influences on the strategic competitive environment that the US will face in the medium and long-term future. Without a comprehensive comparative analysis and in-depth assessment of developmental dynamics of competing rivals, NDIS will face significant difficulties in ensuring that its priorities and action plans are built on accurately identifying the competitive challenge context that the US needs to overcome. Adding strategic analyses of the capabilities and defense industrial strategies of potential adversary nations would help NDIS improve the foundation for making appropriate strategic decisions to maintain competitive advantage, such as identifying priorities for developing key technological areas, strengthening partnerships with specific allies, or making targeted investments in strategic production capabilities. This comparative analysis becomes even more urgent in the context where the US needs to ensure its defense industrial system maintains a superior position compared to competitors to preserve its leading role in global defense.

c) Overall Assessment of NDIS

The US NDIS represents an important strategic advancement in efforts to comprehensively restructure and modernize the defense industry. Developed in the context of increasingly complex and multidimensional geopolitical challenges, NDIS's outstanding advantage is demonstrated through its systematic, comprehensive, and multi-layered approach, going beyond short-term tactical vision to build a sustainable, flexible, and highly adaptable defense industrial ecosystem in the face of global security environment fluctuations. The most notable aspect of NDIS is the harmonious and balanced combination between long-term strategic vision and specific implementation steps that are highly feasible in the short term. The strategy not only provides a theoretical framework for guidance but also delivers a detailed action roadmap with 25 specific activity areas systematically distributed across four main strategic pillars. In particular, NDIS demonstrates profound strategic thinking by recognizing that US's future defense strength depends closely on the ability to mobilize and optimize comprehensive resources from both public and private sectors while building a network of sustainable and reliable alliance relationships on a global scale.

However, through comprehensive analysis, the US NDIS faces four core structural challenges: (a) The complex problem of ensuring financial resources and long-term budget sustainability; (b) Internal conflict between domestic defense industry protectionist policies and the objective requirement for extensive international cooperation; (c) Systemic barriers to promoting healthy competition and overcoming the "valley of death" in the innovation technology transfer process; and (d) Significant deficiency in comparative strategic analysis with key international competitors. If not addressed systematically, comprehensively, and thoroughly, these structural limitations could significantly diminish the feasibility and practical effectiveness of NDIS in its



mission to ensure national security and maintain the US' leading defense technology position in the context of global geopolitical competition that is increasingly intense in magnitude and complex in nature. In the medium and long-term vision, the comprehensive success of NDIS will depend greatly on the ability to maintain political commitment throughout US presidential terms (a significant challenge due to the self-adjusting mechanism of defense policy continuously reflecting differences in strategic thinking between presidential administrations), as well as the ability to adapt flexibly and promptly to rapid and unpredictable fluctuations in regional and global security environments. NDIS is not simply an ordinary defense strategy but essentially a large-scale restructuring project with a long-term vision, requiring synchronized, harmonious, and effective coordination between government agencies, the private business sector, and the international partner network to realize the strategic vision of a strong US DIB with sufficient capacity to comprehensively respond to the diverse and complex challenges of the 21st century.

Conclusion

NDIS marks a pivotal turning point in the US' geostrategic response to multidimensional security challenges within an increasingly unstable international order. This comprehensive analysis reveals the NDIS as a sophisticated policy framework that transcends conventional defense planning by establishing a cohesive quadrilateral structure comprising four interrelated pillars: strengthening supply chain resilience, developing human capital, enhancing procurement system efficiency, and expanding international cooperation capabilities. The hallmark of this strategy lies in its systematic integration of diverse policy dimensions into a unified strategic ecosystem designed to effectively counter emerging threats from US's strategic competitors and their allied networks. However, the NDIS also faces significant structural limitations that may undermine its long-term effectiveness. These include constraints on fiscal sustainability, inherent tensions between protectionist inclinations and the imperatives of international collaboration, barriers to innovation diffusion, and an insufficiently robust comparative assessment of adversarial capabilities. These limitations constitute core vulnerabilities that necessitate systematic remediation to ensure strategic coherence and operational feasibility.

The NDIS reflects a strategic recognition by the US that maintaining technological superiority in an evolving multipolar security environment requires the synchronized mobilization of both public and private sector resources within a consistent strategic framework. As geopolitical competition among great powers intensifies, the success of the NDIS depends on sustained political commitment across successive administrations, agile adaptation to dynamic threat landscapes, and effective navigation of complex domestic and international constraints. Thus, the strategy is not merely a recalibration of defense industrial policy, but a comprehensive restructuring of the US' strategic posture in response to profound transformations in the global security architecture. In essence, the NDIS represents a deliberate effort to revitalize the "arsenal of democracy" - the foundation of US strength that proved decisive in the world wars and the Cold War. This strategy is aimed not only at safeguarding US hegemonic primacy but also at unlocking new opportunities and confronting emerging challenges in the global defense



technology domain. By examining the core themes of the NDIS in this study, national security policymakers can draw critical insights to formulate adaptive strategies, reinforce defense capabilities, and contribute to regional and global stability and sustainable development.

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SECURING THE SELF: ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AND ENERGY RELATIONS IN EU-CENTRAL ASIA ENGAGEMENT AFTER UKRAINE

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Abstract

This article analyses energy relations between the European Union (EU) and Central Asian countries through the lens of ontological security, seeking to understand how identity narratives shape cooperation beyond material interests. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU perception of ontological insecurity increased with the collapse of established energy interdependence routines, prompting a deepening of the engagement with Central Asia to reconstruct its biographical narrative. For Central Asian states, this partnership contributes to their post-Soviet identity construction as sovereign actors. The analysis shows how Central Asian states leverage their distinct energy profiles to craft separate security narratives, while engaging the EU as part of their diversification strategies, demonstrating



that sustainable cooperation depends on integrating partnerships into coherent identities amid geopolitical disruption and energy transition challenges.

Keywords

Central Asia, European Union, Energy, Ontological Security, Identity.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa as relações energéticas entre a União Europeia (UE) e os países da Ásia Central através da lente da segurança ontológica, procurando compreender como as narrativas identitárias moldam a cooperação para além dos interesses materiais. Após a invasão da Ucrânia pela Rússia, a percepção da UE de insegurança ontológica aumentou com o colapso das rotinas estabelecidas de interdependência energética, levando a um aprofundamento do envolvimento com a Ásia Central para reconstruir a sua narrativa biográfica. Para os Estados da Ásia Central, esta parceria contribui para a construção da sua identidade pós-soviética como atores soberanos. A análise mostra como os Estados da Ásia Central aproveitam os seus perfis energéticos distintos para criar narrativas de segurança separadas, ao mesmo tempo que envolvem a UE como parte das suas estratégias de diversificação, demonstrando que a cooperação sustentável depende da integração de parcerias em identidades coerentes em meio a perturbações geopolíticas e desafios de transição energética.

Palavras-chave

Ásia Central, União Europeia, Energia, Segurança Ontológica, Identidade.

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SECURING THE SELF: ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AND ENERGY RELATIONS IN EU-CENTRAL ASIA ENGAGEMENT AFTER UKRAINE¹

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Introduction

The current context of increasing polarisation and dissension in international affairs, with multiple crisis affecting the European Union (EU)'s role and place, have rendered energy security a central element in self-perceptions of (in)security. The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 accelerated the perception of threat coming from this big neighbour and underlined the central role of energy security in the EU agenda. Energy is one of the most pressing issues in modern international relations, embedding economic and political power in security frameworks. Side-by-side fossil fuels, hydroelectric or renewable energy complexes form the basis of the economy of a number of countries, with national security closely interlinked to global energy security (Fayzulloev, 2018). The Central Asian region emerges here as a fundamental player, having enormous energy resources and potentiating beneficial cooperation with the EU. The 2019 new EU Strategy to Central Asia, titled "New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership" (European Parliament and Council, 2019), seeks to update relations between the EU and the Central Asian countries, by designing a relation that is adjustable and targeted, pragmatic and resilient. The document is structured around three 'interconnected and mutually reinforcing priorities': 'partnering for resilience', 'partnering for prosperity' and 'working better together', highlighting "the security of energy supply and diversification of suppliers, sources and routes of the EU, including assessing the possibility to build the Trans-Caspian Pipeline" as a key goal.

Underlining the EU's approach is a security driven agenda, that we argue is pushed by ontological insecurity in the framing of Russia as a threat. The EU's ontological insecurity, particularly in the energy sector here analysed, is rebalanced in the geopolitical relevance of Central Asia given "its share in EU energy imports and the market potential of eighty million inhabitants, as well as the EU's interests in regional security" (European Parliament and Council, 2019: p. 1). By establishing new energy partnerships in Central Asia, the EU is attempting to rebuild its disrupted biographical narrative of energy security and autonomy. The Russian invasion of Ukraine fundamentally challenged the EU's long-established narrative of peaceful energy interdependence with Russia, creating profound anxiety about both material energy supplies and the EU's self-identity as a secure and autonomous actor. EU's further engagement with Central Asia is pursued not just for material energy resources, but also to reframe a coherent identity narrative

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where the EU regains ontological security mainly through reinforced partnerships and diversification of supply routes.

The paper starts by mapping the ontological security framework and how energy security plays out high in the agenda of both the EU and Central Asian countries. Exploring the new EU Strategy and developments in relations of the EU with Central Asia, and how the EU has been perceived by these actors, is key to unpack processes of security building and how these allow to overcome threat perceptions and anxiety. To this effect, the article looks at concrete energy projects and the political narratives informing these. The article concludes that the strengthening of relations with Central Asian states has been contributing to EU's ontological security in face of Russia's threat, while it has also been providing space for Central Asian states agency in energy discussions.

Geopolitics, normative competition, and energy security in regional relations

The literature on the EU's role in Central Asia reveals complex debates about the EU's regional actorness, normative influence, and positioning within a contested geopolitical environment. Central Asia represents a particularly challenging space for EU foreign policy, with the EU seeking to establish itself as a significant player in a region where other major powers exercise considerable influence. As Kavalski and Cho (2018: 54) mention, "Central Asia barely registered on the radar of the external relations of the EU during the 1990s", with the region remaining largely peripheral to EU interests. A significant turning point came following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, when Central Asia gained greater geostrategic significance. This eventually led to the EU's first comprehensive regional strategy in 2007, later updated in 2019 (Fawn, 2021). Despite these strategic initiatives, EU's effectiveness in the region has been questioned. For example, Vasa (2020: p. 121) argues that the EU "does not have a clear, real strategy towards the Central Asian region" and advances it "will lose in the game of great and middle powers for influence and control" (Vasa, 2000: p. 128). Similarly, Kavalski and Cho (2018: p. 63) suggest that "the cultural instincts of the EU's normative power entrap its agency in Central Asia and Afghanistan and make it difficult for Brussels to develop contextual approaches to the region". In a similar vein, Laumulin (2019) describes the EU's strategy for Central Asia as "incomplete", noting that the EU's visibility in the region remains limited despite its diplomatic presence and development assistance programmes.

Spaiser (2015) offers a more nuanced assessment, characterising the EU as a "minor but not marginal" security actor in Central Asia. While acknowledging that the EU lacks the security capacities of Russia and China, the author argues it has successfully developed a role on "'niche' areas of security which are not occupied by the other actors and where it can make a difference. Second, it successfully draws a picture of itself being an 'expert' without any geopolitical ambitions, and third, an intense discourse of 'far neighbourhood' helps to create legitimacy and proximity in its interaction with Central Asian leaders" (Spaiser, 2015: p. 97). The EU's approach has traditionally emphasised values such as democracy, human rights, and rule of law (Fawn, 2021). However, as Kobilov (2021, p. 144) points out, "The New Strategy made consequential amendments taking account of



these specific moments, providing a more balanced policy between values and interests of the EU". This suggests a recognition that an exclusively values-based approach may limit effectiveness in a region where authoritarian governance remains prevalent. Furthering the normative dimension of the EU's security, von Hauff (2019: p. 195) looks at how the "liberally informed EU" and the "politically distinctly illiberal China" interact in Central Asia, arguing that despite normative divergence, both actors ultimately contribute to regional security, albeit through different approaches. This creates a potential for "normative broad-mindedness" (von Hauff, 2019: p. 204) that could serve as a foundation for future cooperation.

The competitive aspect of EU engagement in Central Asia is noted by Fatima and Zafar (2014: p. 631), since the "involved actors can be identified as regional and trans-regional players", with Russia, China, and the United States being particularly influential. Russia maintains strong political and security ties through organisations like the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), while China has increased its economic presence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Vasa, 2020; Fatima & Zafar, 2014). In this complex setting, energy cooperation represents a crucial dimension of EU-Central Asia relations, with multiple competing perspectives regarding regional influence, geopolitical strategy, and security implications. Fernandes and Simão (2010: p. 104) frame energy relations primarily as geopolitical competition, arguing that Russia and the EU are engaged in a rivalry for influence over Central Asia's energy sector. This competition, they contend, extends beyond mere economic interests to encompass broader geopolitical contestation. Differently, Delcour (2011: p. 98) identifies the strengthening of energy cooperation as one of three decisive factors determining the sustainability of the EU's political engagement in Central Asia. She connects this strategic pivot to the 2006 Russia-Ukraine energy crisis, which led the EU to seek for energy diversification by looking for alternative sources in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Regional scholars offer alternative perspectives focused on cooperation rather than competition. Komron Rahimov (2024) advocates for strategic partnerships among Central Asian countries to ensure energy security, emphasising adaptation to global trends and environmental considerations. This approach envisions regional integration as a mechanism to preserve and enhance Central Asia's energy potential while addressing shared challenges. One of the central factors highlighted regarding energy security is the integration of Central Asia into global energy chains, which requires the active participation of countries in multilateral forums and agreements promoting joint infrastructure development and policy coordination. Amineh and Crijns-Graus (2018) highlight energy security as a crucial factor in the EU strategy, noting the EU's dependence on external energy supplies and the strategic importance of Central Asian energy resources, as complementary. Movkebaeva (2015) identifies a strategic shift in the EU's approach, characterised by intensified political engagement and increased financial investment, with the EU almost doubling the budget allocated to the region, suggesting the EU is moving beyond narrowly defined energy interests toward more comprehensive regional partnerships. Issova & Saryyeva (2015) also articulate a position of mutual benefit, arguing that the EU and Central Asia share "paramount interest in enhancing energy security as an important aspect of global security", emphasising diversification of export routes, supply structures, and energy sources as serving



common interests. The authors expand the energy security discussion beyond conventional fossil fuels to include water management and hydropower as crucial elements for regional stability in Central Asia and beyond, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. This same line of reasoning is highlighted by Basirov (2017) who argues that besides seeking to increase oil and gas imports from Central Asian countries, the EU has been focusing on aspects of sustainable development in the region and has been increasing investment in the renewable energy sector in Central Asia.

A concrete example of regional energy security strengthening is the CASA-1000 project, built on a cooperative approach to regional energy security. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have abundant clean hydropower resources, producing surplus electricity during summer months. Neighbouring Afghanistan and Pakistan contend with chronic electricity shortages, especially during hot summers, leading to frequent power cuts that hurt industrial production and endanger citizens during heat waves. This multinational initiative aims to transfer 1,300 megawatts of surplus hydroelectric power from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan through a shared system. This \$1.16 billion initiative, scheduled for completion in 2025, represents a shift from competitive energy geopolitics to collaborative development, addressing both energy surpluses and deficits across the region. By creating interdependencies between Central and South Asian countries through a unified electricity market, the project transforms energy from a source of competition to a foundation for regional stability, simultaneously addressing energy access insecurity, climate concerns, economic underdevelopment, and regional tensions. The EU has provided significant financial support to this regional electricity transmission project through the European Investment Bank and technical assistance (CASA-1000, 2025).

Ontological (in)security in EU-Russia relations and the Central Asia rebalancing game

Ontological security can be understood as the reflective capacity of adapting routines and systems of meaning to new situations in order to overcome anxieties and fears. In the context of EU-Central Asia energy relations, this theoretical lens illuminates how the EU's energy policies respond not only to material supply concerns but to deeper anxieties about identity and continuity. Material security references focus on concrete threats to supply, infrastructure, and economic stability (e.g., supply disruptions, price volatility). Ontological security concerns, by contrast, emerge through language about European identity, values, and continuity (e.g., strategic autonomy, resilience). When EU documents frame energy challenges primarily in terms of preserving European unity or upholding climate leadership rather than addressing immediate supply risks, this signals ontological rather than purely material security logic. For example, Germany's response to energy shortages shows how material crises trigger ontological anxiety. Chancellor Scholz (2022) framed energy independence not merely as supply security but as "sovereignty", which reads along 'strategic autonomy' – language indicating concerns about German/European identity and self-determination beyond immediate material needs. The German case demonstrates how material and ontological security concerns operate in tandem. While Germany experienced genuine material constraints requiring



production adjustments and consumption moderation, the broader EU response revealed ontological anxiety about European energy autonomy. Material security logic would predict pursuing the most cost-effective alternatives regardless of supplier. However, the EU's emphasis on 'strategic autonomy', its investment in more expensive Central Asian partnerships, and its acceleration of renewable transition despite higher short-term costs indicate that identity concerns shaped policy choices beyond pure material calculation. The ontological dimension thus explains not whether material threats exist, but how actors interpret and respond to them in ways that maintain coherent self-narratives.

The EU's decades-long energy relationship with Russia constituted a set of routinized practices that helped define the EU's self-perception as a stable, prosperous entity capable of managing complex interdependencies. When Russia's actions in Ukraine shattered these routines, the resulting ontological insecurity prompted the EU to seek not just alternative energy sources but new narratives of energy security that could restore its sense of continuity and agency. The EU's construction of itself as a 'secure energy user' emerges clearly in key policy documents following major energy crises. The European Commission's 2022 REPowerEU plan explicitly frames Europe as moving from vulnerability to resilience, with the concrete example of EU dropping its share of Russian gas imports from 45% to 19% between the launching of this programme and 2024 (European Commission, 2025), and the energy security strategy that it involves has been positioning the EU as a reliable partner that must diversify suppliers and routes (Sarno & Colantoni, 2023). These framings consistently present energy challenges as temporary disruptions to an inherently secure European energy system, rather than fundamental vulnerabilities. The REPowerEU Plan, adopted in May 2022 as a direct response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, exemplifies the EU's narrative shift toward energy autonomy through renewable acceleration. The programme's ambitious renewable energy targets and rapid capacity increases represent more than technical achievements – they constitute the EU's attempt to reconstruct its identity as a self-reliant energy actor no longer dependent on Russian supplies.

Therefore, ontological security can lead to readjustments not only in the actor himself, but also in the identity narrative that is articulated and becomes part of the process of identifying how we want to define ourselves (Browning and Joenniemi, 2017). This is a process that allows us to better understand the ability to adjust to change in contexts of uncertainty, visible through narratives. In the case of European energy security, from the point of view of the EU towards Russia, the discourse has shifted to the formula "the other as a threat", following the understanding that energy became a threat to the collective well-being.

Several authors have worked on ontological security at this "collective level" (Browning, 2018; Hansen, 2016; Kinnvall, 2006; Mitzen, 2006; Steele, 2008; Zarakol, 2017), where self-identification is a central reference point for the way we feel threatened or instead reinforced in our own identity/security. Routines are part of this process of self-identification and autobiographical narratives become legitimisers of an actor's existence and continuity. These autobiographical narratives are defined in fundamental documents, such as the EU Strategy for Central Asia, the Global Gateway Initiative and SECCA (Sustainable Energy Connectivity in Central Asia) project. The negotiation of new-generation Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (EPCAs) with Central



Asian states has also provided a strong vehicle to forge a more modern and diversified partnership beyond a "trade and aid" agenda and promote cooperation and regulatory convergence in areas which are relevant to the reform processes underway in the region. In this way, these institutional cooperation mechanisms foster a narrative of cooperation and assurance building on the normative agenda routinised in EU collaboration.²

By outlining priorities and practices that build routinised relations, these documents create the autobiographical narrative that allows the perception of policies and actions to be implemented. From an ontological security perspective maintaining routine and stability prevails, fulfilling the defined objectives and allowing a self-defined position as autonomous. When routine is disrupted and uncertainty and anxiety prevail, ontological insecurity arises. This leads actors to seek to reorient strategies to restore stable narratives or conduct changes that seek a repositioning where the self regains the feeling of security. The anxiety caused by Russian political action and narrative, with the war in Ukraine since 2014 and the full-scale invasion in 2022, materialised ontological insecurity (Freire, 2020), forcing a readjustment of systems of meaning – the EU-Russia partnership crumbled down, and a new antagonistic narrative took shape, where potential cuts in supplies fuelled insecurity. Political resistance from the EU, through a policy of increased autonomy from Russia's supplies, including through strengthening relations with Central Asian states, signalled a change in the policy and practice in search of reassurance. Indeed, "ontological security is not just a question of stability, but also of adaptability, that is, openness and ability to deal with change" (Browning and Joenniemi, 2017: p. 32).

The reconceptualization of energy relation in Eurasia is part of this process, where Central Asia has been taking on a central role. Furthermore, the construction of the narrative seeking to reinforce routinised behaviours and biographical continuity, can be challenged both internally through a self-reflective process as well as external challenges. EU-Central Asia energy relations encapsulate these dynamics of readaptation to a differentiated context, where new narratives are framing ontological security drivers related to energy security and different competitors in this great game. This framework allows us to look at how energy security narratives impact the international and the domestic contexts, and how autobiographical narratives and competitive dynamics contribute to feelings of ontological (in)security.

Setting the context: EU-Central Asia energy relations

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the energy resources of Central Asia became crucial not only for material reasons but for how major powers constructed their post-Cold War identities and narratives. For Russia, maintaining influence over Central Asian energy resources reinforced its autobiographical narrative as a continuing great power despite the Soviet collapse. For Western powers, engaging with these states aligned with narratives of expanding liberal market democracy. The EU's later entry into this competition – accelerated by ontological insecurity following Russia's actions in Ukraine

² The EPCA with Kazakhstan has come into force. The EPCA with Kyrgyzstan was initialled in 2019 and work proceeds on preparing the text for signatures. EPCA negotiations with Uzbekistan are nearing completion. The EU is preparing to engage in EPCA negotiations with Tajikistan.



– demonstrates how disruptions to established security narratives can provoke new engagement patterns as actors seek to restore coherent self-identities. The strategic rivalry between Russia, China, and the United States makes the importance of the region very noticeable, rich in natural resources, in particular oil, gas, and coal (Sirochiddin, 2020).

Acknowledging a renewed geopolitical interest in Central Asia based on the mineral wealth of the region, in 1996, The New York Times published an opinion piece titled “The New Great Game in Asia” stating:

While few have noticed, Central Asia has again emerged as a murky battleground among big powers engaged in an old and rough geopolitical game. Western experts believe that the largely untapped oil and natural gas riches of the Caspian Sea countries could make that region the Persian Gulf of the next century. The object of the revived game is to befriend leaders of the former Soviet republics controlling the oil, while neutralizing Russian suspicions and devising secure alternative pipeline routes to world markets. (The New York Times, 1996)

According to Umirserik Kasenov (2021), the most important factor determining the new geopolitical role of the Central Asian region is its energy resources, and above all, oil from Kazakhstan and natural gas from Turkmenistan. In essence, the “New Great Game” is fundamentally different from the Great Game of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Central Asia. In the old Great Game, the main players were Tsarist Russia and the British Empire. In the New Great Game, the main players are Russia, the United States, China, the European Union, and a number of regional powers, such as Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, South Korea and Japan. The New Great Game focuses to a great extent on oil, gas, and hydropower resources, while simultaneously trying to narrow each other’s position in the region. Unlike the other powers, the EU entered the game later, and this has been to a great extent mobilised by an ontological security framework. The need to respond to Russia’s threat has led to a shift in the narrative and readjustment of EU energy policies both within its space and with regard to external players, such as further engagement with Central Asia. This shift signals the effort to reconnect to stability and a cooperative narrative in energy terms. The EU has shown its interest in the region’s oil and gas resources, and positioned itself to contribute to the security of Central Asia. That is why, with the initiative and assistance of the EU, several projects have been implemented in the region in the areas of hydropower and renewable energy. The implementation of the BOMCA, CADAP and LEICA programmes by the side of EU demonstrate how security and stability of Central Asia is very important for the EU’s own security.

The Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) is the flagship and largest EU-funded programme in the region with an overall budget of 21.65 million euro and an implementing period of 54 months. Since its launch in 2003, it has focused on capacity building and institutional development, developing trade corridors and the facilitation of trade, improving border management systems and eliminating drug trafficking across the Central Asia region, spanning through critical issues. Security and stability in the region



are thus at the core of the initiative, mainly by fostering sustainable economic development through integrated border management (BOMCA, 2025). CADAP is the Central Asia Drug Action Programme, an initiative of the EU to promote the development of effective drug demand reduction policies in Central Asian countries. Also launched in 2003, it has been supporting the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the implementation of strategies and measures to reduce the demand for drugs, promoting prevention initiatives and improving the treatment offered by public institutions to drug users in the region. Cooperation has developed in the context of different projects and frameworks put forward in mutual agreement (CADAP, 2025). The Law Enforcement in Central Asia project (LEICA) seeks to build law enforcement capacities in the five Central Asian countries to enhance security both on a national and regional level. In other words, the overall objective of LEICA is to partner with Central Asian countries in order to prevent and to counter terrorist activity, underlining the security considerations in the agenda (LEICA, 2024).

The energy landscape in Central Asia – where Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan possess rich oil and gas reserves while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have abundant hydropower resources – provides opportunities for the EU to reconstruct its energy security narrative. These complementary resources align with the EU's post-2022 narrative seeking stability and continuity by emphasising diversification, sustainability, and reduced dependency on Russian supplies. The EU's focus on renewable energy partnerships with hydropower-rich Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, for instance, reinforces its self-identity as a green transition leader. Similarly, its engagement with Kazakhstan on both traditional and renewable energy sources allows the EU to narrate a transition story that maintains continuity (energy security) while embracing change (diversification away from Russia). For Central Asian states, their different energy profiles enable distinct identity narratives: Tajikistan positions itself as a "green energy" leader, while Kazakhstan balances its fossil fuel wealth with nuclear energy ambitions, each constructing separate ontological security frameworks through energy diplomacy. Indeed, with only a few wind and solar power plants operating within their territories, Central Asian governments keep a strong drive on fossil fuels (Kedar, 2021). Regarding gas reserves in the world, Turkmenistan ranks 5th (13.6 trillion m³), Kazakhstan ranks 15th (2.3 trillion m³), Uzbekistan ranks 18th (0.8 trillion m³), Tajikistan ranks 91st (6 billion m³), and Kyrgyzstan ranks 92nd (6 billion m³) (BP, 2022). In terms of oil reserves, Kazakhstan ranks 12th (30 billion barrels), Turkmenistan ranks 50th (600 million barrels), Uzbekistan ranks 51st (million barrels), Kyrgyzstan ranks 82nd (40 million barrels), and Tajikistan ranks 93rd (12 million barrels) (EIA, 2023). In the EU, oil and gas are scarce, with import coming from Russia, Asian countries, Norway and the United States. Germany and France have large coal reserves, and the EU countries are trying year after year to reduce the amount of coal-fired energy due to its high greenhouse gas emissions. The EU has achieved unprecedented success in renewable energy, with Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Albania, Montenegro, Portugal and Lithuania being the leading countries in this area. Renewable energy in these countries accounts for between 30 and 70 percent of the energy used (Eurostat, 2025).

As part of the European Green Deal, in order to encourage this smart sector integration, the Commission presented an EU strategy for energy system integration in July 2020, promoting direct electrification of end-use sectors and involving various existing and



emerging technologies, processes and business models, such as ICT and digitalisation, smart grids and meters and flexibility markets (OECD, 2020). In particular, the scale up of renewable energy production has been at the centre of the REPowerEU Plan's objective to build a secure and decarbonised energy system in the EU. Adopted in May 2022 as a response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, the programme aims at phasing out Russia's fossil fuel imports (European Commission, n.d.). The latest data show substantial results with the increase of installed wind and solar capacity by 36% between 2021 and 2023, saving approximately 35 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas over 2 years. With 56 GW of new solar energy capacity installed in 2023, the EU has set yet another record surpassing the additional 40 GW installed in 2022. These figures represent important steps in the right direction, but further acceleration is needed to meet the REPowerEU targets under the EU Solar Energy Strategy and reach a total of at least 700 GW capacity by 2030, up from the estimated 263 GW installed at the end of 2023. Over the last years, the EU has taken several initiatives to strengthen the support to the European photovoltaic manufacturing sector by launching the European Solar PV Industry Alliance, adopting a Solar Charter, and setting up a public-private co-programmed partnership to support its coordinated R&I efforts (Eur-lex, 2022). As for wind power, 16 GW of new capacity was installed in the EU in 2023, reaching a total 221 GW. While this shows good progress, the power sector needs to increase the pace of installation to meet the EU's ambitious renewable energy targets, a challenge to which the Commission has responded with the adoption of the Wind Power Package (October 2023) (European Commission, 2023), while striving for a balanced deployment in collaboration with local citizens to avoid that the energy transition is challenged because of concerns over landscapes, biodiversity, cultural heritage and lifestyles, especially in rural areas (European Commission, 2024).

The EU aims to become fossil fuel independent by 2050, coal-free by 2030, and gas-fired and nuclear-fired power generation (Gurkov, 2021). However, this narrative is not matched in Central Asia, where there is no talk of abandoning coal and gas-fired power plants. In Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan alone, more than 90 percent of electricity is generated from hydropower, and these two countries are also planning to increase their electricity generation from renewable sources. In the remaining countries, coal-fired power plants are a priority, and even Uzbekistan has decided to build a nuclear power plant (with Russian assistance) (World Nuclear News, 2024). Nevertheless, discussion on how to better integrate energy-related cooperation and enhance regional security in the Euro-Asia region have intensified. For example, on February 13, 2024, a telephone conversation took place between the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, and the then President of the European Council, Charles Michel. Further strengthening dialogue and expand cooperation in political, economic and commercial areas were mentioned as key. The parties also discussed security issues, including the situation in Afghanistan and the strengthening of the Tajik-Afghan border. In this regard, it was expressed confidence that cooperation within the framework of such programmes, such as BOMCA, CADAP and LEICA would continue. The President of Tajikistan expressed his support for more active cooperation in the implementation of "green economy" and "green energy" policies (MFA Tajikistan 2024).

Central Asian states have developed distinct approaches to post-Soviet identity construction since 1991, each crafting national visions that reflect their energy profiles



and security needs. Kazakhstan's 'Strategy 2050' emphasises multi-vector foreign policy and nuclear non-proliferation leadership, positioning the country as a bridge between major powers while leveraging its energy resources for identity construction (Nazarbayev, 2012; Satubaldina, 2021). Uzbekistan's 'New Uzbekistan' approach under President Mirziyoyev has focused on regional reintegration and economic modernisation, using energy cooperation to signal its transition from isolationist policies (Nadirova, 2024). Tajikistan centers its strategy on energy independence through hydropower development, constructing an identity as a 'green energy' leader, while Kyrgyzstan has pursued multi-vector diplomacy that balances competing external relationships (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, 2013; Masalbekova, 2024).

These differentiated approaches reveal a common pattern: all Central Asian states have gradually shifted from Russian-dominated frameworks toward diversified partnerships that reinforce their self-narratives as independent actors (DCAF, 2020). The ability to engage multiple external partners – including the EU, China, and the United States – serves ontological security needs by demonstrating sovereign agency and providing narrative flexibility in their ongoing identity construction. In this context, the EU has positioned itself as a relevant partner that allows these states to diversify their security relationships while constructing new post-Soviet identities.

EU-Central Asia energy relations: from strangers to partners

The evolution of EU-Central Asia energy relations can be understood as part of an identity construction where both actors used energy cooperation to build and maintain coherent autobiographic narratives about their roles in the post-Cold War order. For the EU, engagement with newly independent Central Asia states through the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) programme represented an opportunity to construct a narrative of itself as a transformative power capable of extending liberal democracy values beyond its immediate neighbourhood (International Crisis Group, 2006). The European Commission's 1995 document "The EU's relations with the Newly Independent States of Central Asia" marked the first attempt to articulate a coherent autobiographical narrative about the EU's regional role, though its simultaneous identification of geopolitical and economic interests alongside serious political concerns over human rights and democracy revealed the fundamental tension in EU identity construction between normative aspirations and strategic interests (European Commission, 1995).

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States created profound ontological disruption for both sides, forcing rapid revision of established security narratives and compelling both actors to reconstruct their narratives around new security imperatives (Kluczevska & Dzhuraev, 2020). The EU's 2002 Strategic Paper for Central Asia represented an attempt to reconstruct its regional identity around crisis management and security cooperation, with the allocation of fifty million euros annually signalling investment in maintaining the EU's self-image as a capable international actor (European Commission, 2002). However, the 2005 Andijan massacre created another moment of profound ontological anxiety, forcing the EU to confront the impossibility of



maintaining coherent narratives that simultaneously emphasised human rights promotion and strategic partnership with authoritarian states (Drost et al., 2025: 47).

The Council of the European Union's "Strategy for a New Partnership" with Central Asia (2007) marked a critical juncture in ontological security construction, representing the EU's attempt to establish routinized practices that could stabilise its regional identity (European Council, 2007; Fawn, 2021). The Czech Presidency's 2009 emphasis on the Southern Corridor initiative demonstrated how energy cooperation served identity construction needs beyond material diversification, allowing the EU to narrate itself as a strategic connectivity facilitator while providing Central Asia states with opportunities to construct identities as energy partners rather than peripheral suppliers (Hubinger, 2009).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 created the most profound ontological disruption in EU-Central Asia energy relations since the Soviet collapse, fundamentally shattering established narratives of energy interdependence and peaceful cooperation (Drost et al., 2025: 8). Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine first cracked the EU's established energy interdependence narrative, prompting initial diversification rhetoric. However, the EU's response remained largely within existing frameworks, seeking to maintain the possibility of restored relations with Russia while gradually reducing dependence. The 2022 full-scale invasion represented a qualitatively different rupture, with no illusion about energy partnership with Russia and pushing for a comprehensive reorientation, which accelerated EU engagement with Central Asia. The Strategic Partnership memoranda of Understanding with Kazakhstan (November 2022) and Uzbekistan (April 2024) represent more than diversification strategies – they constitute attempts to reconstruct autobiographical narratives of energy security and autonomy (European Commission, 2022b; Delegation of the European Union to Uzbekistan, 2024). EU energy relations with Central Asia have evolved from minimal post-Soviet engagement to comprehensive strategic partnerships. Currently, we can see how ontological security needs drive energy cooperation beyond material calculations, as both the EU and Central Asian states use these partnerships to reconstruct coherent self-narratives that can accommodate geopolitical disruption while maintaining identity continuity.

Energy relations: building blocks or competing insecurities?

The relationship between the European Union and Central Asian states has evolved significantly in recent years, marked by increased diplomatic engagement, strategic framework development, and expansion of cooperation across multiple domains. EU-Central Asian relations have been institutionalised through a series of strategic initiatives, most notably the adoption of a new European Union Strategy for Central Asia in 2019 (EU Strategy, 2019). The New EU Strategy to Central Asia also sought to reinforce relations in a context of tension with Russia (EU Strategy, 2019). One of the points of the 2019 Strategy is the exchange of knowledge in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Indeed, in their mutual cooperation, the EU and Central Asia pay serious attention to the energy sector. This is why over the course of more than 30 years of cooperation between the two sides, many energy projects have been renovated or built in the region. As the current EU strategy for Central Asia declares, "the strategic



geographical location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, its share of the EU's energy imports and the market potential of eighty million inhabitants, as well as the EU's interest in regional security, have made Central Asia an increasingly important partner for the EU" (European Parliament and Council, 2019). In light of the Ukrainian crisis, relations between Central Asian countries and the EU could be significantly strengthened by the Team Europe Initiative on Water, Energy and Climate Change and the Team Europe Initiative on Digital Connectivity, within the Global Gateway Project (European Commission, 2022a).

The EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference on November 17-18, 2022 in Samarkand was the first meeting since the EU Global Gateway Strategy was adopted on December 1, 2021 and marked the intensification of the Union's policy towards the region, demonstrating the growing importance of Central Asia for the EU. The meeting was attended by Central Asian leaders and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell. This event was accompanied by the launch of a number of EU initiatives covering areas such as energy, transport, climate change, water and digital connectivity (European Commission, n/d). This framework has been complemented by the establishment of regular high-level dialogue mechanisms, including the Heads of State of Central Asia and European Union summit format, which has convened twice already - first in Astana (October 2022) and subsequently in Cholpon-Ata (June 2023). In April 2025, the first EU-Central Asia Summit took place, hosted by the President of Uzbekistan, where it was stated the need to address common security challenges, and explore new possibilities for engagement between the regions, along with furthering cooperation and investments within the Global Gateway project (European Council, 2025). These meetings, and particularly the Summit at the highest level in 2025 represent a significant elevation in diplomatic engagement between the regions (European Council, 2025).

Other example of how the energy crisis caused by the Russia war on Ukraine and the need for alternative energy suppliers became pressing is the agreement on a large-scale project "Sustainable Energy Connectivity in Central Asia" (SECCA), the budget of which is 6.8 million euros (Andžāns & Djatkoviča, 2023; see also Strulkova, n/d). The main objective of the SECCA project is to support the transition to sustainable energy systems by exploiting the region's potential in solar, wind and hydropower in line with EU best practices. The programme supports the implementation of pilot projects aimed at demonstrating the viability and benefits of renewable energy technologies. In addition to this, the SECCA project also focuses on energy efficiency measures. This includes providing technical assistance and capacity building to improve energy efficiency by reducing energy intensity in industry and improving the energy efficiency of buildings (NUZ UZ, 2022). In addition, the SECCA project aims to increase access to energy in remote and underserved areas of Central Asia. Access to basic energy services remains a challenge for the region's predominantly rural population. This involves supporting the development of off-grid and mini-grid systems based on renewable energy sources (Stantec, 2022).

The frequency and substantive nature of these dialogues indicate a mutual recognition of the strategic importance of interregional cooperation. President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan explicitly acknowledged satisfaction with the level of cooperation with the EU,



while Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev credited the EU with helping strengthen intra-regional dialogue in Central Asia despite "unprecedented geopolitical aggravation". This suggests the EU is achieving a measure of normative influence in the region.

Economic cooperation forms a cornerstone of EU-Central Asian relations, with the EU emerging as a significant trade and investment partner for the region. President Tokayev's statement that the EU is "Kazakhstan's largest trading partner, accounting for more than 40% of our foreign trade" with bilateral trade reaching \$40 billion in 2022 is particularly illustrative of this economic interdependence. Furthermore, European investment constitutes approximately half of Kazakhstan's \$350 billion in foreign direct investment accumulated since independence. The economic dimension of the relationship appears to be characterised by ambitious growth targets, as evidenced by Kazakhstan's stated goal of increasing trade with the EU to \$50 billion by 2025. This economic cooperation extends beyond traditional trade to encompass infrastructure investment, particularly through the newly established *EU-Central Asia Connectivity: A Global Gateway to Sustainable Development* framework launched in Samarkand in November 2022.

Transport infrastructure development, particularly the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, has emerged as a strategic priority in EU-Central Asian relations. Multiple Central Asian leaders, including Presidents Tokayev, Mirziyoyev, and Berdimuhamedov, emphasised the importance of this corridor in their diplomatic communications. Turkmenistan, positioning itself as a "reliable transport bridge between Asia and Europe", has actively engaged with the EU on developing North-South and East-West transport corridors. This focus on transport connectivity appears directly connected to Central Asian states' aspirations for economic diversification and reduced dependence on traditional trade routes. President Mirziyoyev directly characterised the "diversification of transport routes" as an "urgent task for all countries in our region", suggesting the EU engagement addresses a core strategic need of Central Asian states. President Tokayev, while participating in the Central Asia-Germany meeting on September 17, 2024 in Astana, said that "Kazakhstan welcomes the decision of European partners to allocate 10 billion euros as part of the Global Gateway programme for the development of the Middle Corridor. We count on Germany's assistance in connecting this route with the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the Global Gateway strategy". According to President Tokayev, further integration of transport and logistics systems between Central Asia and Europe remains an urgent task (Tokayev, 2024). The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, also known as the Middle Corridor, connects China and European countries through Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, offering Central Asia a safe, short and inexpensive route given its rich resources (European Parliament, 2023).

Energy cooperation constitutes a significant dimension of EU-Central Asian relations, with emphasis on both traditional and renewable energy sources. The references to "green energy" in statements by Presidents Rahmon and Mirziyoyev suggest alignment with the EU's own climate objectives and external energy policy. Notably, President Rahmon outlined Tajikistan's Strategy for the Development of the "Green Economy", which aims to increase renewable energy capacity to at least 1,000 megawatts by 2030. In fact, the



Republic of Tajikistan has had fruitful cooperation with the EU in the energy sector since its independence, with a significant role in the reconstruction of Tajikistan's energy networks, the introduction of new technologies for electricity metering, energy security, and the construction of hydroelectric power plants, such as the Sebzor hydroelectric power plant, located in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Delegation of the EU to Tajikistan, 2020; Interfax, 2024).

Concurrently, Kazakhstan's President Tokayev emphasised the importance of nuclear energy development, including accelerating construction of the country's first nuclear power plant and creating a "nuclear cluster" to address "growing energy deficit". This diversity in energy priorities across Central Asian states presents both opportunities and challenges for EU energy diplomacy in the region, requiring a differentiated approach that acknowledges varying national priorities while promoting broader sustainability objectives. The EU's engagement with Central Asia on security matters appears to be welcomed by regional leaders, suggesting recognition of the EU's potential contribution to addressing complex security challenges in the region.

While the EU-Central Asia relationship has a strong multilateral component, bilateral relations between the EU and individual Central Asian states display significant differentiation. Kazakhstan appears to have the most developed economic relationship with the EU, as evidenced by substantial trade and investment figures. Kyrgyzstan's President Japarov characterised the EU as "one of Kyrgyzstan's reliable partners, providing support to the country for sustainable development since independence", while Turkmenistan emphasised the development of "long-term ties" on both bilateral and multilateral bases. This differentiation reflects varying levels of economic development, resource endowments, and strategic orientations across Central Asian states, necessitating a calibrated EU approach that balances regional frameworks with bilateral engagement.

EU-Central Asian relations have evolved toward a more strategic partnership characterised by regular high-level dialogue, diversified cooperation areas, and increasingly institutionalised frameworks. Economic relations, particularly trade and investment, form the foundation of this relationship, complemented by growing cooperation in energy, security, transport connectivity and digital development. The emphasis on formal dialogue mechanisms, particularly the establishment of regular summits at the heads of state level, indicates mutual recognition of the strategic importance of this interregional relationship. However, significant differentiation exists across individual Central Asian states in terms of their specific priorities and depth of engagement with the EU.

The European Parliament's 2025 assessment of EU-Central Asia relations provides compelling evidence for the ontological security dimensions of energy cooperation, revealing significant disparity between strategic rhetoric and material outcomes. Despite total bilateral trade of only 52.8 billion euro in 2023 and limited concrete energy flows, the EU has committed 12 billion euro through the Global Gateway initiative specifically to enhance energy and transport connectivity with the region (European Parliament, 2025). This disproportionate investment becomes particularly evident in the EU's ongoing negotiations with Turkmenistan for the Trans-Caspian Interconnector, a project that has been under discussion since 2021 but involves only 10-12 billion cubic meters annually



– a relatively modest contribution to EU energy needs. The document's emphasis on using Central Asian partnerships to "reduce dependence on China and Russia in the context of global geopolitical changes" explicitly frames energy cooperation as serving broader identity reconstruction purposes beyond material supply security. Moreover, the Parliament's focus on "enormous potential" for renewable energy cooperation and critical raw materials partnerships with countries like Kazakhstan suggests the EU is constructing future-oriented narratives of energy autonomy and green transition leadership, using Central Asian partnerships as vehicles for autobiographical narrative reconstruction rather than immediate material energy security gains. For Central Asian states, particularly those transitioning from post-Soviet identities, partnerships with diverse international actors represent opportunities to assert sovereign agency and construct new national narratives. The ability to negotiate and maintain multiple external relationships, rather than remaining exclusively within Russia's sphere of influence, reinforces these states' self-realisation as independent actors. As both the EU and Central Asian states navigate shifts in the context of the war in Ukraine regarding routes' diversification, and regarding renewable energy sources, these transitions challenge established identities tied to traditional energy production and consumption patterns. This explains why cooperation frameworks that acknowledge identity needs, not merely material interests, tend to generate more sustainable partnerships.

Conclusion

Through the lens of ontological security, this article looked at the evolving relationship between the EU and Central Asian states, focusing on energy cooperation as a critical domain where identity narratives and security anxieties intersect. The analysis reveals that EU-Central Asia energy relations cannot be understood solely through material or geopolitical frameworks, but must be situated within broader processes of identity construction and narrative continuity that shape how both regions perceive and respond to threats. The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 represented a critical juncture in the EU's autobiographical narrative, fundamentally disrupting established routines of energy interdependence with Russia that had structured the EU's self-understanding for decades. This disruption generated profound ontological insecurity, compelling the EU to seek not just alternative energy sources but new narratives that could restore a sense of continuity and purpose. Central Asia emerged as a key space for this narrative reconstruction, with the EU developing frameworks like the Global Gateway Initiative, SECCA, and enhanced institutional cooperation mechanisms that serve both practical and identity functions.

Ontological security considerations help explain policy choices that might appear suboptimal from purely material perspectives. The EU's extensive investment in capacity-building programmes alongside energy initiatives reflects an attempt to construct a comprehensive narrative of partnership that stabilises its identity as a normative power even as it pursues energy diversification. Similarly, Central Asian states' willingness to engage with multiple external actors reflects not just hedging strategies but efforts to maintain narrative flexibility in their ongoing identity construction. The ontological security framework shows how energy cooperation serves distinct identity reconstruction purposes for both sides. For Central Asian states, engagement with the EU offers



opportunities to strengthen their post-Soviet identity narratives as sovereign actors with agency in international relations. For the EU, these partnerships reinforce its self-narrative as a normative power promoting sustainable development and regional integration beyond its immediate neighbourhood. Thus, energy security is revealed to be not simply about securing physical supplies but about maintaining coherent self-narratives in a world of disruption and change.

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RUSSIA'S TURN TO THE EAST: ANALYSING THE DRIVERS OF MOSCOW'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION SINCE 1991

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War and the consequent dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has made the recovery of a relevant status in the international system one of the main objectives of its foreign policy. To achieve this aim, it is of great interest for Moscow to play an important role in the world's fastest growing region in recent decades: the Asia-Pacific region. Although the Kremlin's involvement has been more visible in other areas such as the post-Soviet space or Europe, a gradual process of reorientation of Russian foreign policy towards its Eastern neighbourhood has begun since the beginning of the 21st century. Hence, this article presents the results of a mixed method research design related to the main internal and systemic factors that have turned Asia-Pacific region into a priority area for the Russian Federation since its independence in 1991.

Keywords

Russian Federation, Foreign Policy, Asia-Pacific, International Relations.

Resumo

Desde o fim da Guerra Fria e a consequente dissolução da União Soviética em 1991, a Rússia fez da recuperação de um estatuto relevante no sistema internacional um dos principais objetivos da sua política externa. Para alcançar esse objetivo, é de grande interesse para Moscovo desempenhar um papel importante na região com o crescimento mais rápido nas últimas décadas: a região Ásia-Pacífico. Embora o envolvimento do Kremlin tenha sido mais visível noutras áreas, como o espaço pós-soviético ou a Europa, desde o início do século XXI iniciou-se um processo gradual de reorientação da Política Externa Russa em direção à sua vizinhança oriental. Assim, este artigo apresenta os resultados de uma investigação com um desenho metodológico misto, relacionada com os principais fatores internos e sistémicos que transformaram a região Ásia-Pacífico numa área prioritária para a Federação Russa desde a sua independência em 1991.

Palavras-chave

Federação Russa, Política Externa, Ásia-Pacífico, Relações Internacionais.

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RUSSIA'S TURN TO THE EAST: ANALYSING THE DRIVERS OF MOSCOW'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION SINCE 1991¹

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Introduction

Since its emergence as an independent state in 1991, the Russian Federation has maintained a constant interest in the Asia-Pacific region. This interest has sometimes gone unnoticed due to the priority given to its so-called "Near Abroad" (*bližneye zarubežye* Ближнее Зарубежье)², and, to a lesser extent, to other areas. Although the Kremlin's efforts in the Asia-Pacific have evolved over time and intensified in recent years, Moscow's interest in the area is often seen as a reaction to the deterioration in Russian-Western relations following the country's decision to invade Ukraine. However, the reality is that Russian engagement in Southeast Asia dates back several decades and is the result of various factors influencing the foreign policy decision-making process.

In the first place, Russia's interest in its Asian neighbourhood is rooted in the expansionist periods of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. While the primary external threats perceived by Russia have historically come from the West, its interactions with Pacific powers have been a consistent feature of its diplomatic history, even under pro-Western leaders such as Peter the Great. Furthermore, the Russian territories that border the Asia-Pacific region —known collectively as the Russian Far East— are part of the Tsarist and Communist legacy³.

On the other hand, due to the ongoing consolidation of the so-called "vertical of power" or "power vertical" (*vertikal vlasti* Вертикаль власти)⁴, the President of Russia plays a dominant role in the foreign policy decision-making process, as stated in the Russian Constitution adopted in 1993 (Chapter 4: Art. 80-93) and the amendments of 2020.

¹ ACP – The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States / AIIB – Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank / APEC – Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation / APR – Asia-Pacific Region / ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations / BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa / CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States / EAS – East Asia Summit / EEF – Eastern Economic Forum / EDM – Eastern Military District / EFTA – European Free Trade Association / EU – European Union / G20 – Group of 20 / NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization / OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / OECD-EC – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-European Commission / OSK – Operational-Strategic Command (Obyedinennoye Strategicheskoye Komandovanie Ob'yedinnennoye strategicheskoye komandovanie) / QUAD – Quadrilateral Security Dialogue / SCO – Shanghai Cooperation Organization / SIPRI – Stockholm International Peace Research Institute / U.S.A / U.S – United States of America / UN Comtrade – United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database / USD – US dollar.

² "Near Abroad" is a concept used by the Russian Federation to refer to the countries of the former Soviet Union, with the purpose of asserting its perceived "right" to expand influence in this part of the world - see William Safire, "On Language: Near Abroad", *New York Times*, May 22, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/22/magazine/on-language-the-near-abroad.html>

³ For an overview of Russia's historical engagement in East Asia, see: Chris Miller, *We Shall Be Masters: Russian Pivots to East Asia from Peter the Great to Putin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

⁴ For further explanation of the concept, see: Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 7.



Nevertheless, it is important to note that Moscow's international strategies are also shaped by the existence of differing schools of thought, namely the Westernizers, the Eurasianists, the Nationalists or the Slavophiles (Kotz and Weir 2007, 285-86).

All these aspects should therefore be considered when analysing the evolution of Russian Foreign Policy towards the Asia-Pacific region. This background information is essential for understanding why the Kremlin initially displayed indifference towards the area during the first half of the 1990s under the pro-Western Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, before Yevgeny Primakov relaunched Russia-Asia relations. Similarly, throughout the 21st century, Vladimir Putin has made strengthening ties with Southeast Asian countries a foreign policy priority. This was part of an effort to re-establish *derzhavnost* (Державность)⁵. This term refers to regaining the great power status and influence lost after the Soviet Union's collapse.

At the same time, this evolution has been shaped by a range of factors, whose relative importance has shifted due to changes in the international system and in response to specific events. The fact that researchers have often analysed these factors in isolation has limited previous evaluations of Russian strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. Considering the current state of research, this article seeks to analyse Russian foreign policy towards the region to explain why enhancing its presence there has become a key priority within Moscow's current multi-vector foreign policy.

Accordingly, this article is structured in three main sections. It begins by tracing the evolution of the Russian Federation's approach to the Asia-Pacific region since 1991. The second section explores Russia's economic interests in the region, focusing on trade, foreign direct investment, and the development of the Russian Far East. The final section addresses Russia's security concerns in the area, from ongoing territorial disputes with regional nations, such as Japan, to contemporary regional tensions. Each section is supported by contextual background information reflecting how global dynamics have influenced the development of these policies. The conclusion will examine the interaction between domestic and systemic factors that have shaped Russian foreign policy towards the Asia-Pacific region. These systemic factors emerge from the international system itself.

2. Methodology

To analyse Russian foreign policy towards the Asia-Pacific region and highlighting the main elements that have shaped its evolution, a mixed-methods approach has been adopted. Mixed methods research is an approach in the social sciences. It involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. By combining the strengths of both, the researcher can draw more robust conclusions and gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell 2015, 2). Given the nature of the phenomenon

⁵ The concept "*derzhavnost*", which refers to Russia's sense of 'Greatpowerness', is considered the major component of the predominant geopolitical worldview in the country despite the existing debate. For a balanced discussion of the meaning of the concept, see: Bobo Lo, "Recasting the ideological debate", in *Russian Foreign Policy Making in the Post-Soviet Era – Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*, ed. by Bobo Lo (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave 2002), 52-56.



analysed in this article, this approach offers deeper insights than either form of data alone.

Qualitative data were gathered through an extensive literature and documentary review. On the one hand, the literature review was based on books written, as well as academic articles published by institutions specializing in Russian foreign policy and Asia-Pacific studies. On the other hand, the documentary review analysed official sources such as legislation or government documents (e.g., Foreign Policy Concepts, Energy Strategies or National Security Strategies of the Russian Federation), speeches relevant to the study (e.g., speeches of Presidents or Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation), and official reports from relevant organizations.

To determine whether relationships between variables exist, quantitative data (e.g., investment and trade data) were compiled and analysed. These data were obtained from national datasets (e.g., data from the Bank of Russia and the Russian Federal State Statistics Service, also known as Rosstat), regional datasets from the Asia-Pacific region (e.g., data from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and international datasets (e.g., data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute or the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database also known as UN Comtrade).

To integrate these two strands, this research employed a sequential explanatory design. The analysis was conducted in two main phases. The process began with the qualitative analysis of documentary sources and academic literature. This initial phase was crucial for building a theoretical framework and identifying key historical turning points, strategic concepts, and the dominant narratives within Russian foreign policy discourse over time.

The insights gained from this qualitative review then guided the quantitative data collection phase. For instance, the qualitative identification of the post-2014 "Russia's Turn to the East" as a critical juncture prompted a targeted collection of trade and investment statistics from that specific period to measure the economic dimension of this strategic shift. This sequential process ensured that the quantitative data was not collected in a vacuum but was instead used to explore and verify the patterns identified in the initial qualitative stage.

Finally, the two types of data were synthesized through triangulation to cross-validate the findings. Quantitative data, such as the increase in arms sales to Asian nations or the growth in trade with APEC, were used to substantiate and provide empirical weight to the qualitative arguments derived from official policy documents and academic literature. This approach ensures that the article's conclusions are not only supported by policy discourse but are also reflected in measurable trends, thereby enhancing the overall validity of the analysis.

To clearly present the findings of this mixed methods research and the various forms of data used, the results of the information analysed are also presented in charts (e.g., bar charts, line charts or pie charts), tables, and illustrative quotations where appropriate.



3. The Evolution of the Asia-Pacific Region's Importance to the Russian Federation

The volatility of the international environment, along with the wide variety of policies implemented by the different governments that have led the country since 1991, has influenced not only the evolution of Russian foreign policy, but also Moscow's attitude towards the Asia-Pacific region. For an efficient identification of the most relevant changes in the Kremlin's behaviour towards Southeast Asia, an examination of the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation approved to date is required. These official documents outline Russia's regional and thematic priorities, providing brief explanations of the key milestones that justified the formulation and intended implementation of each strategy.

Since the 'vertical of power' and the multidimensionality of Russian foreign policy discourse also play a crucial role, this section includes this section includes relevant background information beyond what is stated in the official documents. This context is essential for understanding the development of Russia's foreign policy decision-making during the administrations of Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999), Vladimir Putin (2000-2008), Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012), and Putin's current government since his re-election in 2012.

3.1 Russian Foreign Policy in the 1990s: Boris Yeltsin's Government (1991-1999)

Following its emergence as an independent state in 1991, the Russian Federation entered a period of crisis as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the consequent loss of its status as a global superpower. In such a fragile and transitional context, Moscow's main priority was to stabilise the country's situation in order to avoid economic collapse and maintain its privileged position over the former Soviet republics (Amirov 1999, 275).

To address this situation, the Kremlin adopted the so-called "Kozyrev Doctrine", named after its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Kozyrev. This new policy aimed at achieving full integration with the West, with the goal of restoring the desired social and economic stability. For this purpose, the strategy implied the recognition of a unipolar order of the international system under the hegemony of the United States, since obtaining international support was an essential condition for the survival of the country (Kozyrev 2005, 196-97).

Consequently, Russian interest in the Asia-Pacific region was limited during those years. As stated in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation approved during this period in 1993 —where only three Asian countries were considered important (China, India, and Japan)— Russia merely perceived the region as a partner in its transformation, which was required across all levels:

Acquiring a firm position in the Asia-Pacific Region, which has been rapidly transforming itself into a center of world politics and economy, comparable to the Atlantic region, would promote Russia's domestic reforms, enhance Russia's influence over the general



political and economic developments in the world, and help fulfill its unique Euro-Asian potential (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 1993).

The pro-Western orientation of this foreign policy provoked fierce opposition from Nationalist and Eurasianist sectors, ultimately leading to Kozyrev's dismissal in 1996. Unlike his predecessor, the new Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, would radically shift Russian foreign policy with the introduction of the so-called "Primakov Doctrine". This new strategy advocated for a more active foreign policy across multiple geographic areas. Its goal was to counterbalance American hegemony. Primakov perceived this hegemony as a threat to Russia's security, believing Washington intended to prevent Moscow from playing a significant role in the emerging multipolar order (Primakov 1996, 3-13).

Hence, there are two key elements of this doctrine that remain embedded in contemporary Russian Foreign Policy: multivectoralism and multipolarity. On the one hand, multivectorialism provides Moscow a strategical diversification of partnerships with the post-Soviet space as the main regional priority. On the other hand, aware of its limitations in directly confronting the United States, Russia advocates the creation of a multipolar world in which it can reassert itself as a major global actor. This explains Russia's interest in forging strategic alliances with emerging powers in the international system such as China or India. This is what Primakov referred to as the creation of a "Strategic Triangle" to counterbalance Western powers, which would provide Russia with the necessary partners to regain influence (Leichtova 2016, 23) (Mankoff 2009, 201). As an example of this, the signing of the Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New World Order in 1997 can be highlighted⁶.

At the same time, Russian participation in regional integration processes in Asia-Pacific started during Primakov's presence in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1991, Russia established formal relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), becoming a dialogue partner five years later. Regarded by the Kremlin as a useful mechanism for balancing power dynamics in the international system, ASEAN has increasingly been used by Moscow to revitalise its engagement with regional countries (Trenin 2014, 122).

Also in 1996, Russia co-founded the Shanghai Five alongside China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The Shanghai Five was later renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) following its membership expansion in 2001. Although regional security cooperation has remained the institution's primary strength since its inception, its agenda has expanded to include other areas —such as the energy sector— demonstrating the SCO's crucial role in Moscow's progress towards its goal of becoming a key regional player (Alonso Marcos and Nurimbetov 2021, 1-13).

To achieve fuller integration in such a developed region, Russia also joined its principal financial institution by becoming a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 1998. Beyond trade and investment openness, Russia's participation in APEC reflects both its economic needs and its desire to position itself as a fully integrated actor within the global economy (Dueñas Pulido 2003, 28-29).

⁶. For more information about the Joint Declaration, see the full document: "Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order", United Nations Digital Library, April 23, 1997, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/234074?ln=es>



3.2 Russian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev

Although both Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev encouraged cooperation with the West in combating shared threats during their presidencies, they consistently showed reluctance to build a partnership based on shared values and institutions with Western countries (Stent 2005, 272) (Trenin 2006, 87-96). As a result, the legacy of Primakov's multivector foreign policy —and the accompanying interest in the Asia-Pacific region— was preserved and even strengthened following Vladimir Putin's rise to power in 2000.

During the early years of his presidency, Putin pursued a pragmatic foreign policy focused primarily on economic growth and national security, given the backdrop of domestic instability and the growing threat of terrorism. In this context, securing cooperation with as many international partners as possible was essential (Donaldson, Noguee, and Nadkarni 2014, 369-70) (Tsygankov 2016, 138-39). Regarding the eastern vector, the Foreign Policy Concept adopted in 2000 stated that Russian foreign policy was "aimed at building up the positive dynamism of relations with the states of South East Asia". Achieving this objective required active Russian participation in the main regional integration institutions mentioned above, as well as the strengthening of bilateral ties with countries such as China, India, Japan, and South Korea (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2000).

However, Russian Foreign Policy became increasingly assertive during the second half of the decade, especially as a consequence of Western support to the "Colour Revolutions"⁷ that took place in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan between 2003 and 2005 (Donaldson, Noguee and Nadkarni 2014, 283-84) (Tsygankov 2016, 177-78). As Putin's speech at the 2007 Munich Conference demonstrates, Moscow began openly accusing the United States of unilateralism and reclaiming its role as a global power in the emerging international order. At the same time, China's rise led to a further intensification of Russian efforts towards the Asia-Pacific region, which steadily gained importance in both political and economic terms (Molchanov 2015, 52-53) (Sergunin 2016, 157).

In 2008, Dmitry Medvedev assumed the presidency and approved a new Foreign Policy Concept. In this updated document, alongside the continued emphasis on strengthening bilateral ties with key regional states such as China, Japan, and India, additional Southeast Asian countries —including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore— were identified as strategic partners. As it was established:

In the context of the Russian Federation's multi-vector foreign policy, the Asia-Pacific Region has important and ever-increasing significance, which is due to Russia's belonging to this dynamically developing region of the world, its interest in tapping its potential for the realization of programs aimed at economic development of Siberia and the Far East, the need for strengthening regional cooperation in the field of countering terrorism,

7. The concept "Colour Revolutions" is used to refer to the protests occurred in some former Soviet Union states to topple its authoritarian regimes during the 2000s like Georgia in 2003 with the Rose Revolution, Ukraine in 2004 with the Orange Revolution, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 with the Tulip Revolution – For a further explanation, see Lincoln A. Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).



ensuring security and maintaining a dialogue between civilizations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008)

During the 2008-2012 term, Medvedev faced an international context marked by growing rivalry between Moscow and Washington which was fuelled by Russian invasion of Georgia, the Kremlin rejection of Kosovo's Declaration of Independence, and NATO's proposal to eventually admit Kyiv and Tbilisi into the alliance (Donaldson, Nogee and Nadkarni 2014, 395-96). Several factors led Russia to increasingly view the Asia-Pacific as the new centre of global power. These included the severity of the global financial crisis, known as "The Great Recession," and the relative strength of Southeast Asian economies. This stood in contrast to the signs of weakness shown by Western economies (Østevik and Kuhrt 2018, 78). This situation was reflected in the Foreign Policy Concept approved by Putin in 2013, one year after his return to office:

The ability of the West to dominate world economy and politics continues to diminish. The global power and development potential is now more dispersed and is shifting to the East, primarily to the Asia-Pacific region. The emergence of new global economic and political actors with Western countries trying to preserve their traditional positions enhances global competition, which is manifested in growing instability in international relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013)

This shift formed an integral part of Russia's renewed global strategy, which aimed to position the country as a Eurasian power through closer cooperation with Asia:

Strengthening Russia's presence in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) is becoming increasingly important since Russia is an integral part of this fastest-developing geopolitical zone, toward which the center of world economy and politics is gradually shifting. Russia is interested in participating actively in APR integration processes, using the possibilities offered by the APR to implement programs meant to boost Siberian and Far Eastern economy, creating a transparent and equitable security architecture in the APR and cooperation on a collective basis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013)

Examples of this shift include Russia's initiative to establish financial institutions such as the BRICS New Development Bank in 2014, the national creation of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF), and the country's accession to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2015 (Korolev 2016, 59). As a result of the new strategy adopted in this context, Moscow sought to reassert its *derzhavnost* —the notion of great power status— and reclaim what the Kremlin perceives as "its deserved place in the world", regardless of potential consequences. In line with this ambition, the Russian Federation annexed Crimea in 2014 and intervened militarily in the Syrian Civil War in 2015, citing the need to counterbalance what it viewed as the dominance imposed by the United States and its Western allies in global affairs (Tsygankov 2018, 241-43) (Forsberg 2018, 329). This assertiveness was complemented by a narrative aimed at Southeast Asian nations, framing Russia's pivot not merely as a pragmatic choice but as the embrace of a Eurasian identity that offered an alternative to the Western-led global order (Tsvetov 2016, 55-56).

As stated in the Foreign Policy Concept of 2016, the "new world" was defined as a world where a multipolar international structure was emerging and where "global power was



shifting towards the Asia-Pacific region eroding the global economic and political dominance of the traditional western powers” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016). In this context, Russia opted to maintain its strategy and intensify its engagement with the Asian region:

Russia views strengthening its positions in the Asia-Pacific Region and stepping up relations with its States as a foreign policy area of strategic importance, which is attributable to Russia belonging to this vibrant geopolitical region. Russia is interested in participating proactively in the integration processes in Asia-Pacific, using the possibilities it offers to implement socioeconomic development programmes in Russia’s Siberia and Far East, and creating an inclusive, open, transparent and equitable collective security and cooperation architecture in Asia-Pacific (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016)

As an illustration of the implementation of this policy, it is noteworthy that President Putin attended the 13th East Asia Summit, held in Singapore in 2018. This marked the first time a President of the Russian Federation personally participated in the plenary session of the regional forum since Russia’s accession in 2005⁸.

Currently, Russia’s decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine despite foreseeable consequences makes clearer that the Kremlin’s implementation of the mentioned strategy has continued so far. In fact, expanding its presence in the Asia-Pacific region and strengthening ties with regional states is not only of paramount importance to Russia, but it can now be also considered a strategic necessity. Following the adoption of the new Foreign Policy Concept in March 2023, it is likely that Moscow will continue to intensify its efforts in the region as part of a broader attempt to pivot away from Europe and contribute to shaping a new world order:

A comprehensive deepening of ties and enhancement of coordination with friendly sovereign global centres of power and development, which are located on the Eurasian continent and committed to approaches which coincide in principle with the Russian approaches to a future world order and solutions for key problems of the world politics, is particularly important for achieving strategic goals and major objectives of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2023)

4. Russian Economic Interests in the Asia-Pacific Region

As previously mentioned, the firm economic growth experienced by Southeast Asian states in recent years is one of the most significant events that have influenced international relations in the 21st century. Therefore, Moscow has several interests at stake in such an attractive economic market. Considering the available data, it can be observed that both Russian exports to Asia-Pacific countries and imports from such nations have progressively increased, contrasting with the declining trade trend observed

⁸ About Putin’s attendance to the East Asia Summit, see “East Asia Summit: Vladimir Putin attended the plenary session of the 13th East Asia Summit (EAS)”, President of Russia, November 15, 2018, <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/countries/SG/events/59128>



with Western partners. In addition, data reveal that China, Japan, and Korea are Russia's most important trading partners in the region (see Table 4.1).

Table 1. Share of the Russian Federation's Exports and Imports by Main Partners in the Asia-Pacific Region and the West (%)

	Russian exports				Russian imports			
	2000	2010	2015	2020	2000	2010	2015	2020
China	5,1	5,1	5,3	14,6	2,8	17,0	19,1	23,7
Korea	0,9	2,6	3,9	3,7	1,1	3,2	2,5	3,1
Japan	2,7	3,2	4,2	2,7	1,7	4,5	3,7	3,1
Germany	9,0	6,3	7,4	5,5	11,5	11,7	11,2	10,1
Italy	7,0	6,9	6,5	3,0	3,6	4,4	4,5	4,4
The Netherlands	4,2	13,6	11,9	7,4	2,2	1,9	1,7	1,6
APEC	15,1	16,9	22,8	27,9	16,1	34,1	37,9	42,4
Eurozone	35,8	53,5	52,0	33,7	32,9	41,7	41,3	34,0

Sources:

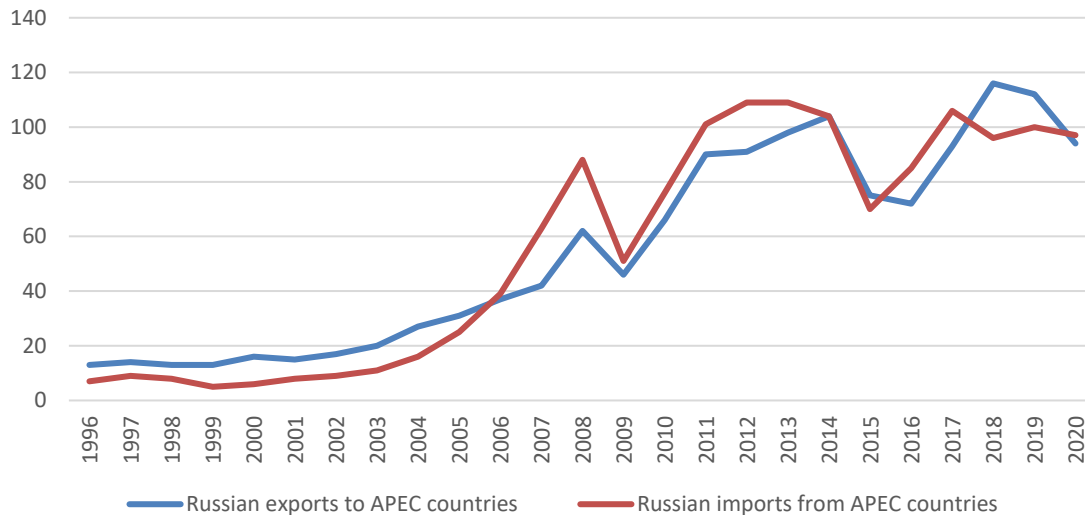
Data from Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *Rossiiskii Statisticheskii Ezhegodnik 2017* [Russian Statistical Yearbook], (Moscow: Federal State Statistics Service - Rosstat, 2017), 223-224, <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/torg17.pdf>

Data from Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *Rossiiskii Statisticheskii Ezhegodnik 2022* [Russian Statistical Yearbook], (Moscow: Federal State Statistics Service - Rosstat, 2022), 587, https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Ejegovnik_2022.pdf

At the multilateral level, Russian trade with APEC experienced significant growth in the early 2010s, largely as a consequence of the aforementioned "Great Recession" (see Chart 4.1). In contrast, trade between Russia and ASEAN peaked in 2014, coinciding with the deterioration of Moscow's relations with Western countries after the annexation of Crimea and the military intervention in territories of Eastern Ukraine (see Chart 4.2). However, despite this growth, experts note that Russia's overall economic footprint in the region remains modest, limiting its ability to build influence through trade and investment when compared to established economic powers like China, Japan, or the United States (Rangsimaporn 2012, 326).



Chart 1. Evolution of Russian trade with APEC (in USD millions)



Sources: Data from Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, "StatsAPEC: Bilateral Linkages Database". Accessed October 15, 2023, http://statistics.apec.org/index.php/bilateral_linkage/bld_result/37

Chart 2. Evolution of Russian trade with ASEAN (2010-2020) (in USD millions)



Sources: Data from United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database, "Free access to detailed global trade data". Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://comtradeplus.un.org/>

On the other hand, Moscow has a keen interest in promoting its arms sales in a region where military modernization efforts currently predominate. Considering the data provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Russia has been by far Southeast Asia's largest arms supplier over the past 20 years, with several states in the region heavily reliant on Russian weaponry (see Table 4.2). At the same



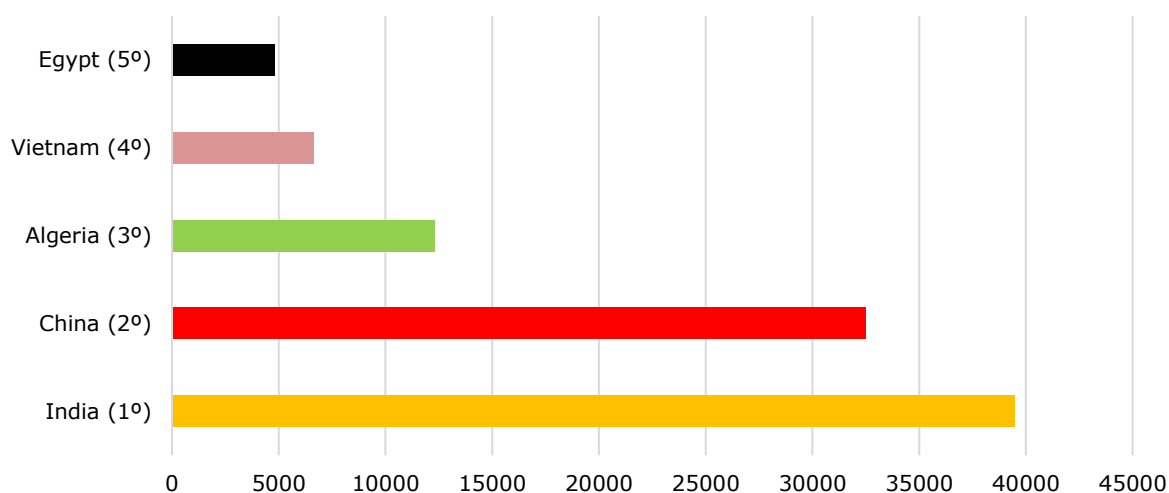
time, alongside Egypt and Algeria, three Asian countries rank among the top foreign customers of Russian weapons: India, China, and Vietnam (see Chart 4.3).

Table 2. Arms Imports from Russia by Southeast Asian Countries (2000-2022) (in USD millions)

	Total arm imports in millions (2000–2022)	Arm imports from Russia (2000–2022)	% imports from Russia
North Korea	93	93	100%
Vietnam	8168	6607	81%
China	40827	32487	80%
India	61304	39479	64%
Laos	269	130	48%
Myanmar	4529	1962	43%
Malaysia	4401	1274	29%
Indonesia	7906	1147	15%

Sources: Data from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database". Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.55163/SAFC1241>

Chart 3. Main Destinations of Russian Arms Exports in the 21st Century (2000-2022) (in USD millions)



Sources: Data from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database". Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.55163/SAFC1241>

Nevertheless, the main opportunity for Russia to project itself as a major player in the region lies in the energy field. As one of the largest energy suppliers in the world, Moscow

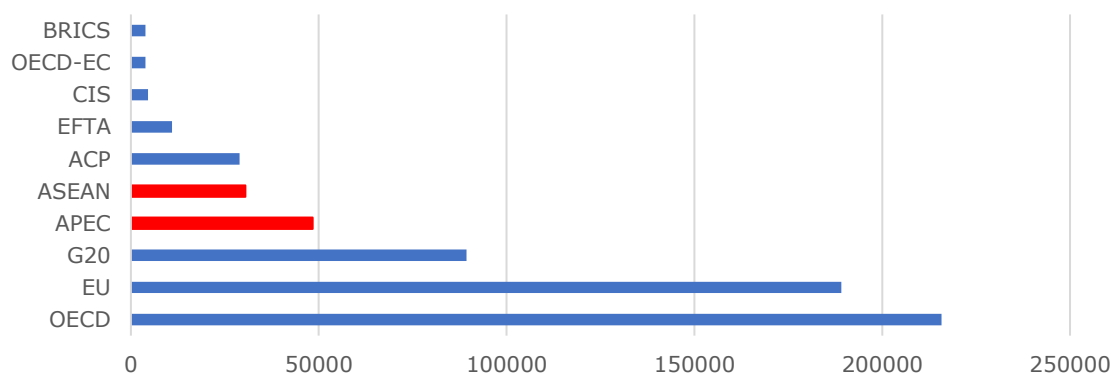


finds in the Asia-Pacific region a key market, especially following the measures adopted by the European Union (EU) to reduce its reliance on Russian oil and gas. In 2009, the *Energy Strategy of Russia for the period up to 2030* set the objective of increasing oil and gas exports to Southeast Asia to 25% and 20%, respectively (Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation 2010). Currently, the goal set by the existing *Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2035*, approved in 2020, has raised that target to 50% for both resources (Government of the Russian Federation 2020).

To achieve these aims, Russia has launched several projects such as the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline—which exports crude oil to the Asian Pacific markets of China, Japan, and Korea—, the Sakhalin I and II projects—to export oil and liquefied gas to a wide range of countries— and the Power of Siberia pipeline—which allows Russia to deliver gas to China—. Regarding the latter, although negotiations between Moscow and Beijing had taken place for years, it was not until 2014 that both parties signed the agreement for the construction of the pipeline. Moscow's willingness to meet Beijing's terms was largely due to the deterioration of its relations with the West, combined with other factors such as the shale gas revolution, the EU's Third Energy Package, and the emergence of liquefied natural gas producers (Ruiz González 2014, 16).

To develop these projects, major structural reforms are required in eastern parts of the Russian Federation. In 2013, Putin declared the modernization of the Russian Far East—a region bordering the Asia-Pacific whose underdevelopment poses a severe threat to Moscow—a national priority. Due to the urgency of the matter, attracting investment from Southeast Asian states is viewed as the fastest solution (Mankoff 2009, 67-71). For this reason, the Kremlin's main efforts have focused on promoting cooperation between the Russian Far East and the Asia-Pacific region, as it is shown by the continuous launch of "Development of the Far East and Baikal Region" plans and funding mechanisms, the creation of the Ministry for the Development of the Far East, and the annual celebration of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok—a Russian city that hosted the APEC summit in 2012— (Korolev 2016, 53-63).

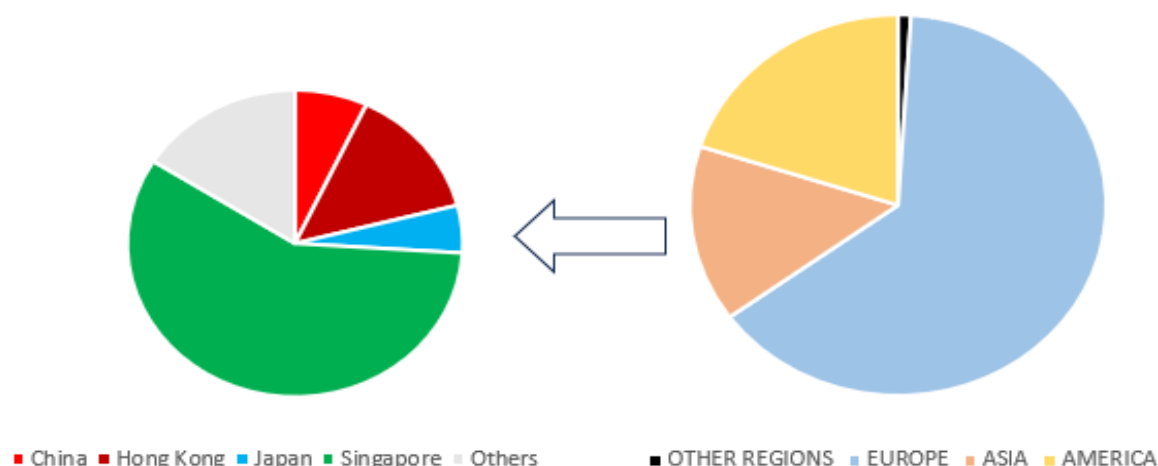
Chart 4. Foreign Direct Investment Flows into the Russian Federation by Regional and Global Institutions (2011-2021) (in USD millions)



Sources: Data from Bank of Russia, "Statistics: Flows by Geographical and Economic Areas", 2023. Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/>



Chart 5. Foreign Direct Investment Flows into the Russian Federation from Asia, by Country (2011-2021) (in USD millions)



Sources: Data from Bank of Russia, "Statistics: Flows by Geographical and Economic Areas", 2023. Accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/>

5. Russian Security Concerns in the Asia-Pacific Region

In its early years as an independent state, the Russian Federation identified in the Asia-Pacific region some elements of relevance in terms of security: territorial disputes with Japan, the persistent presence of the United States in the area, the rise of China, the nuclearization of South Asia, India's intransigence on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control issues, and the importance of the region in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking (Baranovsky 1999, 25-31) (Azizian 2007, 25-26). Many of these concerns remain relevant today.

Disputes over the Sakhalin and Kuril Islands—known in Japan as the Northern Territories—continue despite ongoing peace talks and dialogue mechanisms between Moscow and Tokyo. For the Kremlin, these territories have gained strategic significance due to shifting power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region. Beyond Russia's distrust of one of the United States key regional allies, these enclaves secure Russian access to the Sea of Okhotsk and the Kamchatka Peninsula, where several military bases are located (Hamzah, Esmail and Abbas 2020, 294-99). The large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has further complicated prospects for any agreement.

As reflected in nearly every Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation to date, one of the permanent security concerns for the Kremlin in the region is the Korean issue. Beyond the importance of avoiding a conventional conflict and instability in the region, the situation provides Moscow with an opportunity to position itself as a constructive player in regional security-building and enhance its international standing (Lo 2019, 11-12). However, Russia's role as mediator is constrained by its lack of impartiality, owing to historical ties with Pyongyang dating back to the Soviet era, recently strengthened relations amid shared international isolation, and the Seoul-Washington alliance.



Another significant Russian security concern is Washington's presence in the region, particularly following the prioritization of the Indo-Pacific strategy in U.S. foreign policy as a response to China's rise as both a regional and global power. A clear illustration of this is Russia's rejection of the Indo-Pacific concept, described by Moscow as a Western containment strategy against China in an attempt to divide the Asia-Pacific region into opposing blocs reminiscent of those during the Cold War (Melvin 2021, 3-4). As pointed out by current Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in 2020 at the Raisina Dialogue:

A new concept was coined: Indo-Pacific strategies. Not Asia-Pacific but Indo-Pacific strategies. Initiated and promoted first of all by the United States, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea. When we asked the initiators about the difference between Indo-Pacific strategies, and Asia-Pacific Regional Cooperation, they said, "Well, Indo-Pacific is more open, more democratic." If you look at it closely, I wouldn't go into the details, it is not at all the case. It's an attempt, I think, to reconfigure the existing structures in Asia-Pacific region. And to move from ASEAN-centred consensus seeking forms of interaction, to something which would be divisive" (Lavrov, 2020)

Consequently, the Indo-Pacific concept and the resulting Quad security format would not only divert Asia's future away from Eurasia—where Moscow plays a central role—but would also lead to a regional order centred around Washington and its allies, thereby weakening Russia's ambitions to pivot to a region where its influence would likely be marginal (Melvin 2021, 11-12).

Apart from safeguarding its interests and countering U.S. power, Russia's negative perception of the Indo-Pacific concept is also a result of its growing dependence on China. Indeed, Moscow's partnership with Beijing is crucial for its foreign policy as it enhances Russia's status on the global stage, making its Asia-Pacific policy almost an extension of its relationship with its neighbour. Consequently, Russia follows China's lead on key issues where Beijing's interests are at stake, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the South China Sea dispute, and tensions surrounding Taiwan (Lo 2019, 6-7).

However, Sino-Russian relations have experienced alternating periods of harmony and conflict, including the Sino-Soviet split during the second half of the last century, which has left a legacy of mistrust between the two countries due to the wide common border and their geostrategic ambitions. In this respect, there are several Russian concerns like Chinese demographic pressure on the Russian Far East or the growing rivalry between both states in areas like the Arctic and Central Asia (Pardo de Santayana 2020, 159). Despite these challenges, both sides decided to set aside their differences to achieve their common goal of counterbalancing U.S. influence in the international arena. Thus, the strategic partnership between China and Russia would be better described as a momentary axis of convenience rather than a formal alliance.

For all these reasons, in 2010 the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation established the Joint Strategic Command *OSK East* —also known as the Eastern Military District (EMD)— by merging the Siberian Military District and the Far Eastern Military District with the Pacific Fleet. Following this decision, the number of large-scale military drills conducted by Moscow in the region has increased significantly (Weitz 2019, 917-19). To maintain strategic deterrence in the area, this permanent military presence is tasked with guarding the disputed Kuril Islands and securing the land borders critical to



the Kremlin's desired control over the Russian Far East (Rumer, Sokolsky and Vladicic 2020, 15-19).

Conclusion

In conclusion, a confluence of several factors has turned the Asia-Pacific region into a key vector within the multi-vector foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The Kremlin views the region as a strategic enclave as it offers a wide array of political, economic, and security-related advantages that have grown in significance as a result of various international developments.

At the political level, the Asia-Pacific region is extremely important for Russia in achieving its ultimate foreign policy objective: regaining a prominent role in the international system at the expense of the West in general, and the United States in particular. For this purpose, aware of its inability to confront US hegemony directly, Moscow considers the establishment of a multipolar world order essential to restoring Russian *derzhavnost*. The rise of Southeast Asian countries and the resulting reconfiguration of the international order present a clear opportunity for this objective to be pursued.

Furthermore, Russia's strategy in the region could be summed up by its rejection of the Indo-Pacific concept due to its perception as a Western containment strategy against China. Beijing is Moscow's main partner. However, historical mistrust between the two neighbours remains. Consequently, the Kremlin views the Asia-Pacific region as an opportunity to retain strategic flexibility. This flexibility is essential for Russia to promote itself as a major player, even as cooperation with China continues to be the foundation of its regional policy.

To achieve diversification, Russia faces several disadvantages such as its limited historical presence in the region in comparison with China or the United States. This is also aggravated by the hostility of the latter two countries towards Moscow's presence in the region and their capacity to influence local countries. Therefore, Russian participation in the Asia-Pacific multilateral framework could strengthen its position not only in a region that is widely accepted as the centre of geopolitical shift, but also on the international stage. While APEC and ASEAN may be more helpful for Moscow to develop ties with Asia-Pacific nations due to the importance of the economic factor, the SCO is also essential to promote its interests. Hence, a multilateral approach in Russian Foreign Policy towards the region is expected to continue.

At the economic level, beyond the importance of the region as a source of investment for the needed development of the Russian Far East, the Asia-Pacific region represents a major market at a time when it is essential for Moscow to diversify its customer base. Regarding arms trade, although the war in Ukraine has undermined Russia's reputation as a reliable supplier, Russia still retains opportunities to maintain key clients like Vietnam—a country where Western states are reluctant to sell arms and where China is not perceived as an acceptable supplier. It may also find opportunities with India, whose preference for strategic partnerships over formal alliances also offers Moscow a chance to achieve the diversification and try to counterbalance Beijing's influence. On the other hand, regarding energy trade, the significance of the Asia-Pacific has grown substantially



for Russia considering its increasing international isolation and the pressing need to find alternatives to Western markets. The region offers a viable solution to offset the decline in energy exports to Europe, particularly in oil and natural gas.

Regarding security and defence, aside from the importance of maintaining stability in one of its immediate neighbourhoods, the Asia-Pacific region is of particular interest to Russia due to territorial disputes with Japan over the Sakhalin and Kuril Islands, as well as the threat posed to Russian national security by the deteriorating situation in the Russian Far East. These concerns are further heightened by two major geopolitical dynamics: the rise of China and the persistent military presence of the United States in the region. Other minor but significant security concerns of the Russian Federation in the Asia-Pacific region that have persisted during these decades are the Korean issue and the South Asia's nuclear challenges, both of which have consistently influenced the formulation of Russia's defence policy in the region over the past decades.

To conclude, although Russia's interest in the region is the result of a gradual process, it is evident that this interest has intensified because of some developments at the international level. While at the economic level the importance of the region increased in the 2010s due to the effects of "The Great Recession" and the deterioration of Russian-Western relations as a result of the invasion of Ukraine in 2014, at the security level it has gained significant importance since the adoption of Indo-Pacific strategies and the fact that many powerful international actors like China and the U.S.A are increasing their presence in the region.

In a prospective analysis, considering Moscow's isolation because of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine started in 2022 and the enduring strategic weight of the Asia-Pacific, a region from which no global power can afford to be absent, it is foreseeable that Russian efforts towards the region will be increased in the short and medium term. The Kremlin's pivot to the East may thus be expected to continue, as part of a broader attempt to redefine Russia's role within an evolving international order.

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THE BREAK IN RUSSIAN–AMERICAN RELATIONS: ANALYZING THE DIPLOMATIC TRAIL TO THE IRAQ WAR

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to analyze the diplomatic course to the Iraq War and the divergence in Russian-American relations with a focus on diplomatic activities in January, February and March 2003. To this end, the article discussed Russia's opposition to the use of military force with reference to its evolving foreign policy doctrine and, more specifically, its long-standing and complex relations with the Baath regime in Iraq. Following this discussion, the article argued that this opposition originated from realistic concerns, domestic pressure and doctrinal differences. In this way, it was argued that Kremlin's diplomatic gestures tilted towards multilateralism, non-intervention and the UN Security Council as mechanisms that could secure its interests. However, the review of statements from the Russian president and diplomats suggested that they were careful not to harm Russian-American relations. Therefore, Russia benefited from the anti-war consensus at the UN because it increased the cost of unilateral military action and prevented a direct diplomatic confrontation with Washington. Following these arguments, it was also concluded that the outcome of this diplomatic prelude was an early sign of multipolarity in the 21st century.

Keywords

Russian foreign policy, Iraq War, UN Security Council, diplomacy, Russian-American relations.

Resumo

Este estudo é uma tentativa de analisar o processo diplomático que conduziu à Guerra do Iraque e a divergência nas relações entre a Rússia e os Estados Unidos, com foco nas atividades diplomáticas em Janeiro, Fevereiro e Março de 2003. Para tal, o artigo discute a oposição da Rússia ao uso da força militar, com referência à evolução da sua doutrina de política externa e, mais especificamente, às suas relações complexas e de longa data com o regime Baath no Iraque. Após essa discussão, o artigo argumentou que essa oposição teve origem em preocupações realistas, pressão interna e diferenças doutrinárias. Dessa forma, argumentou-se que os gestos diplomáticos do Kremlin se inclinaram para o multilateralismo, a não intervenção e o Conselho de Segurança da ONU como mecanismos que poderiam garantir os seus interesses. No entanto, a análise das declarações do presidente russo e dos diplomatas sugeriu que estes foram cuidadosos para não prejudicar as relações entre a Rússia e os Estados Unidos. Portanto, a Rússia tirou partido do consenso antiguerra na ONU, pois aumentou o custo da ação militar unilateral e impediu um confronto diplomático direto com Washington. Seguindo esses argumentos, concluiu-se também que o resultado desse prelúdio diplomático foi um sinal precoce da multipolaridade no século XXI.



Palavras-chave

Política externa russa, Guerra do Iraque, Conselho de Segurança da ONU, diplomacia, relações russo-americanas.

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THE BREAK IN RUSSIAN–AMERICAN RELATIONS: ANALYZING THE DIPLOMATIC TRAIL TO THE IRAQ WAR

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Introduction

The present study is an attempt to reassess the US campaign for the 2003 invasion of Iraq from a Russian perspective. In this regard, the study will examine the reactions of key Russian officials to this military invasion in the period leading up to the invasion. A discussion of these reactions can provide a context which shows the diplomatic course to the Invasion of Iraq in March 2003. The following discussions argue that Russia's opposition can be explained, on the one hand, in the context of Russian foreign policy doctrine at that time and, more specifically, in the context of Russia's long-standing and complex relations with Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Accordingly, the article argues that Russia's opposition to the imminent military action was rooted in Moscow's Middle East policy and doctrinal differences with the United States regarding the use of force and military intervention to reach international goals.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks which led to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq by a US-led military coalition, reinforced an international political paradigm in which the use of military force and regime change were more likely in the future. Thus, the dawn of the twenty-first century presented a bleak outlook for the world and set a controversial precedent for the invasion of sovereign states by major powers. In this regard, a great deal of research has been written on the Iraq War in recent years, assessing its causes and circumstances from conflicting perspectives. On March 22, 2003, in his radio address, President George W. Bush attempted to clarify the overall structure behind the US massive military campaign by saying that the goal of this mission was "to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction [WMDs], to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people" (White House Archives, 2003). This was despite the fact that, prior to the invasion, the UN inspection team had failed to find convincing evidence of the existence of such weapons in Iraq (see, UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 2003). Given the history of tensions with Iraq, the emphasis on the risk of Iraqi WMD program, including chemical and possibly nuclear weapons, had become an integral part of the American "containment" policy against the Saddam regime since 1991 (Zilinskas, 1995; Black, 1999). After February 28, 1991, when a coalition of 42 countries ended the occupation of Kuwait, some criticized the administration of George H. W. Bush for failing to continue the campaign and possibly overthrow Saddam. When the Gulf War began, Bush made it clear that the goal was to liberate Kuwait and not to occupy Iraq, but he also stated that his administration was determined to destroy Saddam Hussein's nuclear bomb potential and his chemical weapons facilities (Rosenthal, 1991). Later, Bush and his national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, argued that the continuation of attacks after the liberation of Kuwait would certainly undermine the alliance and cause severe



casualties for the coalition forces (see, Bush & Scowcroft, 1998). Indeed, the idea of toppling Saddam's regime seemed risky and impractical at the time.

However, the conclusion remained among the Americans that the Iraqi regime was still a problem. While regime change was temporarily removed from Washington's agenda, to ensure this containment, the British and American governments launched a series of punitive measures and military campaigns against Iraq in the 1990s. These measures included economic sanctions through the UN Security Council, the enforcement of no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq and the regular inspections of targets inside Iraq by the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM). Hence, the tension between Britain and, in particular, the United States with the Baath regime of Iraq escalated throughout the 1990s. The peak of these tensions appeared in December 1998 when the UK and the US launched Operation Desert Fox with airstrikes on targets deemed suspicious by UNSCOM. These airstrikes were supported by another major development regarding Iraq that occurred on October 31, 1998 when President Bill Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act. The act that had been approved by a majority vote at the US Congress and Senate explicitly stated that the US government should "support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq" (Iraq Liberation Act, 1998). Until then, the US government had been regularly trying to weaken or even overthrow Saddam Hussein by conducting covert operations and supporting insurgencies in Iraq. In fact, CIA assessments indicated that Iraq still posed a threat to American interests after the 1991 ceasefire (see, Ignatius, 2003). But the signing of the Liberation Act made regime change an official policy of the United States. Therefore, the Clinton administration removed the main obstacle to the possibility of a military attack on Iraq. In this vein, the September 11 attacks and the start of the so-called "War on Terror" brought this possibility to the fore. Interestingly, in October 2002, the Bush administration capitalized on this act, among other things, to justify the invasion and successfully passed the Iraq Resolution.

Thus, by the time George W. Bush took office in 2000, regime change had become the official policy of the United States towards Iraq. At that time, the general expectation was that the Republican administration would take measures that were more aggressive in dealing with Iraq, not least because some advisers who were close to the president were obsessed with the concept of military action to remove Saddam from power. A notable case was the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who was responsible for directing George Bush's War on Terror. During the first emergency meeting of the National Security Council on September 11, he had famously asked, "why the United States should not go against Iraq and not just al-Qaeda" (Kampfner, 2003, p. 156). Thus, from the very beginning, military plans for an invasion of Iraq had been prepared in the Pentagon even though there was no proven connection between Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi regime. However, the leading members of the administration tried to convince the outsiders of this connection. For example, on September 14, 2003, Vice President Dick Cheney said to a conservative think tank that "he (Saddam) had long established ties with Al-Qaeda" (NBC News, 2003). Following the first stages of the American campaign in Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban regime, the Bush administration made extensive efforts to galvanize American public opinion, justify the invasion of Iraq and garner support from allies with the aim of organizing a political-military coalition. In a well-known example, on February 5, 2003, the US Secretary of State Collin Powell appeared at the UN Security Council to describe evidence based on "solid intelligence" about Iraqi



WMDs which failed to convince the members and was later proved to be false and misguided (see, White House News Release, 2003).

As noted above, Russia along with some major countries such as France, Germany and China opposed the campaign and warned of its consequences for the region and the world. Thus, as the invasion began, President Vladimir Putin said in a Kremlin statement that the campaign would cause widespread humanitarian and environmental disasters and his foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, called it unjustified. To be clear, Russia's objection to the use of military force against Iraq must be considered within the Russian Middle Eastern policy and Moscow's complex interaction with the Iraqi government from 1991 to 2003.

Iraq: A bone of contention in Russian foreign policy in the Middle East

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the new Russian Federation attempted under President Boris Yeltsin to maintain the former ties that had been developed during the Soviet times. This became more evident in the second half of Yeltsin's presidency and particularly in 1996 when he chose Yevgeny Primakov to lead the Russian foreign policy (see, for instance, Simha, 2015). Primakov was a substitute for Andrei Kozyrev whose friendly gesture towards the West and especially the United States was a matter of concern for Russian nationalists. Kozyrev's nationalist critics such as the conservative members of the Russian State Duma claimed that his Atlanticist approach had failed to adequately address their concerns about NATO expansion and developments in Iraq (Lynch, 2001). Therefore, the new foreign minister gave priority to further strategic autonomy and multilateralism with special emphasis on India and China as emerging powers in the post-Cold War era. This turn in strategy was later called the 'Primakov Doctrine' (see, Delong, 2020; Rumer, 2019). As a diplomat, Primakov was also famous for his pragmatism and his close knowledge of the Arab World as he had previously served in key diplomatic positions across the Middle East. With respect to the Middle Eastern conflicts and particularly the case of Iraq, Russian foreign policy showed a strong opposition to military intervention. Hence, despite Yeltsin's early efforts to maintain security and economic cooperation with the United States, Russia's emphasis on non-intervention gradually drew the country away from the American foreign policy in the Balkans and the Middle East.

Historically, the Arab World was a theater for Soviet-American rivalries and, in this theater, Iraq was geographically and politically closer to the USSR. In this case, Russia's close relations with the Iraqi regime, which was a legacy from the Cold War, became a bone of contention in Russian-American diplomatic gestures throughout the 1990s. In fact, these confrontations captivated many international scholars in that decade (see, for instance, Freedman, 2001; Nizamedden 1999; Rumer, 2000; Shaffer, 2001; Vassiliev, 1993). These scholars often emphasized that the revival of relations with Iraq was ultimately inevitable in the post-Cold War era. However, a review of records suggests that Soviet-Iraqi relations were always interesting to Western political scientists. For instance, in 1980, Francis Fukuyama analyzed the depth of these relations since 1968 and concluded that Iraq was really "an ideal location for the expansion of Soviet influence" (Fukuyama, 1980, p. 5). In his analysis, Fukuyama stressed factors such as oil resources, the firm position of the Baath Party, Iraq's overall political and military



influence and the country's need for Soviet military hardware. However, he also indicated the 'considerable weakness' in Soviet influence in Iraq. In fact, Primakov's observations from the same historical period may corroborate Fukuyama's theory (see, Primakov, 2009, pp. 301-324). This being said, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union maintained close military and economic ties with the Iraqi regime and, despite criticisms from Washington, this support continued even after the occupation of Kuwait in 1990. However, one should note that the Soviet Union ultimately supported the UN Security Council Resolutions 660 and 665 which condemned the invasion of Kuwait and authorized a naval blockade against Iraq. This indicated that ideology was then a less significant factor in the Soviet Union's foreign policy towards the end of the Cold War and multilateralism and the application of UN mechanisms were becoming more relevant. Replacing the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation maintained this approach especially in the case of Iraqi crisis.

Naturally, with its economic potential and vast energy resources, Iraq remained a key piece of the Russian foreign policy puzzle in the post-Soviet era. In hindsight, therefore, one might see that Kremlin's support for Baghdad put this tendency in direct opposition to the more aggressive stance that the Anglo-American front promoted. In this political climate, Yeltsin's position on Iraq was sometimes coupled with his opposition to Washington's policies which often appeared in the form of unilateral sanctions and military escalations. Nevertheless, as some scholars have shown, the Russian foreign policy followed a complex logic. In one case, in 1996, Primakov raised the question of Iraq's seven-billion-dollar debt to the Soviet Union. Likewise, in his analysis of post-Soviet foreign policy, Nikolai Zlobin has argued that Moscow regarded this massive debt as an instrument to exert influence on Saddam Hussein (Zlobin, 2004, p. 91). In fact, the urgent need to restore Russian economy, in a situation where Western financial support was visibly insufficient, prompted Primakov to salvage relations with the former Cold War allies. But the question of Iraq and its delusional leader remained problematic. In "Russia and the Arabs", a memoir that documents his diplomatic experience in the Middle East, Primakov wrote extensively about "the Phenomenon that was Saddam Hussein". During his long career, he had met with Hussein on several occasions and therefore could offer an analysis of his personality. Recalling Russia's fractured influence in Iraq, Primakov had this to say:

"But without meaning to belittle the influence that Russia had, it has to be said that Saddam continued to believe in his lucky star, in his own foresight, and ultimately in Allah, who would save him from harm. What sustained his belief was not blind hope, but his realpolitik certainty that, given the prevailing sentiment in the Arab world—and indeed the Americans' own interests—the United States had nothing to gain from bringing about his downfall" (Primakov, 2009, p. 318).

According to Primakov, Russia made several attempts in the 1990s to prevent air strikes on Iraq. But, as mentioned earlier, the reemergence of hawkish Republicans in 2000 (mainly figures such as Cheney and Rumsfeld) and the 9/11 terrorist attacks created an immediate crisis in the Middle East. Moreover, in a general sense, Yeltsin's Russia had already become increasingly aware of its fundamental differences with the West and its potential to exert more influence globally. This awareness along with later developments promoted a new course for Russia's foreign posture in the new century. On March 26, 2000, Vladimir Putin became president of Russia and, with his leadership, the foreign



policy discourse became more assertive while still showing some pragmatism. Initially, Putin supported George Bush's War on Terror and provided support for the United States during the occupation of Afghanistan. However, the relations took a turn for the worse when, in December 2001, Washington informed Moscow that the United States would soon withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The withdrawal from the treaty could jeopardize the Russian strategic parity in terms of ballistic missile arsenal. To make matters worse, the following year, the NATO 17th summit was held in Prague during which the organization reaffirmed its post-Cold War Open Door Policy. During a NATO press conference in Prague, Bush supported the admission of new countries to the organization and also indicated that the United States would "lead a coalition of the willing to disarm Saddam Hussein" (see, NATO Press Conference, 2002). Following these developments, Russia did not support the Iraq War and, as some Pentagon documents later suggested, even provided the Iraqis with intelligence about the coalition's plans and troop movements (Burns, 2006). Therefore, since 2003, Russian foreign policy became evidently more divergent. In what follows, this study will revisit some statements from Russian and American officials to discuss their positions in the weeks leading to the war.

The Iraq War and Putin's break with the US

As noted earlier, speculations and informal statements about the Bush administration's intention to go to war with Iraq had been circulating since the September 11 attacks. But the US government had not yet made an official attempt to publicize the idea before Bush's address to the UN General Assembly on September 12, 2002. In his address, while praising his administration's performance in the Afghanistan campaign, Bush referred to the dangers that he believed threatened the world and, then, linked these threats to Iraq:

"In one place -- in one regime -- we find all these dangers, in their most lethal and aggressive forms, exactly the kind of aggressive threat the United Nations was born to confront". (The White House Press Release, 2002).

After months of diplomatic struggle and lengthy media debates, the invasion of Iraq began on March 20, 2003, and lasted until May 1 of that year when Bush gave his famous "Mission Accomplished" speech. Nevertheless, in the months and weeks leading up to this massive operation, many high-profile figures took explicit and sometimes alarmist positions on the war ahead. Here, the study will focus on the official position of the Russian government including statements from President Putin and his Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov that appeared in the press within a short period before the war. Discussing these reactions can provide a context for understanding the diplomatic background to the Invasion of Iraq.

In 1998, Igor Ivanov succeeded Primakov as foreign minister. He took the helm of Russian foreign policy when it had become more assertive and independent from American and Western world policy. For instance, during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, Ivanov expressed Russia's opposition to these developments which were described as a breach of international law (Averre, 2009). In a similar vein, he had also criticized the 1998 bombing of Iraq which were carried out despite Russia's opposition. But, in January 2003, amid the Anglo-American propaganda campaign against the Iraqi regime that coincided with the dispatch of more British and American troops to the



Persian Gulf, there were speculations in the media that Russia was actually negotiating with Saddam Hussein to step down and avert the war. The speculations led Ivanov to deny these reports in an interview with the Russian newspaper *Trud*. According to the foreign minister, the goal of these reports was to undermine Russian diplomacy at that time, but he also emphasized that Russia maintained diplomatic relations with Iraq in order to “know more about the mood and thoughts of the Iraqi leadership” (Oliver, 2003). At this point, three points were clear in the Russian Foreign Minister’s statements. First, Russia believed that Iraq, contrary to the claims of the United States and Britain, had begun to cooperate with the UN weapons inspectors. Second, contrary to the claims of the Bush administration, there was no substantial evidence that the country was rearming. Third, sanctions against Iraq were counterproductive and had to be lifted. Therefore, regarding the possibility of war, he told reporters that there is “still political and diplomatic leeway to resolve the Iraq issue” (Oliver, 2003).

To understand the relevance of these statements, one must regard the positions of some other European governments. In this regard, Germany and France also supported Russia’s position which brought forward criticisms from Secretary of State Colin Powell. On January 23, during a joint press conference, French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder questioned the wisdom of starting another war in the Middle East. In this connection, Chirac stated that Germany and France had a common position on the Iraqi crisis and believed that “everything must be done to avoid war” (Oliver, 2003). In other words, the Franco-German proposal tilted in favor of more negotiations and UN inspections. Their reluctance to participate in the use of military force prompted the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to downplay their role and refer to them as “Old Europe” (Rumsfeld, 2011, pp. 444-445). This was a term that conservative analysts used to attach more importance to the role of Central and Eastern Europe in contrast to that of Western European countries in the post-Communist era especially when it served a United States-led campaign or coalition. Nevertheless, the Franco-German proposal was generally in line with the position of Russia. In this sense, the month of January was crucial in shaping international politics as the US government tried to provide convincing evidence of Iraq’s support for Al-Qaeda terrorists. In one specific case, given that Russia was still fighting Chechen separatists at that time, Washington tried to convince Russia that Iraq was supporting some of the terrorists operating in the North Caucasus (Wines, 2003). Then, the American discourse in formulating the threats from Iraq was based on two arguments, namely the WMD program and support for terrorism. In this way, the Americans had concluded that the argument highlighting the threat of Islamic terrorism was more relevant to Russia than with the WMD argument. At that time, there was some evidence of a softening in Russia’s position, partly due to statements from Sergey Yastrzhembsky who was the Kremlin Press Secretary. Among a group of foreign policy experts in Washington, Yastrzhembsky had mentioned that Kremlin “did not need a smoking gun, merely a gun” to be convinced, meaning that the Russians expected Washington to provide further evidence before they could consider another solution to the crisis (Wines, 2003).

In sum, the main assumption of American policymakers in January 2003 was that Russia would not seriously oppose the United States on the issue of Iraq. In the analyses that the American media echoed, two reasons were given for this assumption. First, during the previous two years, the United States had withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile



Treaty and then had supported the expansion of NATO. Despite opposition to these policies, Vladimir Putin had ultimately decided not to react strongly and eventually acquiesced to these policy changes. Following this trend, he had balanced a mix of pragmatism and principle. Therefore, these policymakers were convinced that Putin would not act very differently with respect to Iraq. The second reason was that, in late January, Putin had not ruled out the possibility of using force if Iraq did not cooperate with UN inspectors. In this regard, the assumption was that Russia would act pragmatically to save its close energy relations with Iraq (Slevin, 2003). However, the fall of Saddam's regime could disrupt Moscow's business dealings in this country and could also create an unclear perspective in the post-war processes. As stated previously, the question of Iraq's debt to Russia was still relevant. Moreover, if the future Iraqi regime were to quickly pump large quantities of oil into the global energy market to rebuild its war-torn economy, the price of oil could fall below \$18 a barrel, which the Russians needed to remain solvent (Slevin, 2003). Simply put, the Iraq War could seriously reduce oil revenues for Russia. It was clear to the Russians that, with Saddam's fall, Washington would dominate the decision-making in the country for a long time. For this reason, there were reports that Russian officials were actively seeking assurances from the United States that their interests would be respected in the future. In fact, some analysts stressed this aspect of Russian diplomacy at the time. A case in point was Fiona Hill, a Russia expert at the Brookings Institution who later served as an intelligence analyst in the Bush and Obama administrations. With regard to this argument, she argued that the Russians simply wanted "an advantageous position" in which Russia would not be excluded from the equations in Iraq and the United States would not "dominate the postwar Iraqi oil industry" (Slevin, 2003). On this account, the Bush administration assumed that Russia would not use its veto right to block the American initiative in the Security Council. They also assumed that, under certain conditions, Russia would not seriously oppose the Iraq War. Therefore, Washington officials were lobbying to create those favorable conditions. But, in hindsight, these assumptions were perhaps not entirely accurate. In fact, one may argue that the Washington lobbyists had underestimated the roots of Russian-Iraqi relations and the role that they had played in the nature of Russian foreign policy.

However, the Bush administration's simplistic view that their resolution could move forward smoothly in the Security Council soon evaporated. This was due to the opposition from France and Russia against an unreasonable attack on Iraq. In this regard, France and Germany had put forward a proposal to remove the crisis, the backbone of which was strengthening the UN weapons inspections. Historically, the French diplomatic initiative was crucial in preventing the United States from obtaining the nine votes for the passage of its long-planned resolution. Speaking on France's TF1 television, while supporting the French plan, Vladimir Putin called unilateral military action without UN approval a "grave error" and warned that "if today a proposition was made that we felt would lead to an unreasonable use of force, we would act with France or alone" (Associated Press, 2003). Of course, this involved the use of veto right by Russia. Nonetheless, the Russian president was cautious and stated that the aim of these diplomatic efforts was not creating a bloc against the United States, but finding a peaceful solution to end the Iraqi crisis. In fact, as Bush had said earlier, the United States could (and later did) go to war with "a coalition of the willing" which mainly included Britain, Australia and Poland. However, by formulating this opposition, it seemed that Russia,



Germany and France had deprived Washington of the UN authorization and had also challenged the post-Cold War order. These developments boosted the possibility of military action without the UN consent. This was evident given the diplomatic gestures between the governments supporting and opposing this military action and Washington's refusal to give Iraq sufficient time to expand its cooperation with the UN weapons inspectors. Thus, although Russia had managed to increase the international costs of this unilateral action for Washington, the fate of Moscow's economic interests in the post-war Iraq was in jeopardy. In fact, since 2000, the Bush administration had taken steps that directly targeted Russian interests. These steps included withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, establishing military bases and building greater influence in the former Soviet republics, and supporting the expansion of NATO along Russia's western borders. In all of these cases, Russia had strongly expressed its objections but had eventually acquiesced to these developments. In this sense, joining the Franco-German initiative and threatening to block the US-sponsored resolution at the UN surprised many in Washington who believed in Putin's pragmatism.

But aside from these reasons for opposition, which were rooted in Kremlin's deep economic ties with Baghdad, some international observers considered another aspect in Vladimir Putin's disagreement with his American counterpart concerning the question of Iraq. For instance, Vladimir Lukin, the former Russian ambassador to Washington in the Yeltsin era, stated that the Russian president had become "tired of one-sided deals" with Washington because Russia had not received any practical assurances to protect its interests before (LaFraniere, 2003). The background to this was the previous disagreements over questions such as NATO enlargement, IMF support, economic cooperation and the ballistic missile treaty. Additionally, analysts such as Viktor Kremenyuk of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute and Alexander Pikayev from Carnegie's Moscow Center, argued that Kremlin did not want to create a perception among Russians that their government had compromised their interests by following the failed pro-Western practices of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin (LeFraniere, 2003). In other words, they highlighted the role of Russian sentiments to analyze this drift. One can also note that, at that time, Russia had close interactions with France and Germany and alignment with these European states could put Russia in a more powerful position. In fact, Russia had a significant historical advantage in Europe at that time. In Germany, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the leader of the Social Democratic Party, had friendly relations with Russia. In 2002, while rejecting the American way of handling international politics, Schröder had instead emphasized "the German Way" and had described his country as a "peace power". In France, President Jacques Chirac, who also had warm relations with Moscow, displayed an independent foreign policy by insisting that Iraq was not an immediate threat. With respect to the question of Iraq, both governments were in agreement with Moscow. It was for this reason that, to support its military campaign, the United States had turned to the New Europe which consisted of some Eastern and Central European countries that had joined NATO in the post-Cold War period.

With respect to the above discussions, Igor Ivanov's short note in the Washington Post illustrates Russia's calculated stance towards the developments of the previous weeks. Ivanov's notes came out on March 15 only a few days before the US invasion. As Foreign Minister, he had the serious responsibility of both advancing an independent foreign policy on the Iraqi crisis and ensuring that Moscow's stance did not irreparably damage



Russian-American relations. Therefore, he indicated his policy within the UN framework, claiming that the Russian government had supported the US to pass Resolution 1441 unanimously. According to Ivanov, this resolution that provided the grounds for more inspections was not necessary from Moscow's perspective. Yet, as a concession, Russia worked with the US to secure its unanimous passage (Ivanov, 2003). Above all, he put emphasis on the role of the UN Security Council to address the Iraqi crisis, since Russia could probably exert influence within that framework. The foreign minister's note suggested that, from a Russian perspective, the international pressure on Iraq was sufficient and the disarmament was proceeding as planned. Thus, in the context of these developments, he repeated that the argument for the imminent use of military force was not valid. According to Ivanov, their goal was "the establishment of a reliable mechanism of inspections that would be able to help disarm Iraq" and, as he argued, this 'political solution' equally served the interests of Russia and the United States (Ivanov, 2003). Finally, he expressed his hope that regardless of the outcome, the two sides would be able to maintain the spirit of cooperation in the future. As stated previously, this expression of hope in Russian-American relations despite the mounting conflict of interest was a commonality in the statements from Vladimir Putin and Igor Ivanov.

However, along this diplomatic course, the members of the coalition were making military preparations. In the end, the coalition began the invasion of Iraq on March 20. On the same day, the Russian President released a statement at a Kremlin meeting. In this statement, while referring to the humanitarian crisis caused by the attacks, he called the military action "contrary to world public opinion, contrary to the principles and norms of international law and the Charter of the UN" and added that nothing could justify it (Kremlin Statement, 2003). At least in terms of narrative, these claims seemed accurate and resonated not only with the world's public opinion but also with the views of many governments and independent observers. Like Ivanov, Putin emphasized the effectiveness of Resolution 1441 that had ruled out the use of force but had provided a mechanism for international inspectors to disarm Iraq peacefully. While calling the military action a mistake, he expressed hope that its humanitarian and security consequences could be prevented by reaching out to the UN mechanisms. In fact, this statement reflected the tradition that Russia had advocated in addressing the previous crises with Iraq. This approach emphasized the role of the UN Security Council as a place where Russian diplomacy could be effective in negotiating with different partners.

Conclusion

This study was an attempt to revisit the diplomatic path to the Iraq War and the break in Russian-American relations with a focus on diplomatic initiatives. The above discussions can be significant because they provide a context for current situations and the broader Russian-American relations.

The invasion of Iraq is largely remembered today for mismanagement and deception. This is because no evidence was found of Iraqi WMD program and the country ultimately fell victim to political unrest and Islamic terrorism. In this regard, the above discussions highlight the argument that Russia's opposition to the American military campaign can be seen in the context of the assertive Russian foreign policy that evolved during the 1990s and the entanglement of Kremlin-Baghdad relations. In particular, Russia's foreign



policy on developments in the Middle East demonstrates a strong aspect of this doctrine. As noted, Moscow relied on the mechanisms of the UN Security Council to protect its long-term interests in Iraq. This approach gave prominence to multilateralism and non-intervention and showed that Russia sought a mechanism to influence international equations and receive assurances that its interests would be respected. Given that the collapse of the Soviet Union had deprived Moscow of the advantage of a wide network of allies, the UN could be an instrument to exert influence and exploit the rift between Europe and the United States. Then, with respect to the above discussions, several conclusions can be drawn from the diplomatic prelude to the Iraq War. First, although Russia was forced to oppose the United States for reasons including energy security, domestic pressure from Russian nationalists and doctrinal differences, Putin and Ivanov's statements also suggest that they did not want this opposition to seriously hurt Russian-American relations. Hence, Russia stood behind the initiative that France and Germany proposed to address the crisis. For Russia, the advantage of this consensus was that it could, on the one hand, increase the cost of unilateral military action for the United States by denying a UN authorization and, on the other hand, save Russia from a direct diplomatic confrontation with Washington. This being said, on a larger scale, the diplomatic maneuvers between Russia, the Old Europe and the United States and its allies could indicate a different process. In other words, the unilateralism that the UN Security Council imposed on the United States could be an early sign of multipolarity at the beginning of this century. In this sense, the Bush administration assumed that it could use the momentum created by the September 11 attacks to rally the international community in the invasion of Iraq. In particular, they also assumed that, following tradition, Vladimir Putin would choose pragmatism over principle in the Iraqi crisis. But the prospects of what Russia could lose eventually caused Kremlin to resist diplomatic pressure and form an alliance with European partners.

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EVOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL REGIME IN UKRAINE: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE PRESENT

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Abstract

The establishment and evolution of Ukraine's political regime is a complex and dynamic process shaped by socio-economic and political transformations. This study aims to analyze the specific features of Ukraine's political regime in its contemporary context. Using methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, and formal and legal techniques, the study examines the structure and functioning of Ukraine's political system, which involves various institutions such as government bodies, political parties, public organizations, and the media. The findings reveal that political decisions in Ukraine are largely influenced by democratic principles, which guide the mechanisms of state power and allow citizens to influence political processes. The paper also explores the role of symbolisation and mythologisation in shaping the political regime, highlighting their negative impact on Ukraine's political development and institutional effectiveness. These processes contribute to the distortion of political narratives and hinder democratic consolidation. The study's findings are valuable for formulating political strategies aimed at strengthening democratic practices and rebuilding Ukraine's political system.



Keywords

Democracy, state power, institution of presidential power, legitimacy, authoritarianism.

Resumo

O estabelecimento e a evolução do regime político da Ucrânia é um processo complexo e dinâmico moldado por transformações socioeconômicas e políticas. Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar as características específicas do regime político da Ucrânia em seu contexto contemporâneo. Usando métodos de análise, síntese, comparação e técnicas formais e legais, o estudo examina a estrutura e o funcionamento do sistema político da Ucrânia, que envolve várias instituições como órgãos governamentais, partidos políticos, organizações públicas e mídia. Os resultados revelam que as decisões políticas na Ucrânia são amplamente influenciadas pelos princípios democráticos, que orientam os mecanismos do poder estatal e permitem que os cidadãos influenciem os processos políticos. O artigo também explora o papel da simbolização e mitologização na formação do regime político, destacando seu impacto negativo no desenvolvimento político da Ucrânia e na eficácia institucional. Esses processos contribuem para a distorção de narrativas políticas e dificultam a consolidação democrática. As descobertas do estudo são valiosas para formular estratégias políticas destinadas a fortalecer as práticas democráticas e a reconstrução do sistema político da Ucrânia.

Palavras-chave

Democracia, poder estatal, instituição de poder presidencial, legitimidade, autoritarismo.

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EVOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL REGIME IN UKRAINE: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE PRESENT

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Introduction

The establishment and development of a political regime is a pivotal and complex political and legal phenomenon in the context of state development. It determines the nature of state power, organizes the political system, and shapes the interaction between the state and its citizens (Herrfahrdt-Pähle et al., 2020). A political regime can be understood as a system of methods and tools for legitimating and exercising power by a particular type of state (Saha & Sen, 2021). The political regime of a country can be democratic, authoritarian, or a hybrid form of the two.

Democracy refers to a system where power is vested in the people, either directly or through elected representatives. In democratic regimes, there is typically a guarantee of political freedoms and human rights, competitive elections, and a separation of powers (Buribayev et al., 2020; Gandhi et al., 2020). On the other hand, authoritarianism is characterized by centralization of power, limited political pluralism, and often restricted civil liberties. In an adversarial authoritarian regime, although the state maintains control over key political structures, it allows some opposition or societal participation in a controlled manner, without threatening the core authority of the ruling elite (Gerschewski, 2013). These regimes often manipulate institutions to create the appearance of political competition while maintaining real power within a select group.

The evolution of Ukraine's political regime has been marked by attempts to shift from a more authoritarian model toward democracy, but this process has been interrupted by political and social divides. The socio-political dynamics in Ukraine, especially the East-West divide, have influenced the political transformations in ways that complicate a straightforward transition to democracy (Romanyuk, 2020).

In the context of post-Soviet Ukraine, the political regime has often been analyzed through the lens of neo-patrimonialism and the clientelist state. Neo-patrimonialism



refers to a system where political power is exercised through personal relationships and patronage networks rather than formal institutions (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). This system often fosters a clientelist state, where political elites use state resources to maintain loyal supporters, who, in turn, provide the elites with political power. Researchers have noted that Ukraine's political regime has been deeply influenced by these patronage systems, which have shaped both its political institutions and electoral processes (Romanyuk, 2020; Zelenko et al., 2021). This system's persistence has been particularly evident in Ukraine's political transitions, where reforms have often been more symbolic than substantive, reflecting the personalistic nature of power rather than institutional development.

In addition to neo-patrimonialism, other perspectives on Ukraine's political regime evolution have emerged. Hybrid regimes, combining elements of both democracy and authoritarianism, have been discussed in relation to Ukraine's political development since independence. The political transformations of the 1990s and 2000s reflect attempts to consolidate democracy while maintaining significant authoritarian tendencies. The Maidan Revolutions of 2004 and 2014 catalyzed a significant shift in the political trajectory, yet political elites continued to manipulate the system to maintain control, leading to a sustained crisis in political development (Prymush & Yarosh, 2020).

Other scholars have explored democratic transition and authoritarian consolidation in Ukraine, particularly through the framework of post-Soviet transformation. In this context, democratic transition is often seen as a gradual process in which the state opens up to democratic practices but faces resistance from entrenched elites and informal networks (Shaigorodsky, 2021). However, the process is often interrupted by shifts towards authoritarianism, which can result in the consolidation of power in the hands of a few, as seen in the control of key political and economic sectors by oligarchs (Berezovska-Chmil, 2020; Galchynskyi, 2020).

The political regime in Ukraine has been framed in various ways depending on the lens used. For instance, institutional theory suggests that Ukraine's political regime has been shaped by the actions and decisions of its elites, who have sought to influence the political system in their favor, often through institutional changes driven by presidential transitions (Bjørnskov & Rode, 2020). Moreover, the role of elites in the formation of the political regime is central to understanding how power has been exercised and contested. Political elites in Ukraine have often oscillated between competing for control over state institutions and monopolizing power within a narrow group, resulting in fragmented democratic processes and repeated setbacks in the democratization efforts (Berezovska-Chmil, 2020).

The evolution of Ukraine's political regime has been marked by tension between democratic aspirations and authoritarian practices, influenced by neo-patrimonial networks, elite competition, and the impact of the Maidan revolutions. A deeper exploration of neo-patrimonialism, clientelism, and hybrid regimes provides a clearer understanding of how political and social dynamics have shaped Ukraine's trajectory. Furthermore, to grasp the full scope of this transformation, it is necessary to examine the literature that frames democratic transition and authoritarian consolidation in post-Soviet states, including Ukraine, to understand the underlying mechanisms of regime change.



Constitutional Foundations of the Political Regime in Ukraine

The study of the transformation of the political regime in Ukraine provides for the need to highlight the essence of this concept and its structural elements. This is important in the context of conducting a comparative historical analysis of the category of "political regime", which should be understood as the way of distribution of power, the reasons for its establishment and development in the public consciousness of the nation. Thus, the establishment of this mechanism involves not only the extension of power to certain types of public relations, but also the influence on the life of citizens. The structure of the political regime consists of: methods of exercising state power; the degree of freedom of a person and their rights; approaches to political decision-making; pluralism; in particular, the presence or absence of legal (illegal) opposition; the configuration of the party system; features of the ruling elite (Helms, 2023; Ketners et al., 2024).

An important step towards changing the political system of Ukraine was the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) of the Declaration on State Sovereignty of Ukraine (1990). The latter provided for the consolidation of the sovereignty of a developing state in accordance with its borders and exercising the right to self-determination. The essence of the constitutional principles consolidated in the Declaration was revealed in the approval of the principle of separation of powers (legislative, executive, judicial) and departure from the idea of democratic centralism. Subsequently, as a result of the referendum held on 1 December 1991, the Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR No. 1427-XII "On Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine" (1991) was signed, which affected the political status of the state. The title of Chapter 7 of the Constitution (Basic Law) of Ukraine (1978) was changed from "Ukrainian SSR – a union republic within the USSR" to "Ukraine – an independent state". On 19 June 1991, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR adopted Resolution No. 1056-XII "On the Concept of the new Constitution of Ukraine" (1991), which consolidated the relationship between the citizen, the state, and society as the main object of constitutional regulation. On 28 June 1996, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted and enacted the new Constitution of Ukraine (1996), which established the priority of human values and democracy in Ukraine.

In accordance with the principles of the political system of Ukraine provided for in this regulatory document, its structure consists of three levels. The highest category includes the principles and norms that have the highest legal force and characterise the constitutional system of Ukraine. As for the general principles based on which the political system as a whole is formed, they belong to the second level. It should be noted that it in fact details the principles of the constitutional order. The third level consists of approaches that regulate the status of a particular category of subjects of the political system, and the algorithm for implementing various types of political activities (Sych, 2020).

It is worth noting that among the set of principles that determine the political system of Ukraine, it is popular sovereignty that is fundamental. This is conditioned by the fact that it consolidates the source of power and the "coordinate system" in the political sphere. Accordingly, the only source of power and bearer of sovereignty in Ukraine is the people, who exercise power through state and local government bodies. As for the principle of the highest social value of a person, it characterises the axiological orientation of the



political system and regime in Ukraine. The Constitution of Ukraine (1996) establishes the principle of republicanism, according to which the establishment of the highest state authorities occurs either directly by the people or by representative bodies.

Defining for all elements of the political system is the principle of democracy, the essence of which is the democracy of political consciousness and regime. In close connection with this principle is the principle of transparency, which determines the implementation of unhindered dissemination of information flows in the context of the political and legal system (Apakhayev et al., 2017; Ongan et al., 2025). In addition to the above principles, the principles on the basis of which the establishment and development of the political regime in Ukraine takes place include: Unitarianism, social and legal state, separation of powers, legality, legal equality, the rule of law, and the guarantee of local self-government. Analysing their essence, it should be noted that Ukraine is developing a democratic political system, which is based on pluralism.

As for the second level of the foundations of the political system of Ukraine, they cover secularism, dynamism, and the role autonomy of the subjects of this system. Thus, they are characterised by a constitutional and legal nature, while detailing the content of the constitutional foundations of the political system. Examples of the third level of principles include: the multi-ethnic nature of the Ukrainian people, subsidiarity, and the ubiquity of local self-government or community groups. Their essence consists in expressing the specifics of various spheres of political life of citizens, asserting the status of specific subjects of the political system. The combination of the above principles reveals the main vectors of the establishment of a political regime in modern Ukraine, which involve consideration of the specific characteristics of the political system.

Structure and Transformation of the Political System of Ukraine

The system of structural elements of the political system of Ukraine includes: the institution of presidential power, the parliament, and the government. The first one should be understood as a specially created system of higher power, which is aimed at implementing sovereignty and ensuring the independence of the country through the effective functioning of various state authorities. The legitimisation of the institution of the presidency through a referendum or free elections indicates its constitutional consolidation as a mechanism of representative form of public power of the people (Galymzhan et al., 2020). An analysis of its historical development shows that the president is characterised by four main functions, namely guaranteeing and protecting, coordinating, constitutive, and representative. This is explained by the fact that the president acts as a guarantor of the Constitution of Ukraine, its sovereignty, and also contributes to ensuring human and civil rights and freedoms. The president coordinates the activities of public authorities so that they are characterised by high efficiency and prevent a political crisis. During the implementation of the constitutive function, the president defines and implements the main vectors of Ukraine's domestic and foreign policy. As for the representative function in the activities of the president, it is reflected in the international arena and in the organisation of public power based on the institution of civil society. The constitutional status of the president is developing, and therefore, there are positions in the scientific doctrine regarding the expediency of transferring certain powers to specialised bodies. For example, I.B. Debenko (2011) suggests that it



is necessary to introduce changes to the status of the president, namely, to give him the opportunity to be a participant in the legislative process and to have his own rule-making powers. Based on this, the researcher's opinion provides for the establishment of presidential control over the rule-making activities of state authorities. The approach proposed by the researcher allows considering the special role of the president in the context of protecting and implementing constitutional legality. Thus, what is common between the conclusions in these papers is that the legal status and functions of the president of Ukraine in the field under study are clearly defined by law, and therefore, can be expanded in the context of the establishment of new specialised institutions.

In general, the institution of presidential power is one of the most important links in the context of the functioning of the political system of Ukraine. This is consolidated in the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), according to which it is the president who is endowed with the status of head of state. The president's powers cover a wide range of issues, in particular, decision-making on national security, implementation of foreign and national policy, and higher personnel issues. This list is not exhaustive, since the activities of the institution of presidential power are systematic and cover, among other things, the right to initiate legislative initiatives or impose a veto (Romanyuk, 2020).

An equally important role in the development of a civil and democratic society is played by the institution of the parliament, local self-government bodies, the ombudsman, elections, and referendums (Ketners, 2025). It is worth noting that parliamentarism is characteristic of various stages of the historical development of Ukraine. For example, the power that the Grand Prince of Kyiv possessed was limited, since it was implemented in cooperation with the consent of the prince's armed forces. As for the period of the country's independence, it is worth noting that the new stage was started in 1990. This is conditioned by the fact that for the first time, the elections to the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR were implemented considering the principles of pluralism, since parties opposed to the Communist Party (which were grouped under the name People's Council) took part in them. Subsequently, the activities of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR became permanent, which were governed by the norms of the temporary regulations. Thus, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR was reformed into a parliamentary-type institution even before Ukraine's independence. After the adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), the Parliament of Ukraine was defined as the main legislative body, whose activities were aimed at passing laws, approving the budget, and implementing monitoring of government activities. In modern Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada has the status of a single-chamber authority and, accordingly, consists of 450 people's deputies. The activity of the Parliament of Ukraine has many vectors, but its ultimate goal is to ensure and develop a democratic system of government. Thus, it promotes the realisation of the voice and interests of the people in decision-making, control over the government and authorities, and coordinates the actions of the authorities with constitutional principles.

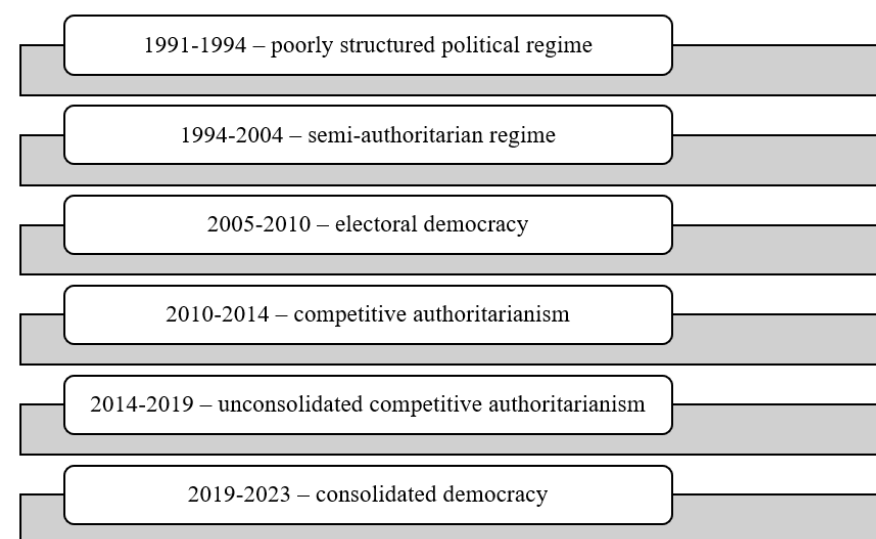
As for the subjects of power, they also have specifics, since they are characterised by their own regulatory framework, purpose, functions, and procedure for making decisions. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine is obliged to adhere in the course of its activities to the general principles of legal regulation, namely: the rule of law, good governance, division of state power, continuity, and collegiality. At the same time, its



tasks are clearly defined in the Law of Ukraine No. 794-VII "On the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine" (2014), which ensures the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens. In this case, the legal status of the government is formed from competence, which includes: powers, subject matter, and functions. The Cabinet of Ministers belongs to the category of subjects of general competence, as it coordinates the work of other central executive bodies, including ministries. It is important to ensure compliance with laws, the Constitution, and human and civil rights in the course of its activities. Its competence covers a number of public relations, including: economic, labour, socio-economic, legal, and others related to the activities of the state.

Thus, the political system of Ukraine consists of elements whose activities complement each other. This shows that all its links play an important role in the context of the establishment of a political regime and, accordingly, should be developed at a high level. The holistic development of political institutions is aimed at consolidating the democratic foundations and principles on the basis of which public life is ensured. The analysis of each of the elements allows us to characterise the political regime in Ukraine, which is based on the ideas of democracy, pluralism, protection of human and civil rights and freedoms. Based on the above analysis, it is advisable to consider the activities of these elements in the process of forming a political regime in different periods of Ukraine's development (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Stages of development of political regime in Ukraine



Source: compiled by the authors.

The period 1991-1994 was characterised by general institutional weakness and low legitimacy of the authorities. This was influenced by several factors, namely: the unwillingness of political actors to structure their activities; the lack of democratic experience in solving political problems; parties were not the main political actors. Based on this, the specifics of this period were the rapid loss of legitimacy by the institutions of power. The lack of institutionalisation during this period was especially evident in the



absence of effective checks on power, with the executive branch largely left unchallenged. This initial phase was largely shaped by the legacy of the Soviet system and the newly independent state's struggles to establish stable governance (Yanyshivskyi, 2025).

The 1994-1998 period saw a shift toward increased political influence of the president and a fragmented Verkhovna Rada following the 1994 parliamentary elections. This era, under President Leonid Kuchma, witnessed the adoption of the 1996 Constitution, which granted the president sweeping powers, including in administrative, legislative, and personnel matters. These powers transformed the president into a hegemonic figure, capable of independently steering the political direction of the state. The privatization process (1998-2000) further consolidated the influence of political and business elites, contributing to the rise of an oligarchic-bureaucratic system (Tsurkan-Saifulina & Popelnytska, 2023). The transition was marked by the increasing centralization of power, where business moguls began to shape the political sphere through control over media outlets and political parties (Ilychok et al., 2024).

The presidency of Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010) introduced a shift toward a parliamentary-presidential republic, reinforcing the principles of electoral democracy. However, the political landscape remained unstable due to the fragmented nature of the Ukrainian political elite and a lack of cohesion in the legislature. The Orange Revolution of 2004 marked a pivotal moment, leading to the consolidation of democratic mechanisms but not the natural evolution of democracy. Yushchenko's failure to establish control over the country's political apparatus resulted in significant instability, and the Party of Regions, led by Viktor Yanukovych, rose to power in 2006. This shift marked the onset of adversarial authoritarianism, where key political decisions were influenced by competing elites. By 2012, following electoral victories, the regime had shifted to a form of consolidated authoritarianism under Yanukovych (Semenenko et al., 2024).

The 2014-2016 period was transformative, catalyzed by the Euromaidan protests and the ousting of Yanukovych. This led to a semi-competitive authoritarian regime, often termed "soft" presidential-oligarchic authoritarianism. The consolidation of power in the hands of President Petro Poroshenko was coupled with the formation of patronage networks involving the President, Prime Minister, and the People's Front party. This regime was marked by informal power consolidation, soft repressions, and pressure on opposition forces. Reforms in the police, army, and decentralisation during this period signalled attempts at democratic consolidation, but they were hindered by the persistence of oligarchic control over the state (Semenenko et al., 2021).

After the presidential elections in 2019, the institutions of political and ideological pluralism were restored in Ukraine. In modern Ukrainian society, the freedom of ideological positions of citizens, including in relation to political activities, is being consolidated and ensured. The current vector of political development of Ukraine is aimed at achieving a consolidated democracy. For this purpose, Ukraine is implementing political reforms, dynamically developing mechanism for cooperation with the European Union, and opening up prospects for participation in regional projects envisaged by the modernised Three Seas concept (Sekh, 2023). On the Europeanization axis, Ukraine has increasingly aligned its policies with EU standards, particularly after the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine (2014), which fostered reforms in



areas such as trade, energy, and decentralization. These reforms demonstrate Ukraine's commitment to EU integration. However, progress is slowed by internal political fragmentation, resistance to certain reforms, and external geopolitical pressures, particularly from Russia. While Ukraine has made steady advancements in adopting EU norms, its efforts to fully integrate with EU governance and legal frameworks remain inconsistent, especially in the areas of rule of law and governance reforms.

Symbolisation and Mythologisation of the Political System in Ukraine

After Ukraine declared its independence, the country set out on a path of democratic development, which was marked by shifts in spiritual and cultural values. These reforms aimed to improve the public's well-being, but they also led to contradictions in public consciousness, often reflecting deep social fragmentation. As S.F. Moore and B.G. Myerhoff (2020) noted, such transitions in state values and ideals make it difficult to consolidate a unified public consciousness, particularly when outdated political norms persist. This duality is a critical challenge in post-Soviet states, where political socialization can be manipulated to shape public opinion. In Ukraine, this challenge was compounded by the rise of oligarchic control over mainstream media, preventing the intellectuals and media from becoming effective change agents (Cassani & Tomini, 2020; Aleman et al., 2021). Instead of providing a unifying force, these sectors became tools for legitimizing the status quo.

Symbolisation in Ukraine's political context refers to the use of images and symbols that replace real aspects of political life. These symbols often carry only a conditional resemblance to the issues they represent, yet, they are perceived by the public as authentic. As S. Hellmeier and M. Bernhard (2023) explain, political actors in Ukraine have utilized symbolisation to construct certain political narratives, which helped them maintain power by appealing to the emotional and psychological aspects of citizens. Symbolisation is particularly powerful in the post-Soviet context, where it substitutes real political realities with idealized images of the state. For example, the political imagery surrounding Ukraine's independence in 1991, as well as the symbolic use of the "Euromaidan" protests in 2014, were used by political elites to establish legitimacy and foster national unity, despite the underlying fragmentation and instability (Drescher, 2020). This approach, while potentially strengthening political authority, also creates opportunities for manipulation, as symbols can obscure the real challenges facing the population.

Symbolisation in Ukraine is not a temporary phenomenon but has been embedded in the political culture since independence. It continues to shape political legitimacy through a substitution of political reality. For example, political actors have used symbols like the "national hero" or "enemy" to justify actions, whether by framing protests as acts of patriotism or labelling political opposition as traitorous (Lai, 2020). Symbolisation increases symbolic capital, which can foster political loyalty, but it can also alienate citizens when the symbols lose their connection to real-world issues.

Connected to symbolisation is mythologisation, the process of creating political myths that simplify complex realities for public consumption. M. Feischmidt (2020) argues that political myths are constructed through language and discourse, transforming ordinary political actions into narratives that resonate with the masses. Political actors use myths



to shape perceptions, often by creating simplified dichotomies – such as the “good vs. evil” narrative in political discourse.

In Ukraine, mythologisation has been a strategic tool for political actors to improve the public’s perception of the regime. Political figures have constructed myths around events like the Maidan revolutions, portraying them as a fight for freedom and democracy, while often overlooking the broader political and social challenges. E. Arbatli and D. Rosenberg (2021) note that political mythologies help to shift the public’s focus away from deeper political issues by emphasizing symbolic victories, such as national identity or territorial integrity, while ignoring critical problems like corruption or governance failures.

Mythologisation, as M. Saud et al. (2020) point out, not only shapes collective memory but also individual behavior, influencing how citizens engage with the political system. It constructs a distorted political reality where certain actors are either elevated as heroes or demonized as enemies of the state, diverting attention from more pressing issues. This process has contributed to the deformation of political discourse, where the true nature of political struggles is masked by mythological narratives that obscure the real political dynamics.

The combined forces of symbolisation and mythologisation in Ukraine have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, they have helped solidify political legitimacy by appealing to the national sentiment, especially during times of crisis like the annexation of Crimea or the war with Russia. However, they have also created a polarized political environment in which symbolic victories overshadow substantive reforms. The influence of these processes on the population’s political consciousness can sometimes result in passivity, as citizens are drawn into mythological narratives rather than engaging critically with the political system (Dzvinchuk et al., 2018). As I. Stihi (2022) observes, political actors can use these tools to reshape public opinion, not only to defend their positions but also to redistribute power resources. The manipulation of public discourse through myth and symbolism is particularly dangerous in unstable political conditions like Ukraine’s, where political struggles often escalate into manipulative battles for control over public consciousness.

The processes of symbolisation and mythologisation have played crucial roles in shaping Ukraine’s political regime from 1991 to the present. These mechanisms allow political actors to construct political realities that justify their actions, while simultaneously diverting attention from deeper issues. The study of these processes is essential for understanding how political regimes can evolve through symbolic manipulation, often at the cost of genuine democratic progress. As Ukraine continues to face political instability and external threats, the role of symbolic politics will remain central to both maintaining power and shaping national identity.

Conclusions

The political regime in Ukraine has undergone significant transformation since independence, with a dominant shift towards democratic development. However, ongoing socio-political and economic challenges require continuous efforts to consolidate democratic values and ensure transparency. The study shows that Ukraine’s political trajectory is characterized by alternating phases of democratization and authoritarian



regression. From the early 1990s to 2004, a struggle between power centers defined the period as competitive authoritarianism. The Orange Revolution of 2004 marked a breakthrough towards electoral democracy, which was balanced by political forces rather than individual strategies. However, 2010-2012 saw an authoritarian rollback under Yanukovych, which was overturned by the Revolution of Dignity, reinvigorating democratization efforts.

The political regime evolved further between 2016-2019, shifting from electoral democracy to competitive authoritarianism again. By 2019, democratic development resumed, alongside mechanisms to protect citizens' rights and freedoms. The study highlights the role of symbolisation and mythologisation in Ukraine's political system, where political elites use these tools to gain power and reform the state. Symbolisation, through imagery and ideas, substitutes the real actions of political actors, creating a distorted narrative. The study advocates for a moral political policy that considers citizens' views and adheres to national traditions, contributing to a more open civil society. Future research should focus on minimizing the negative effects of manipulative symbolisation in politics.

In terms of legal reform, the study recommends changes to the Constitution of Ukraine to define the president's role more clearly, particularly in guaranteeing state sovereignty and coordinating national actions. It also suggests establishing a Commissioner for the Rights of Servicemen to protect military personnel's rights, given the ongoing war. This new position would be appointed by the president and endowed with control and investigative powers, ensuring greater protection for Ukraine's armed forces.

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EU-NIQUE PERSPECTIVES? ANALYSING CONTRASTING POSITIONS ON THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT WITHIN THE EU

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Abstract

This research examines the various positions adopted by the European Union (EU) Member States in response to the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict, since its reignition on February 24th, 2022. The study is based on a content discourse analysis of speeches and official statements released by individual EU Member States, namely Poland, owing to its historical relations with the Eastern Bloc and its noteworthiness in accommodating refugees; followed by Germany and its pivotal role in providing military equipment to Ukraine; and lastly, Hungary, due to the contentious public statements issued by its Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán. The analysis is complemented by an examination of the broader foreign policy orientations of these countries that shape their responses. The primary aim is to assess whether the Union maintains a cohesive consensus on the conflict or if diverging positions weaken its support for Ukraine. Ultimately, through a juxtaposition of opinions issued by Poland, Germany, and Hungary against the overall EU stance, we conclude that the European Union's support for Ukraine is not as robust and cohesive as expected.

Keywords

European Union, Russo-Ukrainian conflict, Member States, European Commission, consensus.

Resumo

Esta investigação analisa as várias posições adotadas pelos Estados-Membros da União Europeia (UE) em resposta ao conflito russo-ucraniano em curso, desde o seu recomeço em 24 de fevereiro de 2022. O estudo baseia-se numa análise do conteúdo de discursos e declarações oficiais divulgados por cada um dos Estados-Membros da UE, nomeadamente a Polónia, devido às suas relações históricas com o Bloco de Leste e à sua notoriedade no acolhimento de refugiados; seguida pela Alemanha e o seu papel fundamental no fornecimento de equipamento militar à Ucrânia; e, por último, a Hungria, devido às declarações públicas controversas do seu primeiro-ministro, Viktor Orbán. A análise é complementada por um exame das orientações mais amplas da política externa desses países que moldam as suas respostas. O objetivo principal é avaliar se a União mantém um consenso coeso sobre o conflito ou se posições divergentes enfraquecem o seu apoio à Ucrânia. Em última análise, através de uma justaposição das opiniões emitidas pela Polónia, Alemanha e Hungria contra a posição geral da UE, concluímos que o apoio da União Europeia à Ucrânia não é tão robusto e coeso como se esperava.

Palavras-chave

União Europeia, conflito russo-ucraniano, Estados-Membros, Comissão Europeia, consenso.

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EU-NIQUE PERSPECTIVES? ANALYSING CONTRASTING POSITIONS ON THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT WITHIN THE EU¹

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Introduction

The European Union's (EU) swift response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine marked a turning point in history, with the Union playing a pivotal role in the conflict and its stance evolving over time. The origins of the feud trace back to the NATO Summit in 2008, in which Ukraine's potential membership in the alliance sparked tensions with Russia (NATO, 2008), with Putin warning that "Moscow would view any attempt to expand NATO to its borders as a 'direct threat'" (Dawar, 2008). Notwithstanding, it was Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 that led to the ongoing hostilities and instability in Eastern Ukraine, with this tension peaking on February 24th, 2022 (Raik et al., 2024). In the early 2000s, despite the EU showing interest in promoting a "ring of friends" with Ukraine (Raik et al., 2024), the EU leaders recognised that Russia's major gas supply to numerous Member States was an insurmountable issue (Maurer et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, Russia's invasion on February 24th, 2022 appears to have significantly shifted the limits of action that Member States were willing to undertake, in response to major disruptions in Europe's security architecture (Maurer et al., 2023), marking a departure from its previous reluctance to a more defined stance. The leaders of the European Commission and the European Council condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and affirmed that the "EU stands firmly by Ukraine and its people", which was later followed by a similar joint statement by the Member States (Bacarani, 2023: p. 10) and a joint recognition of threat (Håkansson, 2023). Not only did the EU pursue its goals through civilian means while simultaneously

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providing military assistance to Ukraine, but it was also swift in adapting to a new situation, noted by Raik et al. (2024) as the EU's "geopolitical awakening". Consequently, the European Union "massively expanded sanctions against Russia" and adopted "unprecedented restrictive measures" (European Council, 2024a), underscoring its dedication to upholding European values in the face of external threats.

More recently, in 2024, the EU leaders reasserted their commitment: "More than ever, we remain united and true to our promise to support Ukraine for as long as it takes" (European Council, 2024b). Nonetheless, as the Russo-Ukrainian conflict remains unresolved, it continues to pose a persistent challenge in European geopolitics, testing the cohesion and effectiveness of the European Union in responding to the unfolding events.

Despite numerous studies concerning the war in Ukraine, a gap in the literature prevails regarding the contrasting EU positions on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, to the best of our knowledge. Hence, this study makes an original contribution to bridge this gap and find a response to yet-to-be-answered questions: are EU countries truly united in their support for Ukraine? Have political leaders adopted similar stances *vis-a-vis* the war? Thus, this article is based on a content discourse analysis of individual EU Member States, namely Poland, owing to its historical relations with the Eastern Bloc and the pertinence it has in accommodating refugees; followed by Germany and its pivotal role in providing military equipment for Ukraine; and lastly, Hungary, due to the contentious public statements issued by its Prime Minister.

More precisely, these three countries were also chosen due to their varying degrees of hostility towards Russia, with Poland displaying the greatest animosity and Hungary the least. Notably, Poland perceives Russia as an existential threat (Poletti, 2023; Stolle, 2023). In contrast, Hungary's Eurosceptic government maintains a strategic economic partnership with Russia, arguably making it the EU Member State with the closest relationship with Russia (Kovács, 2022; Durakcay, 2023). Lastly, Germany was picked for its dominant role in the EU, as the Union's most populous state, i.e. it has the largest representation in the European Parliament, coupled with its strong adherence to EU positions and directives (Whitworth, 2021). This selection offers a variety of perspectives, thereby providing a valuable basis for comparing EU cohesion in the context of the war.

This article is structured as follows: Section II provides an overview of existing literature regarding the response of the EU and the chosen countries in previous crises (Brexit and COVID-19²), Russia's annexation of Crimea, and its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Section III outlines the foreign policy orientations of Poland, Germany, and Hungary, particularly in relation to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, providing the essential context for later analysis. Section IV explains the methodology used and Section V covers the discourse analysis of international newspapers, speeches and official statements pertaining to Poland, Germany, and Hungary, concerning the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian war. Section VI analyses the results by integrating insights from both the foreign policy orientations and the discourse analysis. Lastly, Section VII concludes.

² Both were selected due to their more recent nature when compared to other EU crises (e.g. the 2008 subprime financial crisis), as well as their distinct characteristics, one being political and economic and the other social and sanitary.



A brief review of the literature on EU response to crises

Scepticism exists regarding Europe's ability to replicate its COVID-19 success story in the face of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict (Poletti, 2023). Even though the Member States diverging responses to the sanitary crisis revealed a lack of unity, the national lockdown measures and approaches eventually converged, with most countries opting to adopt a combination of similar policies (Pacces & Weimer, 2020).

In the context of the British exit from the Union, the EU-27 governments maintained a tough negotiation stance, in agreement with the Commission in rejecting any British attempts at "cherry-picking", even at the potential risk of a no-deal Brexit. The block's firm stance was due to, among other reasons, the apprehension that allowing the United Kingdom (UK) to reap the benefits of EU integration, without sharing the associated costs, may instigate the withdrawal of other EU Member States (Walter, 2020). Germany played a significant role in Brexit, as it became one of the architects of the consensus in the EU and took the lead in securing a common EU position (Taggart et al., 2023). Although Poland had a strong economic interest in adopting a flexible Brexit agreement, and occasionally criticised the Commission's stance (Taggart et al., 2023), the country adopted a consensual European attitude in the negotiations. Conversely, Hungary showed sympathy towards the UK, framed as being persecuted by the Brussels elite for daring to go against it, thus, establishing a clear parallel between itself and the UK, regarding the treatment received from the EU (Meislová & Szent-Iványi, 2021).

Overall, during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the EU held back by not playing an active role in the resolution process, "which was left to France and Germany, acting as mediators in the *ad hoc* 'Normandy framework' that also included Ukraine and Russia" (Raik et al., 2024: p. 7). Therefore, it is argued that "the conflict in Ukraine (...) is the most vivid manifestation of the failure to create a stable and durable European security order" (Sakwa, 2015: p. 555). European countries adopted different measures, ranging from economic sanctions to political support, and, despite the lack of consensus regarding military aid, the EU still explored ways to improve its provision of military equipment (Pezard et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the perception of the Russian threat differed between countries, since those bordering Russia perceived a bigger threat, with Poland showing the greatest concern. Still, Germany supported continuous dialogue with Russia (Daehnhardt & Handl, 2018). Although Member States shared different understandings of what Russia's actions would mean to them, they expressed support for Ukraine, maintaining a consensus regarding sanctions since the beginning of the Crimean crisis (Pezard et al., 2017).

However, Hungary became increasingly reluctant to the sanction policy. Despite expressing solidarity at first, Hungary questioned the rationale behind the restrictions imposed, while maintaining its economic relations with Moscow. Contrarily, Poland condemned the annexation of Crimea and advocated for even stricter sanctions against Russia (Zajackowski, 2017), with Poles supporting economic aid and sanctions, even if it heightened the risk of conflict (Forbrig, 2015). Additionally, despite once being the largest consumer of Russian gas in Europe (Liadze et al., 2022), Germany stopped perceiving the Russian Federation as a strategic partner, beginning to increase deterrence and defence options against it. In fact, the country was a leader in implementing EU and United States (US) sanctions, while actively sustaining a measured military response (Daehnhardt & Handl, 2018).



Regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the development of the sanction policy was handled by the Commission to a greater degree than usual, to prevent information leaks and increase the EU's cohesion (Håkansson, 2023). President von der Leyen sought to eliminate the EU's energy dependency on Russia (Bacarani, 2023), although the negotiations on the sixth sanctions package were particularly difficult, as Hungary blocked it for quite some time. Studies conclude that the European Union has grown from the earlier crises that affected integration (Ladi & Tsarouhas, 2020; Radaelli, 2022), with the experience gained from the COVID-19 pandemic having been used to push forward the Commission's policy agenda (Håkansson, 2023). Empirical analysis further suggests that the President of the Commission contributed to developing a united response to the crisis (Bacarani, 2023).

Strategic Foreign Policy Frameworks: Poland, Germany and Hungary

To establish a foundation for the following discourse analysis, this section examines the foreign policy strategies of Poland, Hungary, and Germany, particularly focusing on their approach to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This contextual background can help elucidate how each country's strategic priorities shape and are reflected in their political discourse.

Poland's Foreign Policy

Poland's foreign policy, in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, is influenced by its historical memory, geographical position and strategic culture (Komarnytskyy, 2024; Sus, 2025). Deep-rooted in centuries of conflict with powerful neighbours, particularly Germany and Russia, Poland's perception of the latter as a neo-imperialist power with expansionist ambitions underpins its main strategic objective: to defeat Russia, secure Ukraine's victory and, consequently, eliminate the military threat on its eastern border (Doeser, 2018; President of the Republic of Poland, 2023c). Despite improved relations with Germany since the Cold War, the country's 2020 National Security Strategy clearly identifies Moscow as the greatest threat to national security, emphasising that: "The most serious threat is the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation, also pursued by means of military force." (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, 2020, p. 6; Komarnytskyy, 2024; Sus, 2025).

In addition to this approach is Poland's "Atlanticist" orientation, which perceives the United States as the indispensable security provider in Europe through NATO (Mikulova, Simecka, 2013; Komarnytskyy, 2024; Lisiakiewicz, 2018). Poland's determination to maintain a robust American military presence on its soil and strengthen Polish-American partnerships reflects the centrality of the US in its foreign and security policy (Poland's Foreign Policy Strategy: 2017-2021, n.d.; Komarnytskyy, 2024; Sus, 2025). This is largely due to the country's heavy reliance on NATO's ability to deter Russia in case of an attack, making Washington its main strategic ally. Indeed, proof of this was the joint visit by Tusk and Duda, long-time political adversaries, to the US capital in March 2024 (Komarnytskyy, 2024; Sus, 2025).

Furthermore, since the war in Ukraine began, Poland has firmly established itself as a pivotal player, offering substantial military, humanitarian and political assistance to Kyiv, while also strengthening military cooperation between Ukraine and the US (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, n.d; Tyler, 2022; Komarnytskyy, 2024). However, it seems this proactive



stance aligns with the country's ambition to lead on the Eastern Flank and amplify its influence within the EU and NATO (Komarnytskyy, 2024; Lisiakiewicz, 2018). In fact, Komarnytskyy (2024) argues that Warsaw considers a Ukrainian victory to be vital not only for limiting Russian influence, but also for stabilising Eastern Europe and achieving a balanced power dynamic on the European continent.

As a result, Poland is establishing itself as a key intermediary between the West and the East, promoting EU norms and advocating for the European integration of Eastern Partnership countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia (Brusylovska, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, n.d.; Lisiakiewicz, 2018). Before 2022, Warsaw's influence on EU Eastern policy was limited, but the war has enhanced its role, allowing Poland to play a more decisive part in discussions about European security (Brusylovska, 2022; Komarnytskyy, 2024).

Notwithstanding Poland's consistent support for Ukraine since the government transition in December 2023, domestic political dynamics paint a more nuanced picture (Sus, 2025). Though Prime Minister Donald Tusk stressed there is broad consensus on supporting Ukraine due to Poland's own security concerns, tensions within institutions persist (Tilles, 2024). Sus (2025) highlights that, with President Andrzej Duda and the government representing opposing political camps, these divisions create friction that constrain the decision-making process in foreign policy. This polarisation hinders Poland's role amid geopolitical instability, showing that despite general consensus, evolving domestic factors still influence its external behaviour (Sus, 2025).

Germany's Foreign Policy

Germany's foreign policy has historically been guided by a set of structural principles, such as rejection of war as a legitimate means of settling disputes, respect for human rights, support for democratic governance, as well as commitment to multilateralism, European integration and the transatlantic link with the United States (Blumenau, 2022; Wittlinger, 2010).

Until 2014, Berlin favoured an approach of engagement with Moscow, treating Russia as a strategic partner in the post-Cold War order (Chivvis & Rid, 2009). However, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its military support for separatists in eastern Ukraine directly challenged Germany's commitment to rejecting the use of force and upholding international law, while also striking at the foundations of European integration and transatlanticism – central for its positioning in the international arena (Siddi, 2016).

In light of these developments and faced with Moscow's opposition to European integration in the post-Soviet space – perceived as a threat to its strategic interests –, Germany found itself under pressure to recalibrate its foreign policy (Siddi, 2016). At the same time, the United States' firm condemnation of Russia's actions tested Berlin's balance between transatlantic commitments and its traditional cooperative approach towards Moscow. As a result, and despite growing political tensions, Germany took on a key role in preserving EU consensus on sanctions, while trying to keep channels of dialogue open with the Kremlin (German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2021).



Such environment reinforced the centrality of multilateralism and cooperation in post-1949 German foreign policy, reflected in its strong commitment to European integration and close alignment with EU principles and objectives on peace, security, and prosperity (Daehnhardt, 2018; Siddi, 2016; Germany Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2021). Similarly, its long-standing commitment to NATO complements this orientation, with Germany acting mainly as a mediator among Member States and within the EU-NATO relationship, promoting consensus and coordinated action (Ewers-Peters, 2020).

While traditionally marked by a cautious and pacifist approach to security, with an aversion to using military means to achieve political goals, German foreign policy underwent a decisive change after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Siddi, 2016; DGAP, n.d.; Scholz, 2022). The *Zeitenwende* speech, announced by Olaf Scholz, marked the abandonment of decades of military restraint (Scholz, 2022; Corblin, 2022). After three decades in which German military resources were focused primarily on international crisis management, Scholz declared that the territorial defence of Europe, within the framework of NATO, would become the fundamental priority. Simultaneously, Berlin intensified coordination with its transatlantic allies and became one of the main providers of military support to Ukraine (Scholz, 2022; Graf et al., 2023; NATO, 2023; Al Jazeera, 2023).

Hungary's Foreign Policy

As for Hungary, its foreign policy is strongly pragmatic, focused on defending national interests and promoting strategic political and economic objectives (About Hungary, 2020; Hettyey, 2020; Schmidt & Glied, 2024). The country's policy documents underline the need to ensure a comprehensive and stable security policy, prioritising energy, food, resources and market security. In parallel, there is also an emphasis on the importance of promoting Hungary's regional interests and strengthening the stability of Central and South-Eastern Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, 2011; Varga, 2000).

Since the 1990s, Hungarian foreign policy has had a Euro-Atlantic orientation, though the Orbán governments have distinguished themselves by their increasingly Eurosceptic positions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, 2011; Varga, 2000). Despite the country's membership in the EU, it appears to pride itself on the "independence" of its foreign policy, which it defines as both "Hungarian and sovereign" and "balanced and patriotic" (About Hungary, 2020; About Hungary, 2023d). As mentioned by Hettyey (2020), Hungary's recent foreign policy adjustments can be considered a part of the country's growing process of de-Europeanization, i.e. the rejection of the restraints and practices imposed by the EU.

This distinct foreign policy direction is evident in the way the Orbán governments have broken with several European norms and values (e.g. Hungary's close relationship with Russia), using the country's economic wellbeing as a justification for its dissidence from common EU policy, thus making Hungary stand as an outlier in the Union (Hettyey, 2020; Lamour, 2023). Furthermore, the country's long-term goal is the creation of mutually beneficial relations with all great powers, an aim made evident by the government's "global opening" policy launched in 2010 – the Eastern Opening (2010) and Southern Opening (2015) initiatives –, with the aim of strengthening political and, above all, economic ties with "emerging countries", such as China or Russia (Hettyey, 2020; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, 2011; Schmidt & Glied, 2024).



In spite of this mostly pragmatic approach, there is a moral and value-based facet in Hungary's foreign policy, which the Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister has stressed as one of its most important aspects: the rights of Hungarian minorities abroad, particularly in the countries of its neighbourhood, such as Romania, Ukraine or Serbia (About Hungary, 2019; About Hungary, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, 2011). Therefore, even before the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, the relationship between Hungary and Ukraine was strained because of the latter's treatment of its Hungarian minority. In fact, Minister Szijjártó stated that ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine "continue to face serious challenges" (About Hungary, 2021). Since the 2010s, tensions have escalated due to demands for "full collective rights" and dual citizenship, which is prohibited by the Ukrainian Constitution (Schmidt & Glied, 2024).

Simply put, Orbán – the longest-serving head of government in the EU – seeks to balance Western alliances with a strategic partnership with Russia, ensuring Hungary access to cheap energy. This pragmatism, coupled with the rejection of exclusive alliances, sustains the country's economic and energy security, while also legitimising value-based policies guided by national interests, such as the protection of Hungarian minorities abroad, especially in Ukraine (Lamour, 2023; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, 2011).

Methodology

This research is based on a discourse content analysis, using an interpretative approach. This method involved a detailed reading of the selected speeches, identifying points of convergence and divergence in the positions expressed by the countries under analysis, which made it possible to map the predominant narratives and discursive tensions related to the conflict. For this purpose, official statements made by representatives of the selected countries, along with credible international newspapers and media sources were used. Priority was given to national government websites, speeches at renowned international organisations, such as the United Nations and EU institutions, as well as reliable, publicly accessible outlets (e.g. *The Guardian*, *Reuters*, and the *Atlantic Council*).

To facilitate a thorough but focused analysis of discourse, a total of 45 discourses were selected, of which 22 were analysed in detail based on their relevance and reliability. These were deemed pertinent according to three main criteria: institutional representativeness (i.e. utterances by heads of state, foreign ministers or official government sources), thematic pertinence (direct references to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, EU foreign policy, or national security), and temporal proximity to the conflict. As a result, all selected statements were issued between February 2022 and April 2024³, enabling a focused discussion on the positions expressed by Poland, Germany, and Hungary regarding the Russo-Ukrainian conflict since February 24th, 2022. Furthermore, the keywords used in the search process were: "EU", "war", "Ukraine", "Russia", "Germany", "Poland", "Hungary", "unity" and "statement".

³ The latter marked the beginning of the study's development and served as the cut-off point for data collection.



Discourse analysis

Building on the foreign policy framework outlined in Section III, the subsequent discourse analysis examines how Poland, Germany, and Hungary have publicly positioned themselves in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Poland

On February 24th, 2022, the Polish president, Andrzej Duda, issued a statement to the nation, in which he condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, making it clear that Ukraine could "count on full support from Poland". He further stated that Poland had repeatedly warned against the illusion of negotiating with Putin and that it was crucial "for the whole Western community today to be united and to adopt a firm common position on Russia". According to Duda, to "resist evil", "the most important thing is unity, unity and above all unity". He further emphasised the US's pivotal role in global security, guaranteeing that Poland's borders were safe thanks to NATO allies (President of the Republic of Poland, 2022a). In an annual speech to Poland's parliament in 2023, he expressed that "There will be no European security and, most likely, no effective way to block Russian imperialism without absolutely close Euro-Atlantic cooperation, without a strong European-American partnership" (Krzysztozek, 2025).

Later in August 2022, after talks with Volodymyr Zelensky, the Polish president stated that Ukraine was fighting for its independence and there could not be a "business as usual" with Russia, reinforcing that Poland is Ukraine's supporting partner, its ally and a home for families seeking shelter (President of the Republic of Poland, 2022b). President Andrzej Duda affirmed that Poland had received almost six million Ukrainian refugees by September 2022, highlighting the good conditions provided to them, and the empathy from the Polish people who had also suffered Russian occupation during World War II. Once again, Duda fervently criticised Russia and added that Poland was the country "Ukraine can always count on" (President of the Republic of Poland, 2022c).

In February 2023, one year after the war broke out, the Polish president reinforced Poland's solidarity with Ukraine, "Because what unites us – Poles and Ukrainians – is a great love of freedom.". Duda further declared that "NATO's role has increased with more countries joining the Alliance" and that "Europe is finally ending its dependence on Russian oil and gas". Once again, he stressed that the "United States is the guarantee of security on the old continent". The President reiterated that for Ukraine to have a chance of winning, "we need unity, unity and more unity of the whole free world" (President of the Republic of Poland, 2023a).

Moreover, the Polish president declared that "the West should help Ukraine join the EU and NATO as well as helping it win its defensive war against Russia", concluding it was his opinion on "how this war should end" (President of the Republic of Poland, 2023b). In addition, Polish Foreign Minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, equally defended the United States and its support for Ukraine. He emphasised that Russia and their allies wish to destroy "the stability of America and to create victory where it is not deserved", as they are "hungry to show that the US is weak, ineffective, and hopelessly divided". However, Sikorski remained positive, mentioning the possibility to "achieve peace through strength", and connecting it to the Polish case. He stated that "in 1999, Poland was invited to join NATO and the transatlantic family" and that "victorious Ukraine may follow a similar path" (Atlantic Council, 2024).



Germany

Throughout the conflict, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has remained adamant regarding his support for Ukraine, stating that Germany would “continue to support Ukraine with financial, humanitarian aid, but also with weapons” (Zakaria, 2023), and claiming to be Ukraine’s strongest supporter in Europe. Since the outbreak of the war, not only has Germany welcomed an abundance of refugees (BR24, 2024), but has also “made available more than 27.8 billion euros in bilateral support for Ukraine” (German Federal Foreign Office, 2024).

Across Scholz’s speeches, he often stresses the importance of assertiveness and unity in preventing Russia’s victory in Ukraine: “It is necessary that Putin understands that he will not succeed with his invasion and this imperialistic aggression and that he has to withdraw troops” (Zakaria, 2023). Furthermore, Scholz underscored that a Russian victory would mean “the end of Ukraine as a free, independent and democratic state” and “the destruction of a peaceful order in Europe”. The Chancellor also addressed the concerns regarding the costs of the war by saying that if Russia goes unstopped, “the financial and political price that we would then have to pay would be many times higher than all the expense of our support for Ukraine today and in the future”. Moreover, he emphasized his commitment by stating that, in 2024, “Germany will invest 2% of its GDP in defence this year, and also every following year and the 2020s, 2030s and beyond” (BR24, 2024).

In his speeches, Scholz repeatedly underlines the need for the EU to do more for the resolution of the conflict: “Are we actually doing enough to signal to Putin that we are in for the long haul?” (BR24, 2024). Already in 2023, the German leader had highlighted that, despite the diplomatic efforts being made to resolve the conflict, Russia is ultimately opting for war (Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations, 2023). Furthermore, concerning Germany’s energy dependency on Russia, Scholz has unequivocally stated and sought to reinforce that Germany remains resilient in the absence of access to Russian energy, and will continue to prosper despite the adversity: “There is no economic crisis in Germany. There is no gas shortage” (Zakaria, 2023).

Notwithstanding his verbal support, Scholz has been hesitant in supplying Ukraine with weapons. According to *The Guardian* newspaper, in early 2024, the Chancellor refused to “supply Taurus long-range cruise missiles to Ukraine despite an outcry among Western allies”. He reasoned that to operate and target these missiles, German soldiers would need to go to Ukraine, increasing the tension between Berlin and Moscow: “I am the chancellor, so that’s it”. In this sense, Scholz expresses a desire to avoid a direct conflict between Russia and NATO, claiming that “there will be no ground troops, no soldiers on Ukrainian soil sent there by European countries or NATO states” (Taylor, 2024), even in the case of an escalation.

Hungary

In February 2022, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, issued a statement showing agreement with the EU’s decisions, in which Hungary “jointly condemned Russia’s military action against Ukraine and decided to unite in imposing sanctions”, but they did not “extend to energy”, therefore “energy supplies to Hungary and the other Member States of the EU are guaranteed”. The Prime Minister restated his consent with the EU’s views and NATO’s position by declaring that “we agreed that we need to behave responsibly, and that rash and irresponsible statements will only worsen the situation and endanger the security of



Europeans". He equally clarified that he will always prioritise Hungary's national interests, thus "we shall not allow anyone to draw Hungary into this war" (About Hungary, 2022a).

After the war broke out, Orbán reiterated the country's interest in staying out of it: "We condemn the war, especially that it is here in our neighbourhood; we say no to violence, we stand together with our allies (...) but the most important thing is that Hungary should stay out of this war conflict" to prevent "the price of war being paid by Hungarians" (Kovács, 2022). In fact, the need to rein in inflation, sustain energy security and the exemption of the energy sector from sanctions ("we will definitely avoid sanctioning energy supply" sustained Orbán) are major concerns of the Hungarian government, as well as the country's humanitarian commitment towards Ukraine. As government spokeswoman, Alexandra Szentkirályi said (regarding Ukrainian refugees): "Hungary helps everyone, we are prepared to help everyone, no one is left without help" (Kovács, 2022).

Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, publicly reinforced the notion that Budapest should prevent NATO's engagement in the war, which could lead to an escalation of the conflict. After explaining the overlap of interests between Hungary and NATO, he stated, "Hungary is not blocking any decisions on the EU Member States delivering more weapons to Ukraine, but it will neither supply arms nor allow lethal aid to cross its territory" (About Hungary, 2022b).

One year after the conflict began, the Prime Minister said that "Europe is drifting into the war in these very minutes, it is doing a dangerous balancing act", affirming that European countries are "already indirectly at war with Russia" (Reuters, 2023). Although Orbán understood the stance of Poland, he alleged that the conflict could have unfolded differently if Russia had had the guarantee that Ukraine would not be joining NATO. Furthermore, Orbán criticised EU sanctions and their harm to the Hungarian economy, stating that "the Brussels super-state" and its support for Ukraine had only lifted the conflict from a "local regional war" to "an all-European level" (Reuters, 2023).

Orbán further reaffirmed his concern for ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine, who also lost their lives in the war: "Hungary is in a unique position as Ukraine is not far away. We have ethnic minorities living in Ukraine, and they are part of the war. They are conscripted, they are soldiers in the Ukrainian army, and they die. So, we lose lives, Hungarian lives..." (Bloomberg Television, 2023). Nevertheless, Hungary considers that the solution is not to encourage the war and provide Ukraine with funds and weapons, but to promote a peaceful resolution, which is "to save lives" (Bloomberg Television, 2023). For the Prime Minister, although "our heart is with Ukrainian suffering", it "is obvious that there is no victory for the poor Ukrainians on the battlefield", and this is why Hungary's perspective on the war "does not belong to the mainstream European approach" (Bloomberg Television, 2023).

The Prime Minister also warned of the danger of a possible "third world war (...) knocking on our door" and insisted on the idea of rejecting Ukraine's adherence to NATO, which he considers a provocative action that would only worsen the conflict: "We have to be very, very careful (...) If any Western country would send boots on the ground, that would mean a direct war between the West and Russia" (About Hungary, 2023a). Furthermore, Minister Szijjártó reaffirmed that Hungary pursues "a foreign policy based on national interests and will not accept any pressurising from the outside, therefore we will cooperate with Russia in securing Hungary's energy supply in the upcoming period just like before" (About Hungary, 2023b).



Additionally, during the domestic parliamentary debate on Ukraine joining the EU, Orbán considered that the EU's treatment of Ukraine shows "blatant bias in the European Union" and "inevitably destroys the authority of the European Union's institutions" (About Hungary, 2023c). He concluded that "Ukraine's membership of the European Union in this form is in direct opposition to Hungary's interests" and although "Ukraine can and must be helped (...) no one should want us to destroy Hungary in the process" (About Hungary, 2023c).

Lastly, Viktor Orbán stated that even if the Visegrád Four (V4)⁴ share divergent positions on the war, they all agree that "Russia's attack was a gross violation of international law". When meeting with the V4, and despite the country's economic relation with Russia, Orbán uncharacteristically proclaimed that "Hungary does not want a common border with Russia again", defending that "the most important basic principle of Hungarian national security is that there should be an entity to the east of us that is located between Russia and Hungary" (About Hungary, 2024).

Discussion

The outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated existing political divisions within the European Union, particularly between Eastern and Western Member States, deepening their geopolitical fissures over how to handle the Russian threat. From the get-go, this reality stands in stark contrast to the official discourse of top EU leaders, who declared: "We stand together more than ever and remain committed to our promise to support Ukraine for as long as necessary." (European Council, 2024b). It is this tension between rhetorical unity and divergent national responses that forms the backdrop against which the positions of Poland, Germany, and Hungary must be examined.

While European governments have generally agreed on key objectives – such as reducing their reliance on Russian gas and mitigating socio-economic disruptions – their approaches to achieving these goals have diverged, exposing significant cracks in cohesion and strategic depth (ECFR Comms, 2022). In fact, although extensive, the sanctions imposed have had uneven and delayed effects. In the first half of 2022, for example, Russia maintained financial stability and posted a record current-account surplus, driven by high commodity prices and reduced imports, suggesting a limited short-term impact on its war effort (Demertzis et al., 2022). Thus, even as unity was maintained in principle, through sanctions on Moscow and financial and humanitarian support for Kyiv, national stances continued to reflect each country's foreign policy traditions and strategic cultures.

Through the discourse analysis, it appears that Poland's stance and support for Ukraine have remained stable since the beginning of the war, in alignment with the EU, with high and consistent support across the country's political spectrum (Stolle, 2023). This stability can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, Poland's close relationship with NATO and the United States, combined with its historically rooted "anti-Russian" sentiment, aligns with its foreign policy that identifies Moscow as the principal threat to national and European security, while reinforcing its "Atlanticist" orientation and reliance on the United States as a security

⁴ An alliance between the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. "The Visegrad Group (also known as the "Visegrad Four" or simply "V4") reflects the efforts of the countries of the Central European region to work together in a number of fields of common interest within the all-European integration" (Visegrad Group, 2024).



guarantor (Mikulova & Šimečka, 2013; Stolle, 2023; National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, 2020; Komarnytsky, 2024).

Secondly, the war in Ukraine represents an existential concern for the country, given its geographical proximity and historical experience with Russian aggression, which heightens its perception of direct vulnerability (Zajaczkowski, 2017). Lastly, Poland's support for Ukraine's integration into Western institutions is reinforced by a "siege mentality," reflecting anxieties about sovereignty and the country's position between stronger and expansionist powers. A stable and democratic Ukraine is therefore viewed as essential for regional security and for consolidating Poland's role as a regional leader and "gateway to the West" (Zajaczkowski, 2017; Brusylovska, 2022).

Notwithstanding, the country's response extends beyond military support. As the country with "the largest per-capita influx of refugees under the liberal conditions of the Temporary Protection Directive⁵ in 2022" (Letki et al., 2024: p. 18), Poland allowed Ukrainians to remain, work, and access social security and healthcare (Jankowski & Gujski, 2022), strengthening its political influence within both EU (Brusylovska, 2022; Lisiakiewicz, 2018) and NATO frameworks (Komarnytsky, 2024). Nevertheless, Poland's "maximalist" strategy – seeking Russia's strategic defeat and full Ukrainian integration into NATO and the EU – can sometimes clash with the more cautious positions of several Western European Members, potentially hindering consensus when Warsaw advocates for broader and faster military aid than others are prepared to provide (Komarnytsky, 2024; Stolle, 2023). Moreover, domestic political tensions, such as those between President Duda and the Tusk government, indicate that even a broadly pro-Ukraine stance can be internally fragmented (Sus, 2025).

In comparison, Germany has adopted a more cautious approach to the conflict, remaining broadly aligned with the EU in supporting sanctions, humanitarian assistance and military aid, which underscores Berlin's recognition of the importance of maintaining a united front within the Union. Nevertheless, Germany's stance has often been accompanied by hesitancy, reflecting efforts to reconcile the country's post-war pacifist tradition with the evolving security landscape (Whitworth, 2021; Stent, 2022).

Olaf Scholz's *Zeitenwende* speech marked a clear reorientation of the country's foreign policy from decades of military restraint to prioritising NATO's territorial defence and strengthening coordination with the United States (Scholz, 2022; Graf et al., 2023). This shift, from diplomacy-focused engagement to a firmer security posture, signalled Germany's intent to defend European stability and counter Russian aggression, with Scholz's decision to support Ukraine reinforcing this, in a nation long reluctant to embrace military force after WWII (Whitworth, 2021). Simultaneously, his hesitation to deliver advanced weaponry can be closely tied to Berlin's energy dependency and historical relations with Moscow, as escalation risks are perceived to jeopardise broader geopolitical interests and sever remaining diplomatic ties (Stent, 2022).

Despite initiating the *Zeitenwende* and committing substantial funds to defence (Scholz, 2022), Berlin has faced criticism for delays in weapons deliveries (Taylor, 2024; Gasper, 2024). Furthermore, structural limitations in military readiness raise doubts about its ability

⁵ Exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin (European Commission, n.d.).



to fulfil its own ambitions (Tallis, 2024). This caution, driven by fears of escalation, has slowed EU-level decision-making and fuelled perceptions of a reactive rather than strategic approach (Fischer, 2023).

As for Hungary, the country has followed a markedly distinct trajectory in response to the Russia-Ukraine war, highlighting a pragmatic approach prioritising national interests, energy security, and neutrality above EU solidarity. Budapest's statements have, to some extent, been incoherent with the EU's position, which the country initially affirmed being in total agreement with. Contrary to his earliest stance, Viktor Orbán blames the EU and NATO's decisions and actions for the escalation of the war, proclaiming his belief in the ineffectiveness of the European community (About Hungary, 2020; Hettyey, 2020).

Consistent with this broader goal of safeguarding national interests, Hungary's foreign policy balances Western alliances with strong ties to Russia, exemplified by the "Eastern Opening" strategy adopted in 2010, which strengthened relations with Moscow and supported energy security and economic objectives (Schmidt & Glied, 2024; Durakcay, 2023). Orbán also emphasises the importance of the Visegrád Group and portrays Ukraine as a buffer state between Hungary and Russia, reinforcing his security-driven rationale (About Hungary, 2024). Meanwhile, he invokes the protection of Hungarian minorities abroad, particularly in Ukraine, to justify some of his decisions on value-based grounds (About Hungary, 2021; About Hungary, 2022c). This dual approach is reflected in Hungary's international endorsement of Ukraine's EU candidate status while opposing its full membership domestically – an attempt to reconcile EU integration with national security concerns (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017; Éltető & Szemlér, 2023; Thorpe, 2023).

Nonetheless, Hungary seems to ultimately prioritise its energy security and admits to being dependent on imports from Russia. Considering these countries' connection (Durakcay, 2023), Orenstein and Kelemen (2017) even suggest that Hungary is Russia's "Trojan horse" in the EU, being therefore used to destabilise the European Union to Moscow's advantage (Éltető & Szemlér, 2023). In practice, this obstructive stance – from delaying sanctions packages to opposing military aid (About Hungary, 2023b; Reuters, 2023) – coupled with close energy and political ties with Russia, as well as a preference for negotiated settlements over military solutions, has positioned Budapest as a consistent outlier (Hettyey, 2020; Lamour, 2023). This has not only complicated the process of reaching a consensus but has also undermined the credibility of the EU's unified front.

From a strategic and political standpoint, the common narrative is becoming increasingly fragile. Internal opposition between the desire for justice and the desire for a ceasefire at any cost reflects the fragmented nature of the European public opinion. This tendency undermines the cohesion of future policies and makes the EU vulnerable to political shifts within Member States (ECFR Comms, 2022; Stolle, 2023).

The EU's reactive, *ad hoc* approach, coupled with its reliance on US military capabilities, raises doubts about its ability to sustain a coherent and effective Ukraine policy should external conditions change or transatlantic alignment weaken (Sakwa, 2015; Raik et al. 2024): "the weakness of European defence capabilities and hence dependence of European security on Washington has been once again exposed by the war" (Raik et al. 2024, p.51). This dependence, compounded by the failure to translate ambitious rearmament pledges into concrete outcomes, underscores the persistent gap between rhetoric and implementation.



Conclusion

This study sought to analyse the diverging positions within the EU as a collective body and its Member States (Poland, Germany, and Hungary), regarding the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The empirical analysis concluded that Poland and Germany seem to show support for EU principles, albeit for different reasons. Poland is one of Ukraine's closest allies, as well as a country deeply marked by Soviet repression, therefore it seems to display an "anti-Russian" sentiment that sustains the nation's massive support. Additionally, the country is also strongly committed to the role of NATO and the US in resolving the conflict. Furthermore, although Germany appears to show aversion to direct conflict and remains more cautious with military support, the country has a notorious positive stance towards Ukraine. In contrast, Hungary prioritises national and economic interests over EU consensus, occasionally acting in ways that challenge collective cohesion.

Overall, these cases emphasise the interplay between national foreign policy traditions and EU-level coordination. Warsaw adopts a securitised, "Atlanticist" approach (Mikulova, Simecka, 2013), whereas Berlin adapts its pacifist, multilateralist framework to a new security landscape (Blumenau, 2022; Wittlinger, 2010). Meanwhile, Hungary demonstrates the consistency of its pragmatic, non-EU centric foreign policy while simultaneously revealing contradictions in relation to EU consensus (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017; Éltető & Szemlér, 2023). Such divergences indicate potential vulnerabilities in the EU's foreign policy framework and suggest that maintaining a unified position in future crises could be an ever-present challenge.

Notwithstanding, this study holds a few limitations. The original research was conducted under the constraints of a strict word limit, which limited the depth of country-specific research and also explains the restricted number of selected discourses. Subsequent revisions tackled these constraints as much as possible, yet they still moulded the overall scope of the study. Therefore, further research should focus on the evolution of the current EU predicament and the distinct stance that countries such as Hungary have within the institution. A deep-dive inquiry into the future positions of the most incoherent or ambiguous leaders within the EU could also shed light on its ever-more apparent lack of total cohesion.

Lastly, academics could explore whether the Union can sustain more "Trojan Horses" in its already fragile foreign policy or if there is a way to strengthen the Member States' positions in a single European direction. Researchers could equally delve into the implications of enlargement – a recurring theme within the EU – on conflict resolution and decision-making, since conclusions requiring unanimity could be made more difficult when deliberated by more members (Hertz & Leuffen, 2011).

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THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the pivotal role of cooperatives in facilitating regional integration, with a focus on the Western Balkans region. Utilizing insights drawn from the European integration process and the unique dynamics of the Western Balkans, this study delves into the multifaceted ways in which cooperatives contribute to various facets of regional integration, encompassing rural development, agriculture, employment, social inclusion, and energy. Through an analysis of projects and initiatives involving cooperatives in the region, it becomes apparent that these entities serve as inconspicuous yet crucial local actors, driving socio-economic advancement and fostering cross-border collaboration. Despite encountering challenges such as legal frameworks and historical contexts, cooperatives significantly influence the promotion of bottom-up approaches to integration, thereby amplifying the participation of local stakeholders in the process. By leveraging fundamental principles inherent to cooperativism, including solidarity and democratic governance, these organizations facilitate dialogue, trust-building, and sustainable development, thereby furthering the overarching objectives of regional integration. This paper underscores the imperative for greater acknowledgment of cooperatives as possible stakeholders in regional integration processes and advocates for policies aimed at bolstering their engagement and empowerment.

Keywords

Cooperatives, Regional Integration, Western Balkans, local turn, Rural development.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa o papel fundamental das cooperativas na facilitação da integração regional, com foco na região dos Balcãs Ocidentais. Utilizando insights extraídos do processo de integração europeia e da dinâmica única dos Balcãs Ocidentais, este estudo aprofunda as formas multifacetadas pelas quais as cooperativas contribuem para várias facetas da integração regional, abrangendo o desenvolvimento rural, a agricultura, o emprego, a inclusão social e a energia. Através de uma análise de projetos e iniciativas envolvendo cooperativas na região, torna-se evidente que estas entidades atuam como atores locais discretos, mas cruciais, impulsionando o avanço socioeconómico e promovendo a colaboração transfronteiriça. Apesar de enfrentarem desafios como quadros jurídicos e contextos



históricos, as cooperativas influenciam significativamente a promoção de abordagens de integração de baixo para cima, ampliando assim a participação das partes interessadas locais no processo. Ao alavancar princípios fundamentais inerentes ao cooperativismo, incluindo a solidariedade e a governação democrática, estas organizações facilitam o diálogo, a construção de confiança e o desenvolvimento sustentável, promovendo assim os objetivos gerais da integração regional. Este documento sublinha a necessidade imperativa de um maior reconhecimento das cooperativas como possíveis partes interessadas nos processos de integração regional e defende políticas destinadas a reforçar o seu envolvimento e capacitação.

Palavras-chave

Cooperativas, integração regional, Balcãs Ocidentais, viragem local, desenvolvimento rural.

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THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS

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The integration process in the Western Balkans is guided by two main strategies. The first strategy revolves around the European Union's bilateral approach, wherein each candidate country must individually fulfill specific requirements. The second strategy involves the European Union's enlargement conditionality for candidate nations, which includes fulfilling stipulated criteria and establishing parallel structures under EU sponsorship. Additionally, multilateral intra-regional initiatives, such as the integration of the Western Balkans itself, complement these strategies. The overarching aim is for these inter and intra-regional approaches to mutually reinforce one another, facilitating smoother accession processes to the European Union for Western Balkan countries. Ultimately, this approach aims to foster initial enlargement among these nations, aligning them closely with the EU's four freedoms of the market and its *acquis communautaire*, thus promoting closer integration with the European Union.

Within this outlined integration framework for the Western Balkans, the post-war context is paramount, particularly in rural areas, which faced a devastated economy and inadequate infrastructure (Van Houtte 1999:625-638). Cooperativism emerges as a viable crisis management alternative (Vieta and Lionais 2015:32), capable of contributing to regional development and fostering integration among populations fragmented by conflict (Radosavac, Djukic, and Jovanovic 2014:23-26) (Pugh 2002:467). However, the role of cooperatives in this context is not immediately evident. Rather, it operates diffusely, often with the assistance of various international organizations through hybrid mechanisms and platforms. Factors such as the erosion of trust resulting from war (CEDP 2018:42) and the complex political and economic legacy of the former Yugoslavia (Gardner and Lerman 2006) partly explain the delayed recognition of the cooperative sector's contribution to regional integration.

Considering this context, this paper aims to delve into the role of cooperatives in facilitating regional integration in the Western Balkans region. Building upon the outlined integration strategies for the Western Balkans, which emphasize both bilateral EU accession processes and intra-regional initiatives, this study seeks to elucidate the historical context and contemporary dynamics of cooperatives in the region in the first moment. By examining the historical evolution of cooperativism in the Western Balkans and its contribution to the broader European integration process, this paper aims to shed light on the multifaceted ways in which cooperatives foster socio-economic development and cross-border collaboration. Moreover, it endeavors to explore the nuanced role of cooperatives in navigating the challenges posed by the post-war context and the complex political and economic legacy of the former Yugoslavia. Ultimately, this paper seeks to emphasize the importance of considering cooperatives as stakeholders in the Western Balkans' integration process and promoting policies aimed at enhancing their engagement and empowerment within the region.



The Cooperative Movement in the Western Balkans

In contrast to Europe, where the cooperative movement boasts a well-documented history and is celebrated for its contributions to the social economy (Bietti et al., 2021; Gijselinckx & Bussels, 2014; Ortmann & King, 2007), the history of cooperatives in the Western Balkans, while similarly old - dating back to the 19th century - follows a unique trajectory, yielding distinct outcomes that shed light on the asymmetries of cooperativism's role in their respective integration endeavors. The first cooperative in the Western Balkans region, Gazdovsky Spolok, was founded in Bački Petrovac, Serbia, in 1846, modeling cooperative savings and loan frameworks. Predominantly, the cooperatives sprouting during this era aimed to address capital scarcity issues, marking a phase of relative prosperity for the cooperative movement (Krasavac & Petković, 2015). According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), cooperatives established in the Western Balkans during this epoch mirrored the European model within a context characterized by:

"a developed awareness about the need to associate; a significant number of different kinds of cooperatives; and one or several alliances connected to international cooperative associations" (FAO 2013:12).

Hence, the initial imprint of cooperativism in the region is largely positive, as it not only establishes cooperative enterprises, inspired by the Rochdale model¹, but also aligns with the global cooperative movement, thereby bolstering and fortifying ongoing initiatives. At this juncture, the trajectory of cooperativism in the Western Balkans mirrors that of its European counterparts. However, following the Second World War, this trajectory underwent a significant shift with the adoption of a collectivization system modeled after the Soviet paradigm. This entailed a partial amalgamation of private property, akin to developments in the Soviet Union, with the establishment of *kolkhozes*². Those cooperatives that did not undergo this transformation evolved into community hubs, fostering rural development and serving as conduits for socialist principles within the country (Irwin, 2000). Consequently, *kolkhozes* deviated from the cooperative model, as laborers were unable to leave the premises, remuneration was tied to labor input rather than production output, and decision-making processes mirrored governmental

¹ The Rochdale Model refers to a cooperative business model that originated from the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, a group of weavers in Rochdale, England, in 1844. This model laid down the principles of modern cooperative organizations and became the foundation for the cooperative movement worldwide. Key features of the Rochdale Model include voluntary and open membership, democratic control by members (one member, one vote), distribution of surplus or profits among members based on their transactions with the cooperative, education and training of members, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for the community.

The Rochdale Model emphasized the importance of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity in creating sustainable and ethical businesses that serve the needs of their members and communities. It provided a blueprint for the organization and operation of cooperatives across various sectors, including agriculture, retail, finance, and housing.

² Kolkhozes were collective farms in the Soviet Union where land, livestock, and equipment were pooled together for joint production. These collective farms were a key component of the Soviet agricultural system, established during Joseph Stalin's collectivization campaign in the late 1920s and 1930s. The term "kolkhoz" is derived from the Russian words "kollektivnoye khozyaystvo," meaning collective ownership or management. Kolkhozes were characterized by centralized planning and state control over agricultural production, with farmers working collectively and sharing the profits from their labor. However, the system faced various challenges, including inefficiency, low productivity, and resistance from individual farmers forced to give up their land and join collective farms.



mandates rather than cooperative principles, effectively reproducing state directives within their assemblies.

By the late 1950s, amidst a Yugoslav adaptation of the Soviet model, cooperatives began to showcase their role in rural development and were acknowledged as vital community hubs, fostering social and cultural development and enhancing overall quality of life within the region.

"With the adoption of the Law of 1957 when the emphasis was put on general agricultural cooperatives, which aside from procuring inputs, purchasing products needed for processing, providing services to farmers and other jobs related to improving agriculture, also had a significant role in rural development because these were places of gathering and the development of social and cultural life, which helped to improve life" (FAO 2013:13).

In this context, it is noteworthy to recognize the role of cooperatives in fostering community bonds - irrespective of the prevailing political and economic milieu - and even in nurturing social capital (Barham and Chitemi, 2009). However, within the specific context of the Western Balkans, the deepening of reforms in the region resulted in the closure of numerous cooperatives, particularly smaller ones, with a significant portion being nationalized and amalgamated into state-owned enterprises. This had detrimental effects and, to some extent, dampened the cooperative sector's vigor in the face of evolving reforms, inconsistencies, and a drift away from the cooperative ethos (FAO, 2013:13).

The intensification of this model effectively transformed cooperative entities into extensions of the government, utilized for political ends rather than representing the interests of the cooperators themselves. Consequently, this period witnessed a significant departure from the original objectives and *modus operandi* of cooperatives, elucidating why their contribution to regional integration in the Western Balkans diverged from that observed in European integration. The legacy of the socialist era profoundly discouraged association and cooperative endeavors, a sentiment that persists among certain segments of the population even today (Hagedorn, 2014; Wegren and O'Brien, 2018).

It was only in the late 1980s, amid the onset of new economic and social reforms in the Western Balkans coinciding with the collapse of Yugoslavia, that cooperatives commenced a revival rooted in their foundational principles. However, with the eruption of the Bosnian war and subsequent conflicts, cooperativism was relegated to the backseat, not deemed a priority at the time (FAO, 2013:15). With the advent of peace negotiations in the late 1990s and the imperative for economic and social reconstruction that interest in cooperatives was reignited definitively.

Thus, as can be perceived, when examining the nexus between the cooperative movement and regional integration processes, it is imperative to acknowledge that the trajectory of cooperative formation in the Western Balkans differed significantly from that experienced in Europe. Consequently, the contribution of cooperatives to regional integration is more readily discernible in the European context than in that of the Western Balkans (Chaves and Monzón, 2017). Nonetheless, this does not negate the existence of cooperative engagement within the Western Balkans.



Cooperatives as a Catalyst for European Integration

The integration trajectory of the Western Balkans is marked by a distinctive feature, rooted in the aspiration of each country in the region to join the European Union (Volk et al., 2014:11). Moreover, the European Union, in addition to delineating its accession criteria and requirements, actively encourages and conditions the Western Balkan nations to foster regional integration, thereby facilitating a smoother and more harmonious bilateral accession process, as previously noted³.

Given that the integration journey of the Western Balkans is intricately linked to EU accession, understanding the role of cooperatives and their impact on the integration process necessitates an examination of the existing synergies between cooperativism and European integration. Subsequently, it becomes imperative to underscore their involvement in the ongoing integration process within the Western Balkans.

Accession to the European Union entails a multifaceted process outlined in Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union:

"Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union. The European Parliament and national Parliaments shall be notified of this application. The applicant State shall address its application to the Council, which shall act unanimously after consulting the Commission and after receiving the consent of the European Parliament, which shall act by a majority of its component members. The conditions of eligibility agreed upon by the European Council shall be taken into account. The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded, which such admission entails, shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. This agreement shall be submitted for ratification by all the contracting States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements".

Based on the provisions of the Treaty, the first step for a country to become a member of the European Union is to comply with the accession criteria defined in the European Council of Copenhagen in 1993, known as the Copenhagen Criteria, which can be divided into three broad axes:

- i) stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- ii) a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU;
- iii) the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the 'acquis'), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

³ European Commission. European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. Website: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/policy-highlights/regional-cooperation_en. Access on 24th February, 2024.



Upon initial examination of these foundational documents, namely Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union and the Copenhagen Criteria, it becomes apparent that they share certain parallels with the principles underpinning the cooperative movement. This correlation facilitates the identification of synergies, thereby enabling discourse or visualization of the guidelines established by the European Union at a supranational level, regarding integration. Concurrently, cooperative principles⁴, operating at a more localized level, can be delineated, as depicted in the table below⁵:

Table 1. Comparison between Cooperative Principles, Article 49 TEU, and the Copenhagen Criteria

Cooperative principles	Article 49 of the Treaty of EU	Copenhagen Criteria
1. Voluntary and Open Membership	Democratic principle and voluntary membership are aligned with the EU's aspiration to accept new members who share democratic values and seek voluntary accession to the bloc.	"Stability of democratic institutions" and "Respect for human rights and protection of minorities."
2. Democratic Member Control	It reflects the commitment to democratic governance, one of the pillars of the EU accession process.	"Stable institutions ensuring democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for minorities" is a criterion.
3. Member Economic Participation	The principle of sharing benefits equitably is in line with the objective of building fair and market economies in the EU.	"Functional market economy."
4. Autonomy and Independence	It reflects the desire for autonomous entities, a principle related to the need for EU member states to maintain their sovereignty.	The requirement for "ability to assume the obligations of accession, including adherence to the goal of economic stability."
5. Education, Training, and Information	The pursuit of education and information is aligned with the values of transparency and information in the EU.	Concerns regarding the "ability to assume the obligations of accession" and the need for "effective institutions to implement and enforce the <i>acquis communautaire</i> ."
7. Cooperation among Cooperatives	It reflects the idea of working together at national and international levels, which can be compared to cooperation among EU member states.	Can be related to the commitment to "good neighborly relations" and "peaceful conflict resolution."
8. Concern for Community	The commitment to sustainable community development aligns with the emphasis on social and regional cohesion in the EU.	Can be linked to the need for "good neighborly relations" and the commitment to "stability of borders."

Source: Adapted from "Regionalism in Southern Europe: The cooperativism in the Western Balkans' integration process" [Master's thesis, Universidade de Évora], by R. Lora, 2023. (<https://dspace.uevora.pt/rdpc/handle/10174/36014>).

⁴ The cooperative principles serve as a guiding framework for the operation and organization of cooperatives worldwide. These principles outline the fundamental values and practices that cooperatives adhere to in their daily activities. They include voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, economic participation by members, autonomy and independence, education, training, and information, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for community. Together, these principles ensure that cooperatives operate in a manner that prioritizes the needs and interests of their members, promotes democratic decision-making, fosters cooperation and mutual support, and contributes to the well-being of the communities they serve.

⁵ Lora, R. (2023). Regionalism in Southern Europe: The cooperativism in the Western Balkans' integration process [Master's thesis, Universidade de Évora]. Retrieved from <https://dspace.uevora.pt/rdpc/handle/10174/36014>. Access on 24th February, 2024.



The initial synergy identified can be further underscored by viewing cooperatives as agents of development from a grassroots perspective, i.e., on a local scale. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that cooperatives contribute to certain chapters of the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union accession process or even in a regional integration process. Therefore, it is imperative to pinpoint the areas in this relationship where cooperatives make a contribution and highlight their role in the integration process by scrutinizing the *acquis communautaire* outlined in the third point of the Copenhagen Criteria.

In the European integration process, once a country is recognized as a candidate, it undergoes several stages until it begins to adopt and implement the *acquis communautaire*. At this juncture, chapters of the *acquis* are opened for negotiation, assessment, and approval. Presently, this community *acquis* comprises 35 chapters that serve as the foundation for commencing negotiations for each candidate country. Hence, they pertain to various domains wherein the candidate country needs to adapt administratively and ensure that national legislation aligns with EU legislation in these domains.

Out of the 35 chapters constituting the *acquis communautaire*, cooperatives can be directly associated, identified, and analyzed in five specific chapters, namely: Chapter 11, pertaining to agriculture and rural development; Chapter 19, concerning social policy and employment; Chapter 20, related to business and industrial policy; Chapter 26, addressing education and culture; and Chapter 27, focusing on the environment. By examining the scope of these chapters and cooperative activities it can be argued that cooperatives have the potential to be recognized as catalysts for regional integration not only by contributing to the harmonization of the *acquis communautaire* but also by serving as local enterprises capable of improving deficient or necessary aspects to meet accession criteria, thereby actively and dynamically expediting the process.

In this regard, considering the chapters of the *acquis communautaire* from the perspective of the contribution of cooperativism, it is possible to highlight that the establishment of cooperatives has proven to be an effective instrument for alleviating rural poverty (Mojo et al., 2017), as well as enhancing the efficiency and productivity of processes in rural areas through the collective acquisition of inputs and machinery (Abate et al., 2014; Ji et al., 2019). Furthermore, it empowers producers with bargaining power and facilitates access to broader markets (Gava et al., 2021). It also fosters integration between producers and supply chain actors and addresses gender issues. Similarly, it promotes knowledge building and the creation of local social capital (Barham and Chitemi, 2009), which is crucial in an integration process considering the history of conflict in the Western Balkans.

Moreover, the establishment of cooperatives can support capacity building and the dissemination of knowledge and co-creation through peer learning among producers, which are vital for adopting best practices, adapting to climate change, and implementing risk strategies. Finally, it is worth mentioning that cooperatives can play a central role in local governance by identifying relevant technological innovations and necessary changes in rural management, as well as in education to bolster producer leadership and foster youth and female entrepreneurship (Gava et al., 2021).



In this vein, cooperatives can be associated or observed alongside the concept of *subaltern and insurgent cosmopolitanism*⁶ (Lora 2023), as they enable subordinate or excluded actors from the globalization process to organize transnationally in defense of common interests. This is achieved through links with international organizations, such as the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), or through initiatives, projects, and institutions that allow the grouping of often marginalized voices excluded from a process, not only to participate but also to enjoy common benefits, as is the case with regional integration.

Emphasizing the cooperative contribution to the process and highlighting this *insurgent cosmopolitanism* capacity is crucial because the integration process of the Western Balkans ultimately aims at accession to the European Union in the long term. Therefore, the involvement of cooperatives in this scenario enables, in the short and medium term, the highlighting of the role of a local actor as an international actor in contributing not only to the regional scenario of the Western Balkans but also locally in each country. Furthermore, it is important to note that, in the case of the Western Balkans countries, additional accession conditions were established in the so-called Stabilization and Association Process (SAP)⁷, mainly related to regional cooperation and good neighborly relations. However, it is still necessary to analyze the *catalytic effect* that the cooperative can provide, which will be discussed in detail in the next item regarding regionalism.

Cooperatives: a Non-Evident Local Actor in Regionalism

The role and impact of cooperatives within the European integration process are discernible through the alignment between the foundational principles of European integration — enshrined in the Treaty on European Union and the Copenhagen Criteria — and the cooperative principles. Moreover, the correlation between specific aspects of the *acquis communautaire* and cooperative principles in relevant sectors further highlights their participation in shaping the accession process to the European Union.

Conversely, when considering the integration efforts in the Western Balkans, the contribution of cooperatives appears less conspicuous, primarily due to the historical backdrop of the cooperative movement in the region, as mentioned before. Moreover, the ongoing nature of the integration process in the Western Balkans adds complexity to the visibility of cooperative involvement. Additionally, akin to the dynamics observed in European integration, the engagement of local actors, including cooperatives, may not

⁶ “Insurgent cosmopolitanism,” a term coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, refers to a critical and alternative approach to traditional cosmopolitanism. While conventional cosmopolitanism tends to emphasize a universalist and harmonious view of global citizenship, insurgent cosmopolitanism highlights the voices and perspectives of marginalized and subaltern communities. This approach acknowledges the structural inequalities, injustices, and oppressions that pervade global relations and seeks to challenge and transform these dynamics from the margins of society. Insurgent cosmopolitanism values diversity, plurality, and the struggle for social justice at local, national, and global levels, promoting a vision of global citizenship that is more inclusive, supportive, and engaged with the realities and needs of marginalized communities. Santos, B. de S. (2007). Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges. Review (Fernand Braudel Center), 30(1), 45-89.

⁷ The Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) is a framework established by the European Union (EU) for countries in the Western Balkans with the aim of promoting stability, democracy, and economic development in the region. It provides a pathway for these countries to gradually integrate with the EU and eventually become candidate countries for EU membership. The SAP involves various measures and reforms, including political, economic, and legal reforms, as well as initiatives to promote regional cooperation and reconciliation. It is an important mechanism for advancing the European integration aspirations of the Western Balkan countries.



be readily apparent. This observation stems from the predominant theoretical frameworks, such as neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, which emphasize the roles of states and supranational entities in integration endeavors, a phenomenon accentuated in the context of the evolving integration process in the Western Balkans. This does not mean that there are no local actors or that cooperatives are not indirectly represented, contemplated, and participants in the process. The very mechanisms and structure of global governance mention the possibility of participation and interaction (Lora 2023). In this sense, it is interesting to note that the South East Europe 2030 Strategy⁸ (SEE 2030 Strategy), organized by the member countries of the SEECP⁹, as well as by the RCC¹⁰, highlights the traditional format of global governance processes as insufficient for the full involvement of actors and beneficiaries of an integration process, i.e., the top-down-oriented perspective demonstrates a lack of interaction with local actors and does not foresee greater participation of other actors such as cooperatives.

"The top-down oriented process of programming and implementation of actions did not provide for sufficient involvement of the implementers and intended beneficiaries on the ground, such as the private sector and its related institutions. Furthermore, limitations were detected in access to and operationalisation of available funding; frequent succumbing to a silo approach; weak capacities and/or lacking mandates of some regional coordinators; and challenges in target formulations and data collection."
(RCC-SEE 2030 2021:5)

Although the lack of a robust regulatory framework is a common challenge across the Western Balkans, national approaches vary significantly, reflecting diverse political and administrative structures. Serbia has made notable strides by enacting a modern Law on Cooperatives, which aims to align with EU standards and principles of the social economy (Ljubojevic & Maksimovic Sekulic, 2021). In contrast, Bosnia and Herzegovina faces the additional complexity of harmonizing legislation across its state and entity levels, resulting in a fragmented legal landscape for cooperatives that hinders the development of a unified support system (European Parliament, 2024). North Macedonia, despite its candidate status, still grapples with institutional and administrative capacity challenges that impact the potential of cooperatives to act as instruments for regional

⁸ The South East Europe 2030 Strategy is a regional initiative aimed at promoting cooperation and development among countries in the Southeast European region. It outlines a vision and objectives for the region's sustainable development, addressing various socio-economic challenges and opportunities. The strategy focuses on areas such as economic growth, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and regional integration. It serves as a framework for joint action and collaboration among governments, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders to foster progress and prosperity in the region by the year 2030.

⁹ SEECP stands for the South-East European Cooperation Process. It is a regional initiative aimed at promoting cooperation and dialogue among countries in Southeast Europe. The SEECP was established in 1996 to address common challenges and foster stability, security, and prosperity in the region. It provides a platform for political dialogue, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange among its member states. The SEECP is based on principles of equality, mutual respect, and good neighborly relations, and it works closely with international partners to support regional integration and development efforts.

¹⁰ RCC stands for the Regional Cooperation Council. It is an international organization that promotes cooperation and integration among countries in Southeast Europe. The RCC was established in 2008 to support the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region and to foster stability, security, and economic development. The organization focuses on areas such as regional cooperation, economic growth, infrastructure development, and rule of law. The RCC facilitates dialogue and cooperation among its member states and coordinates with other international organizations and donors to support the region's integration efforts.



development¹¹. Furthermore, Kosovo's cooperative sector development is closely tied to the broader dialogue on normalizing relations with Serbia and fulfilling specific EU conditions related to regional cooperation¹².

Through data collection and analysis, it becomes apparent that the interaction between cooperatives and the RCC occurs indirectly, facilitated at times through established mechanisms or platforms, and at other times through intermediary actors like the International Labour Organization (ILO), which coordinates numerous projects in the region where cooperatives play a central role.

Moreover, the SEE 2030 Strategy underscores the imperative of bolstering regional cooperation across existing sectors within the Western Balkans and between the region and the European Union, aiming to establish a foundational framework through key organizations across various political dimensions (RCC-SEE 2030 2021:6). Emphasizing the need to harness the social capital of sectors and institutions, the Strategy aims to enhance both intra- and inter-regional integration within the Western Balkans. This strategic objective aligns with a specific requirement highlighted in the European Commission's Report on Social Economy in the Eastern Neighborhood and the Western Balkans¹³, further emphasizing the significance of cooperatives in fostering regional integration.

"The lack of a regulatory framework for social economy development is cumbersome (...), not allowing socially driven initiatives full and needed recognition (...) none of the countries have implementation tools. In practice (...) social enterprises do not receive needed public recognition, do not enjoy tax benefits, and are struggling with administrative burden and inconsistent implementation of regulations. Social economy is seen as an inclusion model mostly for people with disabilities, with few countries having defined other vulnerable groups as beneficiaries of the employment model created by social enterprises" (Rosandić 2018:5).

Thus, it is noticeable that, despite the existence and participation of social economy entities, there is a lack of support from the Western Balkans countries in establishing a legal framework to support and enable the functioning of cooperatives (Lora 2023). While the Commission points out this gap, the SEE 2030 Strategy seems to encourage and even highlight the need for greater involvement of this sector.

In this regard, the SEE 2030 Strategy seeks to incorporate this local capacity into integration priorities as a significant contribution to creating synergies among regional, sub-regional, economic, and local levels (RCC-SEE2030 2021:33), primarily through the

¹¹ Balcanicaucaso.org. (2023). The state of progress of regional policy in the European integration process of North Macedonia. Recuperado em 9 de setembro de 2025, de <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/North-Macedonia/The-state-of-progress-of-regional-policy-in-the-European-integration-process-of-North-Macedonia-233282>

¹² Ifri.org. (2017). The Challenge of the European Integration of Kosovo: Regional Cooperation and Neighbourly Relations. Recuperado em 9 de setembro de 2025, de <http://www.ifri.org/en/challenge-european-integration-kosovo-regional-cooperation-and-neighbourly-relations>.

¹³ European Commission. Website: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/29642/attachments/15/translations/en/renditions/native>. Access on 25th February, 2024.



Employment and Social Affairs Platform 2 (ESAP2)¹⁴. This can be linked to the earlier discussion on synergies between cooperativism and the fundamentals of European integration. Therefore, the Strategy acknowledges the importance of local actors, anticipates their participation, and even mentions the construction of this relationship at different levels (RCC-SEE 2030 2021:54).

Based on the European Commission's Report on Social Economy in the Eastern Neighborhood and Western Balkans (Rosandić 2018), as well as the SEE 2030 Strategy (2021), the participation and role of cooperatives in the integration process are not explicitly highlighted. However, when observing the activities of international organizations cooperating in the process as supranational agents, the contribution of cooperatives to various projects, initiatives, and activities indirectly supporting the integration of the Western Balkans region becomes apparent. Thus, cooperatives have served as catalysts for many actions, albeit in a hybrid process with international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), among others.

Furthermore, it is important to note that countries in the Western Balkans have support infrastructure in the form of intermediary organizations, incubators, accelerators, training centers, mentorship programs, along with financing and networks advocating for the interests of social economy stakeholders (Rosandić 2018). In this context, cooperatives are included in various segments and solutions, as their seven principles enable them to be perceived as local enterprises capable of leveraging characteristics related to the social economy. This underscores the aspect of insurgent cosmopolitanism once again.

Thus, considering hybrid initiatives that take into account cooperative capacity and the activities of observed international organizations, it is possible to highlight specific areas - potentially related to the *acquis communautaire* - where cooperativism has contributed to the integration of the Western Balkans in a non-evident manner but as a catalyst. One such area extends beyond regional integration, encompassing rural development, agriculture, employment, and social inclusion, and may even be linked to peacebuilding efforts (Lora 2023). By fostering economic and social development in the region, cooperatives have facilitated the integration of individuals at a local level, enabling groups previously divided by conflict to coexist through the structure provided by cooperatives, as the case of a multi-ethnic agri-food cooperative established in the canton of Zenica-Doboj¹⁵.

The aforementioned project can be related to various chapters of the *acquis communautaire*, in addition to those dedicated to agricultural development, employment, and social aspects. It is also possible to observe in this case the hybrid manner in which cooperatives have operated and been represented in the global governance bodies of the region, always through an international organization. In the same vein, recent projects by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have been notable in

¹⁴ Employment and Social Affairs Platform 2 is a forum associated with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). It serves as a space for discussions, collaborations, and initiatives focused on employment and social affairs within the framework of regional cooperation in Southeast Europe

¹⁵ Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC COOP). Transforming our world: A cooperative 2030 Cooperative contributions to SDG 16. Website: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_emp/---emp_ent/---coop/documents/publication/wcms_711383.pdf. Access on February 25th, 2024.



fostering cooperative initiatives in the Western Balkans region through the Rural Competitiveness Development Program (RCDP)¹⁶. These initiatives aim to establish small agricultural groupings alongside small and medium-sized enterprises and other actors in the agricultural sector, with the goal of implementing rural development, local prosperity, poverty alleviation, and promoting social inclusion.

It is noteworthy that the mentioned project has been operating in a hybrid manner, whereby once the proposal was presented to farmers, they themselves established and registered the groupings. Therefore, the initiative originated from the grassroots, in a bottom-up perspective, in a joint process between cooperatives and international agents, such as IFAD in this case. Although not all groupings in the project identify as cooperatives, farmers may potentially organize themselves in this format in the future and provide collaborative work as has been happening in the region. According to IFAD, these groupings have already facilitated the establishment of five cooperatives and the consolidation of twelve others. In total, a network of 700 farmers has been established so far.

Similarly, in the areas of employment, social and economic development, and inclusion, another case worth mentioning is related to the Romani population in Serbia. Cooperatives have been important actors for this population, particularly in Serbia, as Romani people have traditionally been the main workforce - albeit informal - in the waste management sector of the country (Medina 2008). The establishment of cooperatives has strengthened the participation of this population as well as inclusion, bringing together competitive amounts of raw materials and increasing their bargaining power. In the energy sector, the study "Energy Cooperatives Comparative Analysis in Eastern Partnership Countries and Western Balkans," conducted by Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) in partnership with the Green Energy Cooperative (Zelena Energetska Zadruga-ZEZ), highlights the contribution of cooperatives to the energy theme in the Western Balkans region. According to the study, energy communities, including cooperatives, play a vital role in helping governments achieve climate and energy goals. They foster commitment, reduce costs and distrust, and encourage sustainable actions. These projects promote community cohesion and are part of a broader strategy for inclusive development¹⁷.

In North Macedonia, also in the context of rural development, agriculture, employment, and social inclusion, the project "Support to Development of Agricultural Cooperatives," coordinated by CARE International, along with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the European Union, presented in its final report that cooperative projects established in the region have led to an improvement in agricultural practices and modernization of rural properties¹⁸."

It is possible to list other similar examples that allow us to observe the role of cooperatives as a catalyzing agent in regional integration processes. Therefore, the

¹⁶ Fundo Internacional para o Desenvolvimento da Agricultura (IFAD). Website: <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/project/2000001813>. Access on February 25th, 2024.

¹⁷ Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF). Website: <https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/EnergyCooperativesONLINEshortversionKopieren.pdf>. Access on February 25th, 2024.

¹⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Website: <https://reliefweb.int/report/republic-north-macedonia/final-evaluation-support-development-agricultural-cooperatives>. Access on February 25th, 2024.



cooperative acts as a non-evident actor. Whether due to the hybrid format in which cooperative initiatives are carried out or even because of the history of cooperativism in the region, the process of integration in the Western Balkans has relied on cooperative actions, although this contribution could be better utilized if indeed viewed from a “top-down” perspective, as suggested by the SEE 2030 Strategy, harnessing the inherent *insurgent cosmopolitan* potential of the cooperative essence.

Conclusion

The examination of the cooperative movement within the Western Balkans offers valuable insights into the complexities of regional integration. By tracing its historical trajectory, shaped by a confluence of communist legacies and regional conflicts, we gain a nuanced understanding of its divergent path compared to cooperative movements in Europe. This nuanced perspective underscores the importance of appreciating the multifaceted roles of cooperatives as agents of change within the region’s integration dynamics.

Furthermore, our analysis illuminates the significant but often understated contributions of cooperatives to European integration. As the Western Balkans navigate the path toward EU accession, understanding the pivotal role of cooperatives becomes imperative. Not only do cooperatives possess the potential to facilitate the accession process, but they also serve as vital drivers of regional cohesion and cooperation among Western Balkan nations.

Despite facing challenges stemming from historical legacies and legal frameworks, cooperatives demonstrate resilience and remain integral actors in the regional landscape. While their impact may not always be immediately discernible, their influence permeates various spheres of regionalism, offering avenues for enhanced collaboration and integration. By acknowledging and harnessing the latent potential of cooperatives, stakeholders can unlock new opportunities for synergy between local and global forces, fostering a more robust and inclusive integration process in the Western Balkans.

In conclusion, prioritizing the role of cooperatives as catalysts for integration represents a crucial step toward realizing the region’s aspirations for both regional cohesion and eventual EU accession. By leveraging the inherent strengths of the cooperative movement, policymakers can pave the way for sustainable and inclusive integration, positioning the Western Balkans as a dynamic participant in the broader European landscape. While the cooperative movement faces shared challenges across the region, future research and policy initiatives must account for the distinct national contexts. The differing legal frameworks in Serbia, the complex governance structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the specific post-independence challenges in Kosovo all necessitate tailored approaches to effectively harness the power of cooperatives for integration.

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MULHERES EM ORGANIZAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS: O CASO DE MARIA DE LOURDES PINTASILGO NA UNESCO (1975 -1979)

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Resumo

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, a única mulher a desempenhar, até hoje, o cargo de primeiro-ministro em Portugal, teve um papel de relevo nos mais importantes fóruns internacionais. O presente artigo analisa a atuação, enquanto Embaixadora de Portugal junto da UNESCO, entre 1974 a 1979. Com base em bibliografia de referência, documentação de arquivo e periódicos da época, procura-se investigar o processo de decisão que conduziu ao pedido de regresso de Portugal à UNESCO; compreender quais as razões da escolha de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo para desempenhar o cargo de Embaixadora; e identificar as suas principais áreas de atuação, com a finalidade de garantir a reinserção de Portugal na organização, após a saída voluntária em 1971, por decisão do Governo português.

Palavras-chave

Embaixadora, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Portugal, Política Externa Portuguesa, UNESCO.

Abstract

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, the only woman, to this day, to serve as Prime Minister in Portugal, played a prominent role in major international forums. This article analyzes her intervention as Portugal's Ambassador to UNESCO between the years 1974 and 1979. Based on reference bibliographies, archival documents, and periodicals from that time, it seeks to investigate the decision-making process that led to Portugal's request to rejoin UNESCO; the reasons behind the choice of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo for the position of ambassador; and to identify her main areas of activity aimed at ensuring Portugal's reintegration into the organization, following the voluntary withdrawal in 1971, by decision of the Portuguese Government.

Keywords

Ambassador, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Portugal, Portuguese Foreign Policy, UNESCO.

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MULHERES EM ORGANIZAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS: O CASO DE MARIA DE LOURDES PINTASILGO NA UNESCO (1975 -1979)

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A UNESCO e a política externa portuguesa

A cooperação intelectual, em termos multilaterais, remonta ao final da Primeira Guerra Mundial. Através da Sociedade das Nações (SDN)¹, foi criado, a 4 de janeiro de 1922, o Comité Internacional de Cooperação Intelectual (CICI), ao qual foi atribuído o estatuto de órgão consultivo do Conselho da SDN, com objetivos de “renovar os vínculos entre academias e especialistas, os quais foram paralisados no decorrer da guerra; a necessidade de estabelecer uma coordenação entre as diversas atividades nacionais; e a pertinência de estabelecer Comitês Nacionais para a cooperação intelectual” (Valderrama, 1995, p. 2).

O rápido sucesso do Comité tornou necessário repensar o conceito de “cooperação internacional”, o que conduziu, em setembro de 1924, à criação do Instituto Internacional de Cooperação Intelectual (IICI), com sede em Paris.

Com o estabelecimento do IICI, consolidou-se o entendimento de que a cooperação intelectual visava “a colaboração internacional para assegurar o avanço da civilização em geral e do conhecimento humano, particularmente, o desenvolvimento da disseminação das ciências, letras e artes”, bem como “criar um estado de espírito propício à resolução pacífica de problemas internacionais no âmbito da Liga das Nações” (Valderrama, 1995, pp. 3 - 4).

O IICI funcionou durante quatorze anos e desempenhou um papel de grande relevância em várias áreas, entre as quais se destacam a educação, as ciências sociais, atividade de âmbito científico, cinema, bibliotecas, arquivos e direitos de autor.

Entre 1939 e 1945, com o decorrer da Segunda Guerra Mundial, as atividades do Instituto ficaram suspensas e, terminado o conflito, o IICI cessou funções com a assinatura, a 18 de abril de 1946, de um acordo que previa a transferência dos seus arquivos para as Nações Unidas, a iniciar em 1947 (Lacoste, 1993, p. 29).

¹ Sobre a SDN ver: Ostrower, Gary (1995), *The League of Nations. From 1919 to 1929, The International Cooperation Towards Peace in the 20^a Century*, Nova Iorque, Avery Publishing Group; Gill, George (1996), *The League of Nations from 1929 to 1946*, Avery Publishing Group; Kennedy, Paul (2006). *The Parliament of Man. The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*, New York: Random House; Marbeau, M (2001). *La Société des Nations*, Presses Universitaires de France.



Com a criação da Organização das Nações Unidas, em 1945, foi estabelecido um conjunto de agências especializadas sob o seu domínio. Para assumir as funções anteriormente desempenhadas pelo IICI, foi fundada, a 16 de novembro de 1946, a Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (UNESCO). O principal objetivo da UNESCO - "contribuir para a paz e a segurança, promovendo a colaboração entre as nações por meio da educação, ciência e cultura"² - conduziu a que a organização fosse considerada uma esperança para "governar" as relações internacionais de forma mais democrática e pacífica (Maurel, 2010, p.19). Contudo, o contexto internacional em que foi criada, marcado pela devastação do após Segunda Guerra Mundial e pelo início da Guerra Fria, dificultou a sua ação, evidenciando-se, desde cedo, uma divisão entre Ocidente / Oriente (Maurel, 2005, pp. 123-124).

Ao longo dos anos, tem sido notável o papel da UNESCO na criação de diversas iniciativas globais de carácter cultural, científico e educacional, exemplificadas pela proteção do património cultural, a promoção da ciência e pela erradicação do analfabetismo. Essas iniciativas são transmitidas aos Estados-membros, sendo particularmente relevante observar a forma diferenciada como cada um as implementa (Duedal, 2016, pp. 153-181).

No entanto, apesar dos sucessos alcançados, a organização enfrenta diversos obstáculos, entre os quais se destacam, a localização da sede da UNESCO em Paris e o papel preponderante dos Estados europeus, o que conduz a que muitas das suas ações se concentrem, essencialmente, na Europa (Maurel, 2012, p. 62). Acrescem ainda o nepotismo nas nomeações para cargos, as tensões entre Estados-membros, a excessiva burocracia e os problemas de financiamento, fatores que, em conjunto, dificultam a plena afirmação dos ideais da UNESCO (Maurel, 2010, pp. 173- 216).

No que respeita às relações estabelecidas entre Portugal e a UNESCO, estas estiveram sempre diretamente relacionadas com a posição do país nas Nações Unidas. Apesar de manifestar interesse na organização logo após a sua criação, em 1946, Portugal adotou uma atitude cautelosa: ao longo das décadas de 1940 e 1950 manteve em aberto a possibilidade de adesão; em 1961 procedeu à nomeação de um Observador Permanente; e apenas em 1965 apresentou formalmente o pedido de adesão como Estado Membro de pleno direito. Importa salientar que este pedido coincidiu com o momento em que a questão colonial portuguesa adquiriu uma visibilidade internacional, particularmente, considerável. A década de 1960 ficou marcada pela independência de mais de uma dezena de novos Estados africanos, bem como pela aprovação, pela ONU, de um conjunto de resoluções (1514, 1541 e 1542) relacionadas com a recusa portuguesa em fornecer informações relativas aos seus territórios coloniais (Santos, 2011, pp. 63-68).

Nas Nações Unidas consolidou-se uma maioria fortemente crítica à colonização, enquanto o Governo português mantinha-se agarrando à ideia de "conservar um império colonial, solidamente, amarrado à metrópole" (Silva, 1995, p. 38). Se os representantes portugueses na ONU enfrentaram "o espírito anticolonialista" e a "hostilidade da comunidade internacional" (Teixeira, 2000, p.101), nos fóruns da UNESCO a situação não foi, de todo, diferente.

² Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, consultado em <https://www.unesco.org/en> a 10 de agosto de 2024.



Desde a criação da UNESCO até a adesão formal de Portugal, em 1965, o país adotou uma postura de “constante avaliação e reavaliação das vantagens e das desvantagens inerentes à sua participação na organização” (Rodrigues, 2006, p. 179). Contrariamente, às expectativas do Governo português, o estatuto de Estado-Membro intensificou as críticas à política colonial portuguesa. Pouco após a adesão, ainda em 1965, o Conselho Executivo da UNESCO aprovou a Decisão 70EX/1, determinando que Portugal não seria convidado a participar nas atividades da organização até à divulgação dos resultados de um estudo de campo sobre a educação nos territórios africanos sob jurisdição portuguesa. Nesse mesmo ano, foram também aprovadas as resoluções XI e XX, que condenavam todas as formas de colonialismo e racismo. Em 1968, a Assembleia Geral da UNESCO reforçou a sua posição anticolonialista ao aprovar a Resolução 9.12, que condenava a manutenção dos regimes coloniais e de todas as formas de discriminação racial, bem como a Resolução 9.14, que repudiava os atos de agressão cometidos pelas forças militares portuguesas em África, instando os Estados-Membros a suspenderem toda a cooperação com Portugal nas áreas da educação, ciência e cultura. Dois anos depois, em outubro de 1970, o Conselho Executivo da UNESCO decidiu prosseguir com o apoio às organizações e aos refugiados provenientes de territórios coloniais já libertados (Santos, 2021, pp. 93-94).

Perante as constantes resoluções, o Governo português manifestou a sua insatisfação face à orientação da UNESCO contra Portugal, considerando o conjunto de medidas adotadas uma ingerência nos assuntos internos do Estado português. Em consequência, o Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Rui d'Espinay Patrício, comunicou ao Diretor-Geral da organização que Portugal solicitava a sua saída de Estado-Membro da UNESCO, formalizada em dezembro em 1972.

Somente em Setembro de 1974, com a democratização do regime português, resultante da Revolução de 25 de Abril, Portugal regressou UNESCO, sendo a liderança da Missão Portuguesa atribuída a Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo.

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo: Breve Biografia

Maria de Lourdes Ruivo da Silva Pintassilgo nasceu a 18 de janeiro de 1930, em Abrantes, filha de Jaime de Matos Pintassilgo, comerciante, e de Amélia do Carmo Ruivo da Silva Matos Pintassilgo, doméstica (Souza, 2013, p. 345).

Em 1933, três anos após o seu nascimento, foi institucionalizado em Portugal, o regime do Estado Novo, assumindo a chefia do Governo António de Oliveira Salazar. Desde cedo, para Maria de Lourdes, “obedecer e respeitar os chefes, exigindo-se a si própria a excelência, sempre ultrapassável”, constituiu um lema de vida que manteve nas duas primeiras décadas de existência, altura em que “a submissão dará lugar à contestação, embora sempre dentro do cenário de aperfeiçoamento contínuo” (Beltrão & Katton, 2007, p.22).

Após a mudança da família para Lisboa, em 1937, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo realizou a instrução primária no Colégio Garrett, obtendo as melhores classificações da instituição, e em outubro de 1940, ingressou no Liceu Dona Filipa de Lencastre (Beltrão & Katton, 2007, p.33). Aluna de mérito e excelência, decidiu, em 1948, ingressar no Instituto



Superior Técnico (IST), para cursar Engenharia Química. Uma escolha deveras interessante: “feudo masculino por excelência”, poucas eram as raparigas que frequentavam o IST, “faculdade de engenharia com prestígio internacional e um grau de exigência que ultrapassava muitas das congêneres europeias” (Beltrão e Katton, 2007, p. 65). Em 1953, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo concluiu a licenciatura e iniciou a sua carreira profissional como investigadora bolseira do Instituto de Alta Cultura, da Junta de Energia Nuclear, e a partir de julho de 1954 desempenhou funções na Companhia União Fabril (CUF).

Foi durante os anos da universidade que Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo que se aproximou da vida internacional. No primeiro ano no IST aderiu à Juventude Universitária Católica Feminina (JUCF), ocupando o cargo de Presidente do organismo de 1952 a 1956, e organizando, em colaboração com Adérito de Sedas Nunes, o I Congresso Nacional da Juventude Universitária Católica (Amaral, 2009, pp.77-96).

Durante o exercício das suas funções, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo viajou com frequência ao estrangeiro, adquirindo uma “consciência cosmopolita”, e avaliando à distância o “atraso do seu país e o sistema político que o amordaça” (Beltrão e Katton, 2007, p. 83). Na qualidade de presidente da JUCF participou no Movimento Internacional de Estudantes Católicos (Pax Romana), destacando-se de tal modo que foi escolhida para integrar o Comité Diretor, e, mais tarde, eleita a primeira mulher presidente do Movimento (1956-1958). Durante as suas viagens internacionais, estabeleceu contato com o Movimento Graal,³ o qual introduziu em Portugal, no ano de 1962, em colaboração com Teresa Santa Clara Gomes. Nesse período, abandonou a carreira de engenheira, para desenvolver, no quadro do Movimento, projetos “diretamente com camadas sociais onde a necessidade de transformação mais se fazia sentir”. Entre 1964 e 1969 foi eleita Vice-Presidente do Graal Internacional (anos em que estabeleceu residência em Paris), sendo responsável pela “coordenação de equipas em vários continentes, sobretudo orientadas para o desenvolvimento social e para a promoção das mulheres enquanto motores de transformação da sociedade” (Bettencourt, 1995, p. 219).

Em Portugal, Oliveira Salazar foi substituído, em julho de 1968, por Marcello Caetano na chefia do Governo. O novo Presidente do Conselho, apreciando “a capacidade organizativa, a agilidade verbal, a inteireza ética, a imensa cultura técnica e humanística” de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, convidou-a a desempenhar funções políticas como Procuradora da Câmara Corporativa,⁴ cargo que ocupou, na qualidade de independente, até 1974 (Beltrão e Karron, 2007, pp. 106-107). Seguiram-se, em Portugal, outras funções governativas: consultora do Secretário de Estado do Trabalho e Previdência Social, Joaquim Silva Pinto entre 1970 e 1973, e em novembro de 1973 foi nomeada presidente da Comissão para a Política Social relativa à Mulher onde “foram propostas diversas alterações ao direito da família e a legislação sobre o trabalho das mulheres” (Souza, 2013, p. 588).

Entre 1971 e 1972, a convite de Marcello Caetano, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo integrou a delegação portuguesa à Assembleia Geral da ONU, participando em reuniões nas quais

³ Sobre o Graal ver: Fontes, Paulo de Oliveira (2001) << Movimentos eclesiais contemporâneos >> in Carlos Moreira Azevedo (Dir.) *Dicionário de História Religiosa de Portugal*, Vol. IV, Lisboa, Círculo de leitores, pp. 459-470.

⁴ Entre 1969 e 1973, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo foi a única mulher na Câmara Corporativa.



se debateu a autodeterminação dos territórios portugueses. Durante esses encontros, defendeu “a falta de um estudo objetivo por parte das Nações Unidas do conceito de autodeterminação”; propondo a criação de um grupo de reflexão sobre o problema de África “com gente competente e sensível à questão do ultramar” (Antunes, 1985, pp. 361-362).

Após a Revolução de 25 de abril de 1974, assumiu os cargos de Secretária de Estado da Segurança Social em 1974, durante o I Governo Provisório, e de Ministra dos Assuntos Sociais entre 1974-1975.

No âmbito da política nacional, o ano de 1979 representou, para Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, o maior desafio: foi eleita Primeira-Ministra, sendo até hoje a única mulher portuguesa a assumir o cargo. O V Governo Constitucional, um governo de iniciativa presidencial⁵, tomou posse a 1 de agosto de 1979, constituído por “uma equipa simultaneamente pluralista e coesa, pragmática e idealista” (Pintasilgo, 1980, p.71), e apostando “no diálogo com as populações e num programa de ousadas reformas sociais no domínio da saúde e de previdência” (Reis, 1994, p. 68). O V Governo terminou o seu mandato a 3 de janeiro de 1980, na sequência das eleições a 2 dezembro de 1979, que deram a vitória à Aliança Democrática, assumindo o cargo de Primeiro-Ministro, Francisco Sá Carneiro.

Ainda no domínio da política nacional, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo candidatou-se à Presidência da República Portuguesa, em 1986, obtendo apenas 7,38% da votação, sendo eleito para o cargo, Mário Soares. Perante este desfecho, e “perdidas as esperanças de um papel cimeiro na vida pública portuguesa, ferida no seu orgulho e frustrada nas expectativas (...), tem, felizmente dentro de si, muitos caminhos, muitas atividades onde continuar a investir” (Beltrão & Katton, 2007, p. 327).

A partir dos anos 1980, foi no plano internacional que Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo desenvolveu um conjunto de atividades de grande prestígio. Em 1982, integrou o Conselho Diretivo do World Policy Institute, em Nova Iorque; em 1983, foi membro do Conselho Diretivo da Universidade das Nações Unidas (até 1989), por designação do Secretário-Geral da ONU e do Diretor-geral da UNESCO; e, nesse mesmo ano, foi convidada a integrar o Conselho de Interação de Ex- Chefes de Governo, tendo oportunidade de conviver com importantes nomes da política internacional, como Helmut Schmidt e Jimmy Carter, entre outros. Tornou-se ainda membro de diversas entidades, incluindo o Clube de Roma (Paris- 1984), a Fundação Europa (América Latina - 1984), e o Sisterhood Is Global Institute (Nova Iorque- 1986). Em 1986, criou, em colaboração com Brice Lalonde, François Roelants de Vivier e Carmen Díez Riveira, a Plataforma Europeia para o Ambiente (Beltrão & Katton, pp. 286;288; 342). Por fim, de 14 de setembro de 1987 a 24 de julho de 1989 exerceu funções como deputada no Parlamento Europeu, por convite do Partido Socialista, aceitando a posição na qualidade de independente.

⁵ Durante a presidência de António Ramalho Eanes foram nomeados três governos de iniciativa presidencial entre 1978 e 1979: o primeiro, sob liderança do engenheiro Nobre da Costa; um segundo governo, sob liderança de Carlos Alberto Mota Pinto, e por fim, o terceiro e último, sob liderança de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo.



Na década de 1990, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo integrou diversos organismos internacionais de relevo. Foi membro do Conselho da Ciência e da Tecnologia ao Serviço do Desenvolvimento (1989-1991) do Grupo de Peritos da Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Económico (1990-1991). Entre 1990 e 1992, destacou-se no papel de Conselheira Especial do Reitor da Universidade das Nações Unidas. Exerceu, igualmente, funções de liderança, presidindo ao Grupo de Peritos do Conselho da Europa sobre Igualdade e Democracia (1992-1994), à Comissão Mundial Independente sobre a População e Qualidade de Vida (1992 -1997), ao Conselho Diretivo do Instituto Mundial de Investigação sobre Desenvolvimento Económico, da Universidade das Nações Unidas (1993-1998) e ao Comité dos Sábios (1995-1996). Foi ainda membro do Instituto para o Desenvolvimento e a Ação Cultural (Rio de Janeiro, 1997), do Institute for Democratic Electoral Assistance (Estocolmo, 1997); e do Conselho de Women World Leaders (Cambridge, 1998).

A 2 de fevereiro de 1991, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo recebeu da Universidade Católica de Lovaina (Bélgica), o grau de Doutoramento *Honoris Causa* "gesto de enorme valor, dado o prestígio desta universidade no mundo intelectual, e dentro da Igreja" (Beltrão & Katton, 2007, p. 353). Foi ainda distinguida com diversas condecorações, entre as quais se destacam: *The 1986 Living Legacy Award*, atribuído pelo Women's International Center, em San Diego; a Grã-Cruz da Ordem Militar do Nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo (1981); a Grã-Cruz da Ordem do Infante D. Henrique (1994); a Grã-Cruz da Ordem da Liberdade (2017)⁶; e a Medalha Machado de Assis pela Academia Brasileira de Letras (1997).

Desde 2001 presidiu à Fundação Cuidar O Futuro, instituição de direito privado, sem fins lucrativos, fundada a 13 de julho desse ano, e responsável pela preservação e divulgação do seu espólio documental.

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo faleceu em Lisboa, a 10 de julho de 2004, aos 74 anos.

Embaixadora na UNESCO (1975-1979)

Após a Revolução de abril de 1974, o Governo português ambicionava, em termos de política externa, a plena integração em organismos internacionais, quer através do reforço da sua posição naqueles que já era membro, quer pela adesão às organizações a que ainda não pertencia.

No caso específico da UNESCO, a documentação existente demonstra que, logo no mês seguinte à Revolução dos Cravos, em maio de 1974, o Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Mário Soares, iniciou a recolha de toda a informação e dos procedimentos necessários para garantir o regresso de Portugal à organização. Todavia, a situação colonial, e o rumo a seguir relativamente ao processo de descolonização ainda não se encontravam, claramente, definidos. Apenas com a promulgação da Lei 7/74, que formalizou o reconhecimento do direito à autodeterminação e independência dos territórios até então sob domínio colonial português, o país encontrava-se, totalmente, disponível para iniciar conversações com os organismos internacionais.

⁶ As condecorações em Portugal podem ser consultadas em <https://www.ordens.presidencia.pt/>



A 30 de agosto de 1974, Mário Soares remeteu uma carta ao Diretor-Geral da UNESCO, René Maheu, notificando-o da intenção do Governo português em promover o regresso do país à organização, acrescentando que Portugal se comprometia “fielmente a cumprir todas as estipulações contidas no Ato Constitutivo da organização”⁷. Simultaneamente, procedeu à entrega, no Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros de Londres⁸, do instrumento diplomático relativo à readmissão de Portugal na UNESCO.

O regresso efetivo de Portugal à organização foi formalizado a 11 de setembro de 1974, ocasião em que o Diretor-Geral da UNESCO, René Maheu, felicitou o país pela iniciativa, sublinhando que a “cooperação entre Portugal e a UNESCO é mutuamente benéfica e decisiva”⁹.

Após o regresso do Portugal à UNESCO, impunha-se a criação de uma Missão Permanente em Paris, o que foi definido a 30 de junho de 1975, com a promulgação do Decreto-Lei 329/75, pelo Presidente da República Portuguesa, Francisco da Costa Gomes. A composição da Missão Permanente de Portugal junto da UNESCO ficou então estabelecida nos seguintes termos: um chefe de missão, na qualidade de representante permanente; um funcionário do serviço diplomático “de categoria igual ou inferior a conselheiro de embaixada”, um consultor cultural e/ou científico, e por fim, um secretário, dois escriturários-dactilógrafos, um motorista e um contínuo¹⁰.

A principal questão que se colocava dizia respeito a quem deveria assumir a liderança da Missão Portuguesa em Paris. A dúvida foi esclarecida a 23 de setembro de 1975, quando, em carta enviada ao Diretor-Geral da UNESCO, Amadou Mahtar M’Bow, o Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Ernesto de Melo Antunes, informou que o Governo português decidira nomear Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo como embaixadora junto da organização.¹¹

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo partiu rumo a Paris, em dezembro de 1975, para desempenhar o cargo. O seu primeiro desafio enquanto embaixadora consistiu na seleção dos membros que integrariam a Missão sob a sua liderança. Para Conselheiro de Embaixada escolheu Luís de Sousa Lobo, Professor da Universidade Nova de Lisboa; para conselheiro científico nomeou Jorge Ritto; e, por fim, designou Alberto Melo para a área da educação¹².

A instalação da Missão Portuguesa em Paris foi bem-sucedida, tendo a embaixadora e os restantes membros da equipa sido calorosamente, pelas demais delegações. Esta receção, sem dúvida, acabou por “facilitar a tarefa da nossa representante e permitir-lhe perseguir o objetivo estabelecido pelo Governo Português de reforçar os laços com a UNESCO”¹³.

⁷ Arquivo Histórico Diplomático (AHD), CLT, Maço 411 A, Carta de Mário Soares a René Maheu, 30 de agosto de 1974.

⁸ Local onde se encontra depositado a Constituição da UNESCO desde 1946.

⁹ AHD, CLT, Maço 411 A, Carta de René Maheu, 20 de setembro de 1974.

¹⁰ Portaria 411-A/75 de 2 de julho de 1975, Diário do Governo n.º 150/1975, 2º Suplemento, Série I de 1975-07-02.

¹¹ Arquivo Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (AML), Pasta 0105.018, Carta de Ernesto Melo Antunes a Amadou Mahtar M’Bow, 23 de setembro de 1975.

¹² AML, Pasta 0039054, Carta de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo a Humberto Delgado, Diretor Geral dos Serviços Centrais do MNE, 30 de setembro de 1975.

¹³ AML, Pasta 0237.029, Carta de Ernesto Melo Antunes para Amadou Mahtar M’Bow, 24 de fevereiro de 1976.



Simultaneamente, e com o intuito de assegurar um pleno aproveitamento da participação portuguesa na UNESCO foi criado no âmbito do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, um grupo de trabalho preparatório da futura Comissão Nacional da UNESCO.¹⁴ Competia-lhe, entre outras funções, estudar a experiência dos outros países e recolher a informação necessária do nosso país “de modo a propor os moldes de constituição e funcionamento da Comissão Nacional de UNESCO”, bem como funcionar como “canal de comunicação entre a Missão Permanente de Portugal junto da UNESCO e o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros”. Para integrar o grupo de trabalho foram selecionadas personalidades de grande relevo: Adérito Seda Nunes (investigação), Teresa Santa Clara Gomes (educação), Manuel Fernandes Tomás (tecnologia), João Martins Pereira (tecnologia), Ana Hidalgo Barata (MNE) e, para apoio logístico dos serviços ministeriais em Portugal, Magalhães Cruz.

De acordo com o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros Português, os principais objetivos da Missão Permanente consistiam em promover o contacto de Portugal com outras culturas; contribuir para a paz internacional; assegurar o preenchimento da quota de funcionários da UNESCO atribuída ao país, mediante a seleção dos mais competentes; e, num plano imediato, garantir a participação em todas as reuniões organizadas UNESCO, bem como nas Conferências Gerais da organização.¹⁵

1976: a 19ª Conferência Geral da UNESCO em Nairobi

A 19.ª Conferência Geral da UNESCO, realizada em Nairobi de 26 de outubro a 30 de novembro de 1976, constituiu o primeiro grande desafio da Missão Portuguesa no seu regresso à organização.

Como membros da Missão Permanente de Portugal, além da Embaixadora Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, participaram Jorge Ritto e Luís Sousa Lobo; como membros do Grupo de trabalho da UNESCO, Manuel Fernandes Tomás; José Carlos Ferreira de Almeida, Teresa Santa Clara Gomes e José Manuel Protes da Fonseca; como funcionários do MNE, ligados às atividades da UNESCO, Nataniel Costa e Ana Maria Hidalgo Barata. Entre os participantes estavam ainda nomes como o perito no domínio da educação, Alberto de Melo e em substituição do Ministro da Educação, o Secretário de Estado da Investigação Científica, o Professor José Tiago de Oliveira.¹⁶

A 19.ª Conferência Geral ficou marcada pela discussão sobre a liberdade de imprensa, centrando-se o debate numa declaração proposta pela União Soviética “sancionando o controlo governamental sobre a imprensa”, e segundo a qual os governos deviam ser “responsáveis pelo conteúdo dos meios de informação.”¹⁷ A posição da delegação soviética gerou grande controvérsia, com os delegados dos países ocidentais a afirmarem que “os Estados deveriam proteger o direito de todos exprimirem franca e livremente as suas opiniões”¹⁸ e que a declaração proposta pela União Soviética “significava a aceitação de uma ideologia da informação, diretamente contrária, aos princípios estabelecidos na

¹⁴ Cuja criação oficial foi em julho de 1979 pelo Decreto-Lei Nº218/79.

¹⁵ AHD, CLT, Maço 414, Missão Permanente junto da UNESCO, sem data.

¹⁶ AHD, CLT, Maço 434, Despacho de Ernesto de Melo Antunes, 6 de julho de 1976.

¹⁷ *O Dia*, 4 de novembro de 1976, p.8.

¹⁸ *Jornal Novo*, 10 de novembro de 1976, p.8.



Declaração Universal dos Direitos Humanos”.¹⁹ Face à contestação dos restantes países, o delegado soviético apressou-se a esclarecer que a proposta se destinava apenas “a sublinhar a responsabilidade dos Estados pelos seus próprios órgãos de comunicação social controlados oficialmente.”²⁰

Após longa discussão, a 19.^a Conferência Geral adotou uma resolução que previa o reequilíbrio da informação e o financiamento para a coordenação de programas na área da comunicação social. A delegação portuguesa manifestou-se totalmente desfavorável a esta resolução. No plenário da UNESCO, realizado a 29 de novembro de 1976, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo afirmou que se tratava de uma resolução com um discurso “moralizante” para os profissionais de comunicação social, desprovida de qualquer valor cultural, uma vez que “os problemas de fundo trazidos pelos *mass media* à sociedade contemporânea não eram adequadamente abordados”. Acrescentou ainda que a declaração lhe causou, inclusive, uma certa “preocupação e perplexidade”. Durante a sua intervenção, a embaixadora salientou que os Estados-membros se tinham comprometido “a ajudar os meios de comunicação a desempenhar o seu papel, no sentido de reforçar a paz e a compreensão internacional”, sublinhando, contudo, a necessidade de realizar-se um estudo mais alargado sobre a questão, “que tenha em conta o espetacular aumento do volume das operações de *mass media* no mundo de hoje.” Para Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, os meios de comunicação representavam um novo poder “que se introduz na nossa vida diária e dá forma às nossas opiniões”, lamentando, por essa razão, que pouco tivesse sido feito para os analisar forma ampla e verdadeiramente científica. A embaixadora questionava-se se a UNESCO poderia aprovar uma declaração sobre o papel dos meios de comunicação social antes de se realizar e concluir um estudo mais aprofundado, ignorando a complexidade subjacente à natureza e à função dos mesmos. Ao longo do seu discurso, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo defendeu, fortemente, que a UNESCO deveria ter a iniciativa de conduzir um estudo sobre o poder dos meios de comunicação, contribuindo para uma melhor compreensão dos mesmos e do papel que lhes cabe. A embaixadora apresentou, inclusive, alguns exemplos significativos: seriam inofensivos para a paz os meios de comunicação que dão prioridade “à capacidade de ter e possuir sobre a de ser e viver”; se seriam inofensivos para a compreensão internacional, os meios de comunicação que, mantém “uma visão provinciana, senão nacionalista”; e se seriam inofensivos para a eliminação do racismo, os meios de comunicação que, “persistem em ignorar os grupos marginais, os membros sem voz dessas sociedades?”²¹.

Na 19.^a Conferência Geral foi ainda debatida a reivindicação dos países do Hemisfério Sul sobre a necessidade de se estabelecerem infraestruturas de comunicação nos seus territórios, de forma a que “a informação não fosse apenas veiculada pelas grandes agências internacionais, todas elas situadas no Hemisfério Norte”.²² A este propósito, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo defendeu, desde o início, que “para a salvaguarda da circulação de uma informação correta e livre, o problema fundamental a resolver era o da injustiça das relações entre o Norte e o Sul.” Para a embaixadora, a discussão e a

¹⁹ *O Dia*, 29 de outubro de 1976, p.13.

²⁰ *A Capital*, 6 de novembro de 1976, p.16.

²¹ AMLP, Pasta 0229.041, Ata da 30.^a Sessão plenária, 29 de novembro de 1976. Intervenção de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo. Anexo III 19 C/ VR.36, pp. 36-39.

²² *Diário de Notícias*, 27 de novembro de 1976, p.7.



adoção de uma declaração sobre o papel dos meios de comunicação deveriam ser adiadas até à realização da próxima Conferência Geral, e deveriam ser tomadas as medidas necessárias para se proceder a uma análise mais atualizada dos meios de comunicação. A intervenção de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo no plenário da UNESCO revelou-se tão contributiva para o debate que várias delegações governamentais se pronunciaram para apoiar as críticas e as sugestões apresentadas por Portugal²³.

Por fim, a 19.^a Conferência Geral da UNESCO deu também especial atenção às questões africanas, aprovando uma resolução que condenava o colonialismo e o racismo, defendendo a luta do povo africano “para recuperar a sua identidade, soberania e independência”.²⁴ Em relação a esta resolução,²⁵ a 22 novembro de 1976, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo salientou que, o ponto-chave, residia na confirmação “da existência de um governo autónomo e independente em Angola e no exercício real da soberania sobre o território”, observação que foi sublinhada por todos os intervenientes.

De notar que, dez dias antes do encerramento da Conferência Geral, foram realizadas eleições para o Conselho Executivo da UNESCO. Surpreendentemente, Portugal conquistou um lugar: Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo obteve o maior número de votos a eleger no Grupo Europeu, com um total de 122 votos, sendo eleita membro do Conselho Executivo da UNESCO²⁶.

1977: A visita do Diretor Geral da UNESCO a Portugal

Os laços entre Portugal e a UNESCO fortaleceram-se, progressivamente, sendo exemplo dessa aproximação a visita, em agosto de 1977, do Diretor-Geral da organização, Amadou Mahtar M´Bow, a Portugal.

A 8 de julho de 1977, o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros Português foi informado por Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo de que foi sugerida a possibilidade de se realizar uma visita do Diretor-Geral da UNESCO a Lisboa. A embaixadora sublinhava o interesse político desta visita, recordando que o Diretor Geral exprimia, repetidamente, “grande interesse e apoio a Portugal”²⁷.

A Missão Permanente de Portugal junto da UNESCO sugeriu que a visita tivesse lugar a 7 de agosto, a convite do Governo português e, consequentemente, financiada por Portugal, que assumiria todas as despesas de estadia. Solicitou-se, assim, autorização junto do MNE para cobrir os custos decorrentes da estadia e do programa da visita do Diretor-Geral da UNESCO, incluindo: marcação de uma suíte no Hotel Ritz; disponibilização de um automóvel com condutor, ao serviço do Diretor-Geral; organização de um jantar oferecido pelo Primeiro-Ministro, de caráter privado; e a preparação de um almoço oficial.

²³ AMLP, Pasta 0229.041, Ata da 30.^a Sessão plenária de 29 DE novembro de 1976. Intervenção de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo. Anexo III 19 C/ VR.36, p.39.

²⁴ O Dia, 1 de dezembro de 1976, p.5.

²⁵ Uma das grandes novidades foi a atribuição, por proposta do Conselho Executivo da UNESCO, do estatuto de observador a S. Tomé e Príncipe, Moçambique e Cabo Verde e a possibilidade de adesão como Estado-membro de Angola.

²⁶ O Século, 23 de novembro de 1976, p.13.

²⁷ AHD, CLT, Maço 473, Telegrama de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, 8 de julho de 1977.



Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo propôs ainda a marcação de encontros com o Presidente da República, o Primeiro-Ministro e o Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros (Santos, 2022, pp. 275).

Amadou Mahtar M´Bow chegou a Lisboa a 3 de agosto de 1977, sendo recebido por Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo e por um representante do MNE. Questionado pelos jornalistas, manifestou a sua satisfação pelo convite oficial do Governo português para visitar o país e “travar conversações sobre as relações de cooperação atualmente existentes” com a UNESCO.²⁸ Já a embaixadora portuguesa sublinhou que a visita do Diretor-Geral constituía “o reconhecimento, por parte da UNESCO, da transformação radical de Portugal e da vontade inequívoca que houve para proceder à descolonização.”²⁹ A presença do Diretor-Geral da UNESCO a Portugal, representava, ainda, “uma garantia” do papel que a organização desempenharia na promoção de “um novo desenvolvimento da educação, ciência e cultura em Portugal.”³⁰

A visita a Lisboa revelou-se um êxito, evidenciado pela análise de um conjunto de cartas enviadas por Amadou Mahtar M´Bow às diversas personalidades com quem se reuniu. A António Ramalho Eanes, o Diretor Geral agradeceu a calorosa receção durante a sua visita ao país, sublinhando que a sua deslocação a Lisboa “permitiu reforçar a sua convicção de que os laços de cooperação existentes entre Portugal e a UNESCO apenas tornarão o futuro ainda mais apertado.” A Mário Soares, manifestou particular satisfação “pela ampla troca de opiniões sobre os principais aspetos da cooperação” e assegurou que os efeitos desta colaboração seriam “de grande valor para a comunidade internacional.” Ao Secretário de Estado e da Investigação Científica, Tiago de Oliveira, M´Bow felicitou-o pela sessão de trabalho organizada por si e pelos seus colaboradores, mencionando que a cooperação já estabelecida entre Portugal e a UNESCO poderia ser amplamente desenvolvida, afirmando-lhe: “farei tudo em meu poder para agir nessa direção”. Por fim, numa carta dirigida a Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Amadou Mahtar M´Bow agradeceu a estadia em Portugal e referiu que as conversações que manteve com as altas personalidades que conheceu em Lisboa, constituíram “encorajamento e estimulação”, convencendo-o de que a cooperação entre Portugal e a UNESCO desenvolvia-se da forma mais “harmoniosa” e que os seus efeitos “serão benéficos para toda a comunidade internacional.”³¹ A visita permitiu importantes progressos em diversos domínios, incluindo a política educativa, a área científica e a implementação de projetos culturais (Santos, 2021, pp. 280-284).

1978: A 20ª Conferência Geral em Paris

O ano de 1978 ficou marcado pela realização da 20.ª Conferência Geral da UNESCO, em Paris. A 31 de julho de 1978, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo remeteu uma carta ao Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Victor de Sá Machado, expressando a sua preocupação em apresentar, com a maior brevidade, a proposta reativa à composição da delegação

²⁸ AHD, CLT, Maço 474, Apontamento do MNE, 8 de agosto de 1977.

²⁹ A *Capital*, 8 de agosto de 1977, p. 20.

³⁰ AHD, CLT, Maço 474, Apontamento do MNE, sem data.

³¹ AHD, CLT, Maço 474, Correspondência enviada por Amadou Mahtar M´Bow, 1977.



portuguesa para a 20.^a Conferência Geral, com início previsto para 24 de outubro de 1978.

A delegação portuguesa à 20.^a Conferência Geral era composto pelos membros da Delegação Permanente de Portugal junto da UNESCO: a Embaixadora Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, o Conselheiro Científico, Luís Sousa Lobo, o Conselheiro cultural, Alberto Melo e o Conselheiro de Carreira, Jorge Ritto. Participou ainda na conferência o representante da Secretaria de Estado, Carlos David Calder.³²

Na qualidade de Estado-membro, Portugal participou ativamente, tal como sucedeu em Nairobi, nos vários trabalhos da Conferência-Geral, na qual foram discutidos dois documentos fundamentais: um novo projeto de declaração sobre os meios de comunicação e o relatório da Comissão McBride.

Sobre o assunto, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo afirmou que a delegação portuguesa não ficou satisfeita com o projeto de declaração sobre os meios de comunicação proposto pela UNESCO, justificando a sua posição por considerar o texto "muito moralista e limitado", dirigindo sobretudo a incentivar os órgãos de comunicação social a contribuir para a paz internacional, evitando "propaganda belicista, racista ou do "apartheid", mas não sem insistir "suficientemente sobre problemáticas mais complexas." No entanto, e apesar de todas as suas limitações, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo reconhecia que a declaração representou "avanços para as aspirações dos países mais pobres" e constituiu um esforço da UNESCO no sentido de elaborar uma resolução que lhes pudesse ser útil.³³

A resolução acabou por ser aprovada por 144 países, entre os quais Portugal.

O texto da declaração sobre os meios de comunicação social previa o "estabelecimento de um novo equilíbrio e reciprocidade na circulação da informação." A este propósito, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo defendeu que o desequilíbrio informativo tinha de ser corrigido, mediante "uma redistribuição de bens e não considerando o problema como sendo exclusivo dos países do Terceiro Mundo." Nas palavras da embaixadora portuguesa, os órgãos de comunicação social "criam imagens, estereótipos, gostos, modelos de sociedade, que influem no interior de todas as sociedades, sejam elas quais forem"³⁴. A 14 de novembro de 1978, durante a sua intervenção na UNESCO, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo destacou que os meios de comunicação emergiriam como um novo poder nas sociedades, transmitindo "modelos sociais, estilos de vida, valores e comportamentos", impondo-se, muitas vezes, à identidade cultural preexistente.

No que respeita ao Relatório McBride, redigido por uma comissão presidida pelo irlandês Seán McBride, tratava-se de um documento que analisava os problemas da comunicação a nível mundial, identificando, entre outros problemas, o acesso desigual à informação e à comunicação, e constatado o desequilíbrio dos fluxos de informação entre os países em desenvolvimento. Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo considerou o relatório um documento de "qualidade excecional", que abordava e retratava os problemas dos meios de comunicação, bem como defendia as condições para uma nova ordem internacional de informação. Na sua perspetiva, esta nova ordem de comunicação conduziria a uma melhor distribuição de recursos e à denúncia do notável desequilíbrio "das possibilidades

³² AHD, CLT, Maço 435, Telegrama de Carlos Jorge Mendes Correia Gago, 23 de outubro de 1978.

³³ *Expresso*, 18 de novembro de 1978, p.8.

³⁴ *O Jornal*, 30 de novembro de 1978, p.7.



de comunicação de um pequeno grupo de países.” Segundo a embaixadora portuguesa, o Relatório McBride reconhecia, que “a comunicação é um problema, em primeiro lugar porque é tardio, nos seus princípios, nos seus parâmetros e no seu desenvolvimento, em comparação com as mudanças que são as aspirações que se manifestam na vida política e socioeconómica de muitos países, bem como no nível internacional.” Na sua visão, o direito de comunicar e de se expressar, livremente, era um ideal democrático ainda por ser alcançado, devendo ser complementado “pela afirmação de um princípio de justiça capaz de superar a situação em que uma minoria é a única capaz de informar, emitir e expressar enquanto a maioria permanece recetora passiva.” A embaixadora portuguesa considerava ser necessária uma classe profissional que estivesse ao serviço da sociedade e não de grupos favorecidos, e que essa mesma classe só podia existir se pudesse funcionar “como mecanismo de feedback em relação a qualquer desconforto ou aspiração do tecido social.” Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo finalizou a sua intervenção afirmando, que o Relatório McBride permitiu “conferir substância a uma nova ordem internacional de informação”, e situou a UNESCO, numa das “suas dimensões fundamentais - ser um lugar de encontro de culturas e pensamentos”³⁵.

1978- 1979: português: língua de trabalho na UNESCO

Os anos de 1978 e 1979 foram marcados no que respeita às relações Portugal-UNESCO, pela possibilidade de a língua portuguesa se tornar uma das línguas de trabalho da organização.

A ausência da língua portuguesa na UNESCO era justificada por variadas razões. Antes do 25 de abril, o isolamento internacional a que Portugal estava sujeito; já no período democrático, a explicação residia no facto de a diplomacia portuguesa e as suas delegações nas reuniões internacionais “não estarem sensibilizadas para o problema e não terem compreendido a sua importância. Apesar de terem sido empreendidas algumas iniciativas, tinham sempre carácter pontual e pouco coordenadas”³⁶.

A questão ganhou maior relevo em consequência de uma reunião da UNESCO realizada na Fundação Gulbenkian, entre 4 a 13 de abril de 1978, sendo esta a primeira vez que a organização promoveu uma iniciativa de carácter intergovernamental em Portugal, e recorreu à utilização da língua portuguesa. Não só os discursos inaugurais, como toda a documentação circulada e produzida no âmbito dessa reunião foi traduzida também em português.

A realização da reunião em Portugal foi aproveitada para o desenvolvimento de uma ofensiva pela promoção internacional da língua portuguesa: o Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros deu instruções à missão diplomática junto da UNESCO para requerer a admissão do português como língua oficial da organização. Acrescentava o Governo português que a língua “é o veículo indispensável para a divulgação e valorização da cultura que exprime”. Apesar da ambição portuguesa, entre os obstáculos à adoção do português como língua oficial na UNESCO encontrava-se a oposição dos Estados que têm

³⁵ AMLP, Pasta 0229.041, Intervention de Madame Pintasilgo, Commission IV. Point 12 (20C/94) Rapport intérimaire de la Commission Internationale d'étude des problèmes de la communication, Paris 14 novembre de 1978, pp. 60 – 65.

³⁶ *Diário de Notícias*, 11 de maio de 1978, p.2.



uma maior contribuição, uma vez que no que respeita às implicações de natureza financeira, “a comparticipação portuguesa em termos percentuais era de cerca de 0.19%”³⁷.

Em nota publicada em 1979, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo explicou a sua posição referente à questão, afirmando que os problemas levantados pela possibilidade da introdução do português na UNESCO deviam ser considerados “no contexto mais vasto da introdução de novas línguas nos organismos que constituem o sistema das Nações Unidas.” A embaixadora portuguesa recordava que no Relatório 104 EX/SR.32, o Conselho Executivo defendeu a implementação de uma seletividade tanto nos serviços de tradução de documentos como nos serviços de interpretação disponíveis para conferências e reuniões.³⁸ Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo acrescentava que os serviços linguísticos absorviam 11% do orçamento da UNESCO e mencionava a noção do “efeito multiplicador” da introdução de uma nova língua: “como cada língua tem de ser traduzida e interpretada para todas as outras e vice-versa o número de combinações linguísticas aumenta consideravelmente com cada nova língua”.

A embaixadora portuguesa elucidava para o problema prático da interpretação simultânea de uma língua menos divulgada, que por falta de intérpretes fluentes para todas as outras línguas, são normalmente traduzidas para uma língua corrente (inglês ou francês), a partir da qual os restantes efetuam a sua interpretação. Maria de Lourdes mencionava que “todo o acréscimo significativo nos serviços linguísticos já existentes em organismos das Nações Unidas, ameaçam impor à organização em questão uma carga administrativa demasiado pesada e desviar recursos de utilizações mais produtivas.” A embaixadora lembrou ainda, que tendo mencionado na UNESCO, a possibilidade da língua portuguesa ter o estatuto de língua de trabalho, “devido ao número e a dispersão geográfica dos que se exprimem em português,” foi indiretamente contestada por diversas delegações que assinalaram que nem o número de pessoas que falam uma língua, nem a variedade geográfica são argumentos válidos, dado que o que está em causa é a “identidade cultural veiculada pela língua” e que essa pode corresponder a uma pequena zona do mundo. Como seria esperado, outras delegações, originárias dos países com quota mais elevada no orçamento, como o caso do Estados Unidos, Suíça, etc., declararam que não se justificariam as despesas e não estariam dispostos a contribuir.

Concluía Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, que a avaliação das possibilidades de introdução do português deveria ser feita tendo em conta a situação no conjunto do sistema das Nações Unidas e “não isoladamente num organismo que pode não ser o mais adequado à situação conjuntural.” No entanto, existiam outras vias de entrada do português na atividade dos organismos das Nações Unidas, de que era exemplo a introdução seletiva, em que a língua é utilizada apenas em reuniões em determinadas áreas ou em determinadas publicações, representando encargos administrativos e financeiros menores que o estatuto de língua de trabalho da organização, e com um alcance e difusão, certamente, mais amplos. Concluía Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, que o avanço

³⁷ AMLP, Pasta 0102.026, Esclarecimento a Requerimento, 8 de março de 1979.

³⁸ AMLP, Pasta 0102.014, Relatório 104 EX / SR 32 sobre as deliberações do Conselho Executivo da UNESCO sobre o uso de novas línguas dentro dos organismos da ONU, p. 18.



na utilização do português na UNESCO dependia “ de uma ação cuidadosa e coordenada” que, “tenha em conta a complexidade da situação e afine os obstáculos existentes”³⁹.

A título de curiosidade, a língua portuguesa conseguiu afirmar-se nessa altura em organismos internacionais importantes: nas reuniões dos órgãos diretores da Organização Mundial da Propriedade Intelectual (OMPI), realizadas, de 25 de setembro a 3 de outubro de 1979, a Assembleia Geral da Organização aprovou, por unanimidade, o português como língua de trabalho, autorizando o seu Diretor-Geral, Arpad Bogisch, a fornecer para esse objetivo a quantia de 90.000.00 francos suíços.⁴⁰ Pela primeira vez, a língua portuguesa foi consagrada como língua de trabalho numa das agências especializadas do sistema das Nações Unidas. As publicações sobre direito de autor e sobre direitos de propriedade intelectual chegariam aos novos países africanos de expressão portuguesa e também ao Brasil em português.

Conclusões

Ao longo do presente artigo avaliou-se o contributo de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo durante o processo de restabelecimento de relações diplomáticas de Portugal com a UNESCO, em resultado da saída da organização em 1972.

Com a Revolução de abril de 1974, o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros tinha a difícil tarefa de demonstrar à comunidade internacional que Portugal, contrariamente aos anos de Salazar e Caetano, tornou-se num regime democrático, cuja participação em organizações internacionais tornou-se um objetivo de enorme relevância, o que incluía, colaborar ativamente com a ONU e com os organismos de si dependentes, como a UNESCO, com os quais esteve três décadas em conflito, devido à sua política colonial.

Formalizado o processo de readmissão de Portugal na UNESCO, em setembro de 1974, a escolha de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo para liderar a Missão de Portugal junto da UNESCO, em Paris foi surpreendente. A delegação portuguesa não teve dificuldades em comunicar com as restantes delegações dos países membros, com a Embaixadora Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo a desempenhar um papel bastante ativo em todos os fóruns da organização, fazendo sugestões e críticas, inclusive, nos temas mais controversos, de que são exemplo a questão da liberdade de imprensa, e o Relatório McBride, nas 19ª e 20ª Conferências Gerais da organização Destaca-se ainda a promoção da visita do Diretor-Geral da organização a Portugal em 1977, da qual resultaram diversas colaborações entre o governo português e a UNESCO, e financiamento para atividades de relevo para a cultura e sociedade portuguesas.

O seu mandato foi suspenso, temporariamente, em 1979, aquando do seu afastamento para desempenhar funções governativas, no cargo de Primeira-Ministra em Portugal, num governo de iniciativa presidencial que durou apenas cinco meses (agosto de 1979 a 3 de janeiro de 1980).

O novo Governo eleito, a Aliança Democrática, impediram o seu regresso a Paris, não autorizando o Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, representando por Diogo Freitas do

³⁹ AMLP, Pasta 0102.006, Nota de Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo sobre a introdução de novas línguas na UNESCO, 1979, pp. 1-6).

⁴⁰ *A Tarde*, 16 de outubro de 1979, p.4.



Amaral, que Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo voltasse a desempenhar as funções na UNESCO para as quais tinha sido nomeada, alegadamente, com base em questões de confiança política, decorrentes de divergências ideológicas entre a embaixadora e o novo partido no poder.

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BRICS VS. G7: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EFFICIENCY IN SHAPING GLOBAL ORDER

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Abstract

The global distribution of power is increasingly shaped by the competing influences of two major blocs: BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States). This paper investigates how BRICS and the G7 shape the emerging multipolar global order. Using comparative analysis of key indicators: GDP, trade flows, investment patterns, diplomatic engagement, and strategic alliances. The paper examines each bloc's structure and internal cohesion. The analysis underscores the G7's historical supremacy, which stems from its economic strength and political unity, in contrast to BRICS' rising role as a representative for the Global South and a platform for alternative governance models. Important metrics include trade flows, investment trends, diplomatic efforts, and strategic alliances. The research also assesses the internal dynamics within each bloc, including challenges to cohesion and the effectiveness of decision-making. By comparing the advantages and drawbacks of BRICS and G7, this paper provides insights into their respective functions in a multipolar world order, evaluating their ability to promote transformative global agendas. Lastly, the paper concludes that both alliances embody divergent approaches to global governance, reflecting deeper shifts in international collaboration, competition, and the balance of power.

Keywords

Power-Dynamics, Efficiency, Geopolitical, Comparison, Multipolar.

Resumo

A distribuição global do poder é cada vez mais moldada pelas influências concorrentes de dois grandes blocos: os BRICS (Brasil, Rússia, Índia, China e África do Sul) e o G7 (Canadá, França, Alemanha, Itália, Japão, Reino Unido e Estados Unidos). Este artigo analisa a forma como o BRICS e o G7 moldam a ordem global multipolar emergente. Para tal, utiliza uma análise comparativa de indicadores-chave, nomeadamente o PIB, os fluxos comerciais, os padrões de investimento, o envolvimento diplomático e as alianças estratégicas. O artigo examina a estrutura e a coesão interna de cada bloco. A análise sublinha a supremacia histórica do G7,



que decorre da sua força económica e unidade política, em contraste com o papel crescente dos BRICS como representantes do Sul Global e plataforma para modelos alternativos de governação. Entre os indicadores importantes estão os fluxos comerciais, as tendências de investimento, os esforços diplomáticos e as alianças estratégicas. A pesquisa também avalia a dinâmica interna de cada bloco, incluindo os desafios à coesão e a eficácia da tomada de decisões. Ao comparar as vantagens e desvantagens dos BRICS e do G7, este artigo fornece visões sobre as respetivas funções numa ordem mundial multipolar, avaliando a sua capacidade de promover agendas globais transformadoras. Por fim, o artigo conclui que ambas as alianças incorporam abordagens divergentes à governança global, refletindo mudanças mais profundas na colaboração internacional, na concorrência e no equilíbrio de poder.

Palavras-chave

Dinâmica de poder, Eficiência, Geopolítica, Comparação, Multipolar.

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BRICS VS. G7: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EFFICIENCY IN SHAPING GLOBAL ORDER

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Introduction

In two influential corners of the globe, two blocs chart competing visions for global governance. One, the G7, rooted in the legacy of post-war prosperity and Western liberal order, gathers the world's most industrialised nations - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the USA. The other, BRICS, comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. It represents emerging powers once sidelined by colonialism and global inequities, now advocating for a multipolar world.

Formed in the 1970s, the G7 has long dominated international financial systems, promoting democratic governance and market liberalism. In contrast, BRICS, emerging in the early 2000s, challenges this dominance by offering alternative frameworks through institutions like the New Development Bank and emphasising equitable development and regional partnerships. However, both blocs face internal and external challenges, ranging from slowing economic growth in the G7 to political and ideological divergences within BRICS.

As global power dynamics shift in the 21st century, understanding the strategic visions, structural strengths, and limitations of these two groups becomes vital to analysing the future of international cooperation and competition.

Research Objective, Scope, and Methodology

This research aims to conduct a comparative analysis of BRICS and G7. It focuses on their economic and political efficiency in shaping the global order. It seeks to understand how these two blocs influence the globe and to evaluate their effectiveness in addressing major global challenges.

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary analytical methodology to conduct a comparative analysis of BRICS and G7 in shaping the global order. The research primarily relies on secondary data drawn from peer-reviewed academic literature, policy documents and institutional reports from the IMF, World Bank, WTO, UN, etc. Coding categories were developed iteratively to ensure that both convergences and divergences in rhetoric and implementation strategies were captured effectively.

This research examines both the economic and political dimensions of BRICS and G7. On the economic front. The study measures their contributions to global GDP, trade, financial



stability, and responses to major economic crises. The paper investigates their political leadership roles in global governance institutions and diplomatic alliances. Additionally, the research adopts an interdisciplinary perspective, exploring the impact of technology, cultural values, historical legacies, etc.

The scope of the study is confined to evaluating these factors in the context of key global events from the early 2000s to the present, including the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. It doesn't go deeply into bilateral relations or domestic policies unless they have a direct bearing on global influence. These events serve as "critical junctures" that tested the leadership and coordination capacities of both BRICS and G7, respectively.

While other crises (e.g., the Russia-Ukraine war, the Eurozone crisis) could have been included, these two events were selected because they involved direct engagement by both blocs and offered sufficient data for comparative review across political and economic dimensions.

The study remains cognizant of limitations inherent in case selection and includes triangulation through cross-referencing other relevant global developments to validate conclusions where appropriate.

Historical Perspective

Historical legacies often influence and interfere with current global perspectives. The G7 nations largely emerged from colonial powers with a legacy of industrial dominance and global influence. These countries built their wealth and power through colonial trade networks and resource exploitation, which continue to affect their leadership in international institutions. For example, nations like the United Kingdom and France leverage historical ties to maintain influence in former colonies through diplomatic and economic partnerships.

In contrast, BRICS nations are shaped by histories of colonisation, semi-colonization, or imperial domination. These experiences foster a collective memory of resistance to foreign control and a strong emphasis on sovereignty and development. BRICS countries advocate for decolonial frameworks in global governance, which prioritize equitable representation and challenge Western-dominated institutions. Examples include South-South cooperation initiatives, which seek to promote mutual development without dependency on traditional powers, and calls for reform of the UN Security Council to include voices from the Global South.

While the G7 often defends the stability of existing institutions, BRICS pushes for a restructuring of global power to reflect the realities of a multipolar world. This divergence shapes ongoing debates about justice, equity, and legitimacy in global decision-making processes. The G7 and BRICS represent two discrete blocks. The formation of the G7 was rooted in the need for cooperation among leading industrialised nations to stabilise the global economy following the devastation of World War II. In contrast, BRICS emerged in the early 21st century as a coalition of major emerging economies seeking to challenge the existing Western-centric world order and provide a voice for developing nations.



The G7's historical evolution can be traced back to the 1970s when the world faced multiple economic crises. It includes the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the oil shocks of the decade. Recognising the need for coordinated action, the leaders of six major economies -USA, UK, Germany, Japan, France, and Italy - convened for discussions on global economic stability. Canada joined shortly afterwards, forming the Group of Seven (G7). The G7 became a platform for these countries to discuss and coordinate policies on international trade, finance, and security, exerting significant influence over global economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

On the other hand, BRICS emerged as a response to the growing economic and political influence of countries outside the traditional Western sphere. The term "BRIC" was first coined by economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 to highlight the rising economic potential of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa was added in 2010, completing the BRICS grouping. Unlike the G7, which was primarily formed by developed economies, BRICS consists of emerging economies from diverse regions. These nations recognised the need to create an alternative framework for global cooperation, emphasising multipolarity, development finance, etc. BRICS countries collectively account for a noteworthy portion of the world's population, GDP growth, and trade, positioning themselves as a counterbalance to the G7's influence (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021).

The structure and decision-making processes of the G7 and BRICS reflect their different origins and objectives. The G7 operates as an informal forum with no permanent secretariat or formal treaty. Decisions are typically reached through consensus. The meetings focus on key global issues like economic policy, security, and climate change. Despite its informal structure, the G7 has maintained significant influence through its coordination with global institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, critics argue that the G7's membership is limited and does not reflect the diverse realities of the global economy.

In comparison, BRICS has sought to institutionalise its cooperation by establishing formal structures, including the BRICS Summit and the New Development Bank (NDB). Decision-making within BRICS is also based on consensus, but the bloc emphasises equal partnership among its members, regardless of their differing economic sizes and political systems. This approach highlights BRICS' commitment to promoting inclusivity and reducing the dominance of any single nation within the group. However, the bloc faces internal challenges, such as balancing the competing interests of its members, which range from authoritarian to democratic governments and from resource-exporting to technology-driven economies.

The objectives and missions of the G7 and BRICS further explain their differing priorities in global governance. The G7's core mission has been to promote economic stability, liberal democracy and the rule of law. Over the decades, the G7 has focused on addressing global challenges such as financial crises, terrorism, and climate change. Its influence extends to shaping global financial regulations, promoting free trade, and providing development assistance to poorer nations.



Table 1. Detailed Timeline of G7 and BRICS Milestones

<u>Year</u>	<u>Bloc</u>	<u>Milestone</u>
1975	G7	G7 founded (originally G6) at Rambouillet Summit
1976	G7	Canada joins, making it G7
1997	G7/G8	Russia invited, becoming G8
2001	BRICS	BRIC term coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill
2006	BRICS	First formal BRIC foreign ministers' meeting
2008	BRICS	Global Financial Crisis; BRICS gains visibility
2009	BRICS	First BRIC Summit held in Yekaterinburg, Russia
2011	BRICS	South Africa joins; BRIC becomes BRICS
2014	BRICS	BRICS establishes the New Development Bank (NDB)
2014	G7	Russia suspended from G8 due to Crimea; G8 returns to G7
2015	G7	G7 commits to full decarbonization by 2100
2017	BRICS	BRICS Summit in Xiamen; Digital economy cooperation initiated
2020	Both	G7 and BRICS respond to COVID-19 crisis
2021	G7	G7 launches Build Back Better World (B3W) to rival BRI
2023	BRICS	BRICS expands, inviting six new countries (Argentina, Egypt, etc.)

Source: Authorship

BRICS, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of economic development, South-South cooperation, and a more equitable global order. The bloc's mission is to foster economic growth and infrastructure development in its member states and other developing countries. BRICS aims to provide alternatives to financial assistance through initiatives like the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). BRICS also advocates for reforms in global governance institutions to provide further representation and voice to emerging economies.

The G7 and BRICS have evolved from different historical contexts to serve distinct purposes in the global order. The G7, representing established industrial powers, focuses on maintaining stability and leadership within a liberal international framework. BRICS, representing a coalition of emerging economies, seeks to create a multipolar world that promotes inclusive development and equitable governance. Despite their differences, both blocs continue to play critical roles in shaping the economic and political landscape of the 21st century.

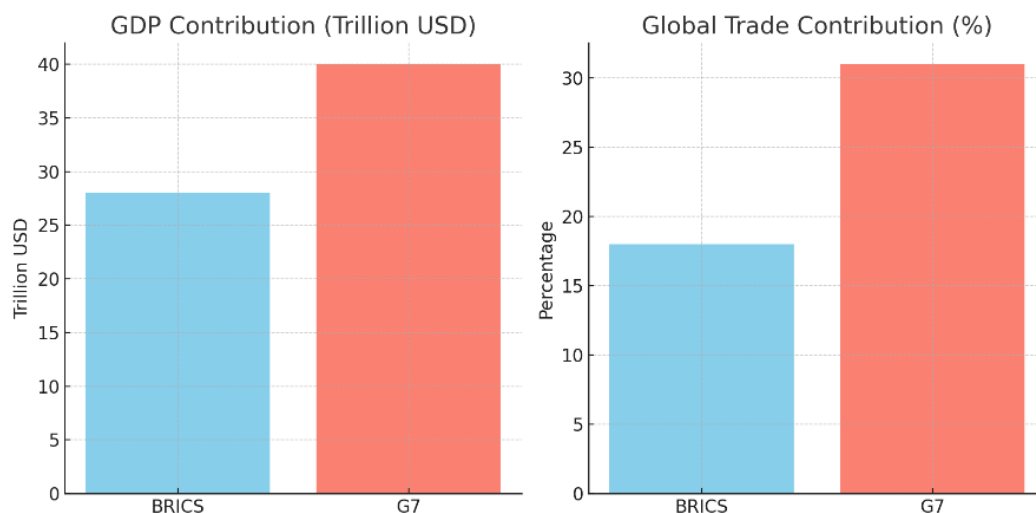
Economic Perspectives: A Comparative Analysis

A] GDP & Global Trade:

BRICS and G7 have contrasting roles in shaping the global economy through their contributions to global GDP and trade. BRICS, comprising major emerging markets, has been a significant driver of global economic growth in recent years. Collectively, BRICS nations contribute approximately \$28 trillion to the global GDP (UNCTAD, 2022). It is driven by rapid industrialisation, expanding consumer markets and infrastructural development. Their economies, especially China and India, have experienced sustained growth due to high investment rates and increasing integration into global supply chains.



Figure 1. Global Trade Contribution (in % terms)



Source: WB Report & UNCTAD

Conversely, the G7 nations collectively contribute around \$40 trillion to global GDP (World Bank, 2023). These economies include technological dominance, advanced financial markets, and established infrastructure. Despite slower growth rates compared to BRICS, G7 countries maintain leadership in global trade (Eichengreen, 2011: 58), contributing about 31% of the total trade. Their strength lies in high-value exports, technological innovation, and strong intellectual property rights frameworks.

In terms of trade, BRICS nations account for approximately 18% of global trade, with a focus on commodities, manufacturing, and digital services. While BRICS drives the growth of emerging markets, the G7 sustains global economic stability. G7 is able to do it through financial leadership and technological innovation. This underscores the complementary yet competitive roles of the two blocs.

B] Strategy and Policy Impact:

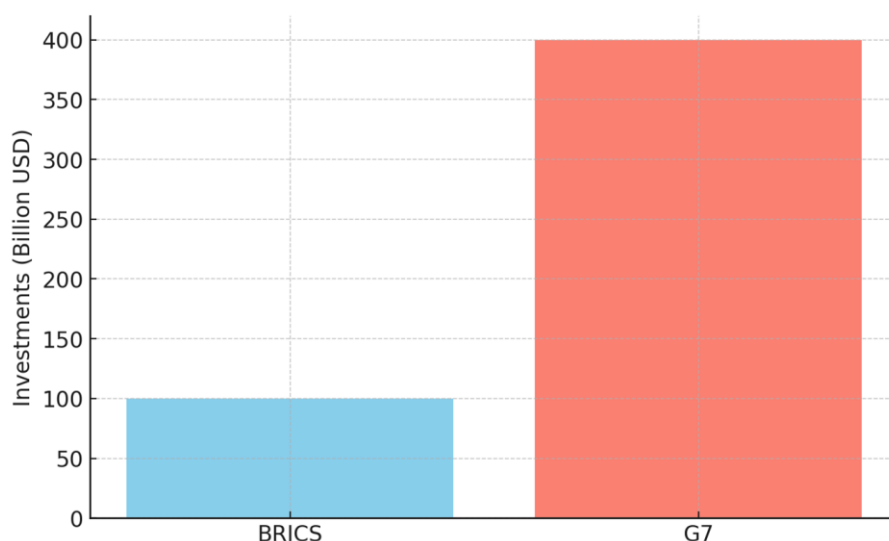
BRICS and G7 employ separate economic strategies that influence their global roles. BRICS emphasises regional cooperation and the establishment of alternative financial institutions, for instance, the New Development Bank (NDB). The NDB focuses on infrastructure development and provides funding to reduce member nations' dependency on Western-led institutions like the IMF and World Bank. This strategy enhances regional economic integration and allows BRICS members to exercise greater autonomy in their financial policies.

In contrast, the G7 relies on coordination through long-established global institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. These institutions play a pivotal role in maintaining global financial stability. It offers crisis response mechanisms, development assistance, and financial oversight. The G7's strategies prioritise economic resilience through policy



coordination, debt management and fiscal incentives during crises. It benefits both developed and developing countries under its influence (Global Finance Magazine, 2022).

Figure 2. Major Economic Investments by BRICS & G7 (in Billion USD)



Source: IMF, World Bank, and NDB reports

In terms of investment, G7 countries have contributed approximately \$400 billion to global development through these institutions. This significantly beats and outpaces the \$100 billion investment managed by BRICS initiatives like the NDB. This highlights the scale of G7's financial capacity but also underscores BRICS' growing importance in providing alternative funding sources to emerging economies.

Table 2. BRICS' NDP vs G7's Bretton Woods Institutions

Institution	BRICS New Development Bank (NDB)	G7 Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF & World Bank)
Purpose	Provide alternative financing for infrastructure in emerging economies and developed countries without rigorous conditions.	Debt restructuring programs, financial aid during global crises to both developing and developed countries.
Challenges	Limited global reach Potential challenges in funding and governance coordination.	Perceived dominance by Western nations. Conditionalities impacting recipient nations' sovereignty (Austerity Measures)

Source: Authorship

While the NDB seeks to address these criticisms by promoting equitable partnerships, it faces challenges related to limited funding capacity and coordination among its diverse member states. In contrast, the Bretton Woods Institutions maintain extensive global



reach but must address perceptions of Western bias and conditionality-driven policies. Both models reflect competing visions of global economic governance.

C] Resilience & Response to Economic Crisis:

Both BRICS and G7 have demonstrated varying degrees of resilience during major global crises, with their responses shaped by their respective economic priorities and institutional strengths.

Table 3. BRICS vs G7 – Comparative responses to Global Crises

Global Crisis	BRICS	G7
Financial Crisis (2008)	Expansion of trade agreements, Financial support through NDB	Massive financial incentives, Coordinated central bank interventions
Oil Price Shock (2014)	Economic diversification efforts, Support for domestic industries	Support for global oil supply stability, Cooperation with OPEC
COVID-19 Pandemic (2019)	Regional aid packages, Increased healthcare funding, Debt relief proposals	Large-scale fiscal packages, Global vaccine distribution programs
Ukraine Conflict (2022)	Neutral diplomatic stance, Efforts to maintain commodity trade flows	Sanctions on Russia, Financial aid to Ukraine, Defence spending increased

Source: Authorship

During the 2008 financial crisis, the G7 led global recovery efforts through large-scale financial incentives and coordinated interventions by central banks. These measures aimed to stabilise financial markets and restore economic confidence. BRICS nations, less impacted due to their relatively low exposure to Western financial markets, focused on expanding regional trade agreements and supporting growth through infrastructure investments (BBC News, 2023).

In the COVID-19 pandemic, G7 countries implemented extensive fiscal packages and organised global initiatives like the COVAX program to distribute vaccines. BRICS nations, on the other hand, prioritised regional cooperation, providing healthcare funding and proposing debt relief for developing nations. Despite resource limitations, BRICS countries emphasised self-reliance and alternative supply chains to mitigate the crisis's economic impact.

Other crucial crises, such as the 2014 oil price shock and the Ukraine conflict in 2022, further highlight differences in strategies. BRICS emphasises economic diversification and maintaining commodity trade flows. In contrast, the G7 implemented policies like sanctions and increased defence spending (Reuters, 2022). The comparison underscores how G7 focuses on financial stability and global leadership, while BRICS emphasises regional solidarity and alternative development strategies.



D] Economic disparities:

Both BRICS and G7 nations face substantial internal challenges stemming from economic disparities and inequalities.

In BRICS, income inequality is a persistent concern, mainly in Brazil and South Africa, where large segments of the population remain excluded from economic growth. Additionally, BRICS nations struggle with uneven development levels; for instance, India has significant rural poverty despite high economic growth, while Russia faces economic volatility due to dependency on oil exports (Leininger, 2018: 126).

The G7, while generally wealthier, also deals with structural issues like ageing populations, mainly in Japan and Italy. It put tremendous economic pressure on healthcare and pension systems. Economic stagnation in parts of Europe and the United States has contributed to rising inequality and social unrest. These nations also face challenges related to wealth concentration and limited upward mobility in lower-income groups. Both blocs are implementing strategies to address these disparities (Chossudovsky, 2003: 62).

BRICS has invested in infrastructure and education to promote inclusive growth, while the G7 emphasises social safety nets, healthcare reform, and job creation. However, the effectiveness of these measures varies due to political and institutional differences. It means the complexity of achieving equitable development in both emerging and developed economies.

E] Technology and Digital Economy:

Technological innovation and the digital economy are crucial drivers of growth and influence for both BRICS and G7 nations. But their focus areas and strategies differ. G7 countries lead in advanced research and high-tech industries, with a strong emphasis on artificial intelligence (AI), data privacy and global digital governance. The United States and Japan, for instance, are pioneers in AI research, while the European Union has established stringent regulations on data protection through the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Matthews, 2020). These countries dominate global markets for high-tech products and services, shaping digital norms and standards worldwide.

In contrast, BRICS nations are focusing on expanding digital infrastructure and leveraging technology for socio-economic development. China has emerged as a leader in AI with platforms like Deep Seek and Fintech with platforms like Alipay, WeChat Pay etc., revolutionizing digital payments (Brooks, 2021). India has developed one of the world's largest digital payment ecosystems through initiatives such as the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). UPI has enhanced financial inclusion and supports economic growth in third world countries at a phenomenal level. These innovations have helped BRICS countries address challenges such as limited banking access and digital inequality (OECD Observer, 2019).

While the G7 emphasizes maintaining leadership through technological exports and global standards, BRICS is creating alternative digital frameworks that cater to the needs of developing economies.



Political Perspectives: A Comparative Analysis

A] Leadership in International Governance and Multilateral Institutes:

BRICS and G7 have discrete approaches to leadership and influence in major international governance institutions like the UN, WTO, IMF and WHO.

Table 4. BRICS vs G7 – Comparison of Influences in Multilateral Organizations

Organisation	BRICS Influence	G7 Influence
United Nations (UN)	Push for reform of Security Council to increase representation for emerging economies.	Dominant influence in decision-making and peacekeeping operations
World Trade Organization (WTO)	Advocacy for fairer trade rules and support for developing nations	Leadership in setting trade policies and dispute-resolution mechanisms
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	Establishment of New Development Bank as an alternative financial institution	Control of financial policy frameworks and loan conditions
World Health Organization (WHO)	Support for global health initiatives through regional collaborations	Major contributors to global health funding and pandemic response strategies

Source: Autorship

BRICS nations advocate for reforms to increase representation and fairness for emerging economies. For example, they have called for restructuring the UN Security Council to include permanent seats for countries from the Global South. In the WTO, BRICS members push for equitable trade policies that protect the interests of developing nations. BRICS perspective challenges the dominance of Western economies (Dupont, 2020: 47) & (Thakur, 2016: 22).

Conversely, the G7 exerts significant control over global governance structures. In the UN, G7 nations are key players in peacekeeping operations and international security initiatives. The G7 also leads in setting global financial frameworks through the IMF. They influence loan conditions and policy recommendations. Additionally, the G7's role in the WTO involves shaping trade rules and resolving disputes to maintain economic stability (Allison, 2017: 80).

Both blocs are active in global health governance, with the G7 contributing large-scale funding to initiatives like pandemic preparedness. BRICS, on the other hand, emphasises regional health partnerships and alternative funding mechanisms. The ongoing competition between the two blocs shapes global norms and decision-making processes in multilateral organisations.

B] Soft Power, Alliances and Diplomacy:

BRICS and G7 leverage unique diplomatic alliances and soft power strategies to expand their global influence. BRICS emphasises South-South cooperation. It supports the solidarity among developing nations. BRICS members frequently advocate for non-Western narratives, challenging the dominance of the Western-led liberal order. For



instance, partnerships with African and Latin American countries and China's Belt and Road Initiative. It seeks to enhance global infrastructure connectivity. Additionally, BRICS nations promote cultural exchange and investment in developing regions. BRICS emphasises respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs (Smith, 2018: A4).

On the other hand, the G7 trusts a well-established network of strategic alliances, for instance, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) to maintain global security and promote the liberal democratic order. G7 supports the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild Europe after World War II and continues to lead in international aid programs. The G7 also wields significant soft power through its dominance in global media, higher education, and arts, reinforcing the appeal of Western values and governance models.

C] Approach towards Global Challenges:

BRICS and G7 vary in their approaches to addressing global challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity, human rights, etc.

Table 5. BRICS vs G7 – Comparative Approaches to Global Challenges

Global Challenge	BRICS Approach	G7 Approach
Climate Change	Support for differentiated responsibilities, emphasis on development-focused green policies	Leading global climate agreements (e.g., Paris Agreement) focus on carbon reduction targets.
Cybersecurity	Promotion of digital sovereignty, focus on national cybersecurity measures	International cooperation on cybersecurity standards, emphasis on collective defence
Human Rights	Emphasis on non-interference in domestic affairs, advocating for socio-economic rights & human rights	Promotion of liberal democratic values, emphasis on political and civil rights

Source: Authorship

Environmental sustainability is a critical priority for both BRICS and G7. It is one the convergence where a majority of them agree with future sustainability goal. It is only the process that creates a stiff objection. Both BRICS and G7 are contributing to and strategizing for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The G7 takes a leading role in global climate initiatives, emphasising Carbon Neutrality and renewable energy transitions. The European Union's Green Deal and the United States' recommitment to the Paris Agreement demonstrate these efforts. Investments in Wind, Solar and Hydrogen energy aim to reduce the carbon footprint of G7 economies. It is easier said than done because industrial legacies face challenges in achieving complete carbon neutrality (Smith, 2018: A4).

BRICS nations, however, must balance rapid economic growth with environmental sustainability. These countries emphasise climate justice, advocating that developed nations bear greater responsibility for global emissions reductions. China leads the world in solar energy capacity, while India's National Solar Mission has significantly expanded access to renewable energy. Brazil faces the dual challenge of economic development



and conserving the Amazon rainforest, which is crucial for global carbon sequestration (Climate Policy Journal, 2021).

G7 countries grapple with industrial emissions and political resistance to strict environmental policies, while BRICS nations contend with developmental priorities and dependence on fossil fuels. Despite these hurdles, both blocs invest in green technologies, signalling a global shift towards sustainable development pathways. Yet, differences are there.

BRICS nations emphasise differentiated responsibilities in climate policy. They claim that developed countries should bear a larger share of the burden. Their strategies focus on balancing economic development with green policies. For instance, the BRICS Climate Action Plan – A sustainable infrastructure plan in developing regions. BRICS also raises partnerships with the Global South to share green technologies and investments.

Nevertheless, the G7 plays a leading role in global climate agreements like the Paris Agreement. It supports rigorous & stringent carbon reduction targets and investments in renewable energy. The G7's approach emphasises global cooperation on climate issues, with significant funding for climate adaptation and technology transfers to developing countries.

Regarding cybersecurity, BRICS promotes digital sovereignty and national cybersecurity measures. It battles with the efforts to impose global regulations they perceive as biased towards Western interests. Meanwhile, G7 nations prioritise international cooperation and collective defence against cyber threats, with frameworks on transparency and standard cybersecurity protocols. (Lee, 2024: 60)

In human rights, BRICS advocates for non-interference, emphasising socio-economic rights and national development. Conversely, the G7 stresses the protection of political and civil liberties. They often criticise authoritarian governance models.

D] Response to Geopolitical Tensions:

BRICS and the G7 response reflect their contrasting ideologies and strategic priorities. The G7 aligns closely with NATO and Western democratic values. G7 often uses military and economic alliances to enforce global norms. A notable example is the G7's unified response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It involved imposing severe sanctions on Russia and providing military support to Ukraine. G7 remains active in the Indo-Pacific region, countering China's influence by strengthening defence partnerships with Japan and Australia. This reinforces commitment of G7 to a Western-led global order but also intensifies geopolitical rivalries.

In contrast, BRICS underlines a counter-hegemonic stance, advocating for a multipolar world where no single bloc dominates. BRICS nations often criticize Western interventions and advocate for respecting national sovereignty. For example, BRICS countries have expressed discontent with unilateral sanctions, arguing that such measures undermine the International Law. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) demonstrate the BRICS' commitment to fostering regional stability and security cooperation (O'Brien, 2010: 51), especially in Asia. Furthermore, BRICS supports peacebuilding and development projects in Africa, giving an alternative to Western-led military and economic interventions.



BRICS & G7 are deeply entangled in areas of global tension. For the G7, key challenges include managing strained relations with Russia and China, notably over trade, human rights, and security in the Indo-Pacific. For BRICS, tensions arise from criticism of Western interventionism and the need to maintain solidarity among members with differing geopolitical interests.

E] Political Sociology Dimension:

The G7 is rooted in cultural values that emphasise individualism, liberal democracy, and human rights. These values are reflected in policies that promote free markets and civil liberties. For instance, the USA's healthcare reforms, the EU's privacy laws, etc. It prioritises individual rights and market competitiveness. These cultural underpinnings also influence the G7's efforts to promote Western governance models through international institutions like the IMF and WTO.

BRICS, on the other hand, underlines collectivism and national sovereignty. These nations often advocate for alternative approaches to governance. They resist what they perceive as Western dominance. Examples include China's Belt and Road Initiative, which focuses on state-led infrastructure development, and India's Rural Development & Agriculture Support programs aimed at improving livelihoods through government intervention. BRICS countries promote cultural diversity and multipolar cooperation. They challenge the imposition of universal political and economic norms. (Al Jazeera, 2023) & (Kumar and Mendes, 2024: 38).

Conclusion

BRICS and G7 both face internal challenges and opportunities as they navigate an increasingly complex global landscape. These factors impact their internal cohesion, unity and future scenarios. It is crucial to understand this because multipolarity and technological advancements are redefining influence and power.

BRICS faces significant challenges in maintaining internal cohesion due to economic disparities and political divergences among its members. China's economic and technological dominance creates an imbalance within the group. It also hampers equitable cooperation. Smaller economies like South Africa often struggle to match the scale of China. Additionally, political tensions, such as the long-standing border disputes between India and China, the Sino-Russian ideological conflicts, etc., pose risks to strategic alignment. These factors complicate decision-making and the ability to present a unified front in international governance (Cooper & Antkiewicz, 2008: 110).

G7 faces ageing populations and economic stagnation in the majority of the states. Japan and several European countries are managing on the brink with declining birth rates and increased pressure on social welfare systems. Furthermore, G7 nations have seen their global influence wane in the face of rising economic powers like China and India. This limits the G7's ability to sustain its leadership role in a world that is shifting toward multipolarity.



Despite internal challenges, both blocs have opportunities to strengthen their global influence. BRICS can leverage its growing partnerships with the Global South to expand its role in global governance. Belt and Road Initiative and South-South cooperation programs have increased BRICS' strategic importance to emerging economies. Additionally, BRICS countries, particularly China and India, are becoming leaders in artificial intelligence (AI) development. BRICS has potential opportunities to drive innovation and influence future global technological norms.

For the G7, prospects lie in strengthening alliances and shaping global standards in AI ethics, Cybersecurity and Sustainable Development. The G7 has already made robust steps in AI research and regulation. Furthermore, G7 nations are expanding their geopolitical alliances in the Indo-Pacific, where partnerships with Australia, Japan and India, i.e., QUAD Alliance, are helping counterbalance China's growing influence. QUAD is, ironically, a threat to BRICS.

A central challenge for BRICS is balancing economic development with political alignment. While projects like the New Development Bank (NDB) have encouraged infrastructure development, achieving consensus on broader policy issues remains difficult. Divergent geopolitical interests, such as Russia's focus on military power versus Brazil's environmental priorities, hamper long-term cooperation. Similarly, G7 countries face criticisms for their perceived dominance over global financial institutions, which has strained relations with developing nations.

However, both groups have opportunities to lead in global issues. BRICS can expand its influence by promoting alternative frameworks for economic development and digital governance. Its emphasis on regional partnerships could allow it to become a central player in addressing the needs of developing nations. On the other hand, the G7 can maintain relevance by investing in technological innovation and forging stronger ties with emerging economies. Efforts to lead on climate change, digital security, and economic recovery will be crucial to the G7's long-term influence.

The internal challenges of BRICS and G7 highlight the difficulties and complexities of maintaining unity within each bloc. However, both groups also have significant opportunities to shape the future of global governance. Rising multipolarity and technological advancements are reshaping the nature of influence and power, offering both blocs a chance to redefine their roles worldwide. Through innovation, partnerships, and effective leadership, BRICS and G7 can continue to compete and collaborate in shaping the world's political and economic landscape. (Singh, 2023: 115)

In conclusion, BRICS and G7 could find common ground in areas like climate change and global health, where cooperation benefits everyone. Both blocs face shared risks from rising temperatures, pandemics, and resource shortages. Working together on clean energy, vaccine distribution, or early warning systems is possible, especially through international platforms like the G20. Middle powers such as Indonesia could help bridge differences. These countries are not strongly aligned with either bloc, making them good mediators. They can promote dialogue and cooperation by focusing on common goals like sustainable development and global stability, helping reduce tensions and encouraging more inclusive global leadership.



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IMPLICATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM ON DEBT CRISIS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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Abstract

There is a growing concern in the global south on the unfavourable nature of the contemporary international monetary system and international debt crisis on development in the global south. This concern have been situated within the liberals and historical structuralist perspectives to the study of international political economy. While both perspective have tenaciously hold on to their postulations on the nature of present international monetary system and the causes of the debt crisis in the global south. This study examine the implications of contemporary international monetary system on debt crisis in the global south. This study is situated with the context of historical research design with data collected from various secondary sources such as journals, books and internet sources. The analysis of the study was carried out using qualitative content analysis. Moreover, one of the implications of the World Bank and IMF structural adjustment and conditionalities on the global south is that its impedes the global south efforts at developing their infrastructure, health service delivery and educational development among others. Lastly, this study recommend among other things, good leadership, good governance and sound domestic economic system are key in addressing the consequences of contemporary international monetary system and international debt crisis on development in the global south.

Keywords

Debt, Liberalism, Crisis, Regime, Money, International Monetary Fund.

Resumo

Existe uma preocupação crescente no sul global quanto à natureza desfavorável do sistema monetário internacional contemporâneo e à crise da dívida internacional sobre o desenvolvimento no sul global. Essa preocupação tem sido enquadrada dentro das perspetivas liberais e estruturalistas históricas para o estudo da economia política internacional. Embora ambas as perspetivas se tenham mantido firmes nas suas postulações sobre a natureza do atual sistema monetário internacional e as causas da crise da dívida no sul global. Este estudo examina as implicações do sistema monetário internacional contemporâneo na crise da dívida no sul global. Este estudo está situado no contexto de um projeto de pesquisa histórica com dados recolhidos de várias fontes secundárias, tais como revistas, livros e fontes da Internet. A análise do estudo foi realizada utilizando análise qualitativa de conteúdo. Além disso, uma das implicações do ajustamento estrutural e das condicionalidades do Banco Mundial e do FMI no sul global é que impede os esforços do sul global no desenvolvimento das suas infraestruturas, prestação de serviços de saúde e desenvolvimento educacional, entre outros. Por último, este estudo recomenda, entre outras coisas, que uma boa liderança, uma boa governação e um sistema económico interno sólido são fundamentais para lidar com as



consequências do sistema monetário internacional contemporâneo e da crise da dívida internacional no desenvolvimento do sul global.

Palavras-chave

Dívida, Liberalismo, Crise, Regime, Dinheiro, Fundo Monetário Internacional.

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IMPLICATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM ON DEBT CRISIS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

ZEKERI MOMOH

Introduction

The evolution of contemporary international monetary relations can be categorised into the following phases: the classical gold standard era which was between 1870s to World War I. During this period gold was the standard unit of exchange and government all over the world were making concerted efforts at converting their domestic currency to gold at a fixed rate. After this period, was the Bretton Woods system which lasted from 1944-1973. The Bretton Wood era was also characterised by a monetary regime that was greatly influenced by interventionist liberalism, that allow nations to fix their exchange rates to gold, which allowed the U.S. dollar as the international currency for conversion. Today, there are pressure for traditional liberals for free market economy.

Consequently, the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was necessitated by the need for the bank to provide short-term loans to the Global South to address their growing balance-of-payments challenges and to ensure that there was state intervention in capital flows in order to maintain exchange rate stability among nations. It is important note that the rising U.S. balance-of-payments deficits, as well as domestic pressures on the United States made the US to return to traditional Liberalism. It was against this backdrop that there was a paradigm shift from post WWI pegged currency conversion to floating exchange rates by 1973.

However, the Bretton Woods system collapsed due to two basic problem. The first was the United States making it difficult for countries to convert the US Dollars into gold and second was the conscious efforts by President Charles de Gualle converting dollars into gold. These two factors prompted the shift in international monetary relations in 1973. Today, international monetary relations is based on the mixed regime system which consist of the floating and fixed exchange rates that started from 1973. In 1973, the international community began a shift from the Bretton Wood monetary system, such that in 1976, there was a complete shift to the floating exchange rates that allow countries not to obstruct the currency market system to allow the market forces to determine currency values in the international monetary system (Cohen 2016).

One of the disadvantages of post and present international monetary system on Global South with reference to Africa is the rising debt crisis that has impeded the growth and development of African countries. Besides, the debt crisis that has impeded the growth and development of many Global South countries and have left long lasting negative implications in Africa was the 1980 debt crisis. In the literature of International Political Economy, a number of reasons have been advanced to be responsible for the 1980s debt crisis such as unexpected chnages in the global economy, irresponsible behaviour of the



creditor nations, irresponsible behaviour of the indebted Global South and dependence of the Global South on the Global North for foreign loan (Cohen, 2000; 2016).

Moreover, the unexpected changes in the global economy was attributed largely to the sharp increase in the prices of food grains (especially wheat) in the 1960s and the Middle East War in October, 1973 that led to increase in the price of oil. Another reason was attributed to overlending by the creditors without considering the credit worthiness of the Global South. For instance, the assertion that debt crisis of the 1980s was attributed to the imprudent behaviour on the part of the Global South were situated within the context of the liberal perspective. While, the postulations that the 1980s oil crisis was attributed to the dependence of Global South on the Global North for loans and other credit facilities were further situated within the context of the historical structuralists perspective to the study of International Political Economy. The historical structuralists especially those labelled as Dependency school attributed the reliance of the Global South on the Global North to long term structural nature of the world capitalist system.

However, the nineteenth Century witnessed widespread of debt crisis and loans defaults in the 1930s that affected the capital flows into Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Latin American countries. The international debt crisis of the early 1980s was regarded by scholars as "one of the most traumatic international disturbances" of the twentieth century (Cline, 1995:1; Cohen, 2000:165). The 1980s international debt crisis took the international community by surprise because many countries did not envisage the debt crisis and the consequences of the debt crisis on the international banking system was detrimental to significant numbers of Global South such as Mexico, Zaire, Argentina, Peru, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Togo just to mention a few.

Prior to the 1980s there was absence of global financial institutions to deal with debt related challenges as sizeable numbers of countries and governments were unwilling to intervene in debt crisis related issues as private bank lending to Global South increased especially around the 1970s as a result of IMF advised, in a bid for Global South to change their economic policies and programmes inline with liberal economic system. By 1982, most indebted Global South could not pay their loans from larger commercial banks which were key player in the global financial system. The consequences of the failure of indebted Global South to meet their loan obligation affected the international financial stability. It is against this background that the creditor government considered it necessary to intervene in the debt settlement process in the 1980s. Moreover, the leading creditors that spearhead addressing the debt crisis in the 1980s were the United States, International Monetary Funds (IMF), World Bank, the Paris Club, London Club and the Bank for International Settlements all playing international financial supporting roles (Cohen, 2000:165). It is pertinent to note that the debt regime became prevalent in the 1980s when compared to the 1930s because, there was the absence of global hegemon like the United States, World Bank and IMF in the 1930s but are evident in 1980s (Corbridge, 1993:25).

By late 1990s the Asian continent witnessed what is known today in International Political Economy literature as the Asian Financial Crisis. It started in Thailand in July 1997, when there high demand for its currency due to capital inflows. This capital inflow led to rise in its current account deficit, decline in Thailand export, decline in property prices and growing international debt of Thailand which resulted in depreciation of the Thailand baht.



Similarly, other Asian countries such as Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore began to witness similar economic shock, in what was popularly referred to as “financial contagion” because investors were afraid that just as Thailand devalued its currency there was the tendency that other Asian countries might do so. This led to capital outflow, currencies depreciation and a rapid fall in stock markets, banking crises, and decline in economic growth rates. This economic challenges led to political instability and civil disobedience in Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, and Philippines (Cohen 2016).

Consequently, the 2008 global financial crisis that started in the United States negatively affected the global economy was attributed to the “financial contagion” just like the Asian financial crisis of 1997. This “financial contagion” are often triggered by investors rush to sell their currency. This often led to capital outflow. In the Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis had common features, such as common stocks in real estate bubbles, deficits in current account, and heavy reliance on large capital inflows. It is pertinent to note that the debt crisis of 1980s and the Asian financial crisis of 1997 both started from the Global South as a result of government debts. The implication of debt crises that emanates from the Global South is that it gives more power and influence to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Developed Countries over the debtors developing countries. This explains why the IMF and World Bank has continued to impose its structural adjustment policies and programmes on Global South that continue to suffer from economic dislocation as a result of the implementation of liberal economic reforms that has no bearing on the wellbeing and living standard of the citizens.

On the contrary, the 1929/1930 and ended in 1933. The 2008 global financial crisis started in the United States in December 2007 and ended in June 2009 as well as the Euro crisis 2008 started from the developed countries as a result of European crisis. It is pertinent to note that government debt was responsible for the Greece debt crisis while in other European countries, government entered into debt in order to bail out banks. The implication of the debt crisis that emanates from the developed countries is that it lead to the emergence of developed countries especially the European Union as emerging economies within the international system. This explains that the present international monetary and financial system is at the disadvantage of the Global South.

On the whole, there is a call by interventionist liberals for a return to a interventionist system that will allow for pegging of currency to gold or a standard unit of international currency conversion. The 1997 Asian financial Crisis, 2008 global economic crisis and European financial crisis also known Euro crisis of 2008, were all caused by the adoption of the free market economic system without interventionist measure. On the contrary, the liberals have argued that global financial crisis have been attributed to poor domestic policies and weak political institutions in developing countries, not from capital outflows. It is against this background, that this study seeks to examine the implications of contemporary international monetary system on debt crisis in the global south.

Conceptual Review of the Contemporary International Monetary System

The contemporary international monetary system (IMS) refers to the set of institutions, rules, practices, and instruments that govern global monetary relations, cross-border



capital flows, and exchange rate stability. At its core, the IMS performs three functions: providing international liquidity, ensuring adjustment mechanisms for balance-of-payments disequilibria, and maintaining confidence in the stability of the system (IMF, 2025).

A central feature of the system is the hierarchy of currencies, where the U.S. dollar plays a dominant role as the primary reserve, invoicing, and settlement currency. Despite periodic discussions of multipolarity, the dollar accounts for the majority of global reserves, trade invoicing, and cross-border financial contracts (Federal Reserve, 2025). The euro and, increasingly, the Chinese renminbi occupy secondary positions, but dollar dominance continues to generate spillover effects from U.S. monetary policy to the Global South (European Parliament, 2025).

Another defining aspect is the increasing role of global capital markets in financing. Since the liberalization of the 1980s and 1990s, private markets have replaced official flows as the primary source of international liquidity. This evolution has increased vulnerability to sudden stops and capital flight, especially in emerging economies that rely heavily on foreign-currency-denominated debt (Bank for International Settlements, 2025). These vulnerabilities are amplified by what scholars describe as the “original sin” problem, where many developing economies are unable to borrow internationally in their domestic currency (Eichengreen, 2019).

The global financial safety net (GFSN) forms the institutional backbone of crisis response. It is composed of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), regional financial arrangements, bilateral central bank swap lines, and multilateral development banks. During the COVID-19 crisis, the IMF’s unprecedented \$650 billion allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) demonstrated the importance of unconditional reserve assets for liquidity provision (IMF, 2023). However, critics argue that access to this safety net remains asymmetrical, with advanced economies benefiting disproportionately from swap lines and SDR holdings, while low-income countries face conditional lending (Boston University GDP Center et al., 2024).

Recent reforms have sought to enhance liquidity and governance. For example, IMF members have begun channeling SDRs to multilateral development banks (MDBs) to expand lending capacity (Reuters, 2024). Yet governance gaps remain: the allocation of voting power within the IMF and World Bank continues to reflect post-World War II realities rather than contemporary global economic structures (Carnegie Endowment, 2024). This imbalance raises questions about the system’s fairness and effectiveness in addressing the needs of the Global South.

Furthermore, scholars and policymakers emphasize the growing challenge of fragmentation and multipolarity. Regional initiatives such as the Chiang Mai Initiative in Asia, along with the use of alternative payment systems, suggest a gradual diversification away from a purely dollar-centric order. However, while such fragmentation may provide options for crisis financing, it complicates coordination in sovereign debt restructuring and systemic responses (UNCTAD/Bretton Woods Project, 2025).

On the whole, contemporary International Monetary System is characterized by the persistence of dollar dominance, the volatility of private capital markets, the incomplete and uneven coverage of the global financial safety net, and persistent governance



asymmetries. Conceptually, these features show that the IMS remains structurally imbalanced, with implications for global stability and for the debt vulnerabilities of the Global South.

Literature Review

There is a growing numbers of study in International Political Economy that focuses on various aspects of international financial or monetary system. For instance, Cohen (2000) examined the monetary governance in the international system. Cohen (2004) investigated the future of international monetary system. Again Cohen (2015) in his study examined competition among various currencies within the international system. Besides, Cohen (2016) investigated the nature of international monetary relations from inception to 2016. However, Eichengreen (2008) examined the globalization of capital while Cohen (2008) investigated the nature of international monetary governance. James (1996) study focus on the International Monetary Cooperation Since the inception of the Bretton Woods system.

Nevertheless, Bootle (2013) examine the crisis associated with Euro. Verdun (2002) had earlier examined the euro and integration theory. Porter (2005) studied the governance of global finance. Fratianni, et al studied the governing of global finance with focus on the new challenges of G7 and IMF Contributions. However, Prasad (2014) examined the changing role of the US dollar. Again, Eichengreen (2011) investigated the rise and fall of the US Dollar. Helleiner, et al (2009) studied the future of the US dollar.

However, Helleiner and Kirshner (2015) investigated China's growing monetary power in the International system. On the influence of domestic politics on international finance, Broz and Frieden (2001) investigated the Political Economy of International Monetary Relations. Webb (1995) examined the relationship between capital mobility, policy coordination, and domestic autonomy since 1945. From the review of the above literature, a lot of studies have been conducted on the nature of international monetary and financial system as well as international debt crisis.

The various financial crises in the world has attracted the attention of scholars to examine their causes and implications. For instance, Kirshner (2014) examined the United States power after the 2008 financial crisis. On the 2008 global financial crisis, scholars who carried out study in this area include Helleiner (2014); Blinder (2013); Rajan (2010) and Lewis (2011) among others. On the European debt crisis scholars who have undertaken research in this area include Marsh (2013); Berend (2013) and Pisany-Ferry, (2011). On the controversial austerity measures adopted as a result of the EU crisis was undertaken by Blyth (2013). On regulation and financial crises, scholars like Barth, Caprio and Levine (2012) wrote on the, financial regulations that work. However, the 1990s Asian financial crisis has attracted the works of Carney (2009); Pempel (1999); Thirkell-White (2005). On international debt crises include Herman and Spiegel (2010) and Rieffel, (2003) among others.

The contemporary international monetary system has been widely critiqued for entrenching structural inequalities that disproportionately affect the Global South. Recent scholarship emphasizes that the persistence of dollar dominance, fluctuating global



interest rates, and conditional lending practices exacerbate debt vulnerabilities in developing economies. For instance, Ocampo and Bértola (2022) argue that the international monetary system is inherently asymmetrical, as Global South countries face limited access to liquidity during crises compared to advanced economies. This imbalance was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when capital outflows and currency depreciations heightened debt burdens in Africa and Latin America. Similarly, Gallagher and Kozul-Wright (2021) highlight that reliance on dollar-denominated debt exposes Global South economies to exchange rate volatility, thereby aggravating debt service obligations whenever the U.S. Federal Reserve raises interest rates.

A growing body of literature underscores the role of international financial institutions (IFIs) in perpetuating debt crises through policy conditionalities. Kentikelenis and Stubbs (2023) observe that structural adjustment programs tied to IMF lending continue to impose austerity measures, reducing fiscal space for social spending and development. These dynamics deepen dependency and limit the autonomy of debtor nations in shaping their own economic recovery paths.

Other scholars focus on the governance architecture of the international monetary system. Acosta and Griffith-Jones (2022) maintain that the current system privileges creditor nations and private financial markets, while debtor nations in the Global South lack meaningful representation in global decision-making forums. This asymmetry reproduces cycles of debt distress, as countries must borrow under unfavorable terms with limited mechanisms for restructuring. In addition, there is increasing attention on the debt-climate nexus. For instance, Bhattacharya and Stern (2023) contend that many Global South economies face a “double crisis” of debt and climate vulnerability, as high debt servicing crowds out investments in climate adaptation and mitigation. The absence of innovative financing mechanisms such as debt-for-climate swaps illustrates how the international monetary system is failing to address contemporary global challenges.

Overall, the literature converges on the argument that the structure of the international monetary system systematically disadvantages the Global South. Today, US dollar dependency, conditional lending, limited representation in global financial governance, and inadequate mechanisms for debt restructuring combine to reinforce debt crises. While proposals such as Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) allocation and regional financial arrangements offer potential relief, the studies reviewed emphasize that without systemic reform, the Global South will continue to be caught in recurrent debt traps. It is against this background this study seeks to make contributions to the implications of contemporary international monetary system on debt crisis in the global south.

Theoretical Framework

Theories abound in International Political economy for the study of international monetary/financial system and foreign debt crisis such as liberal theory, historical structural theory, hegemonic stability theory and regime theory among others. Looking at the variables under investigation namely international monetary/financial system and foreign debt crisis. The regime theory is appropriate in understanding the nexus between international monetary/financial system and foreign debt crisis. The regime theory has



Stephen D. Krasner and Robert Keohane as its leading proponents. It emerged as a theory in the 1970s.

The Regime theory is anchored on the premise that regimes help to reduce the conflict that characterized the nature of the international system and promote cooperation among states. The regime theory is used to explain why in some sections of the international system experience, orderliness while in some areas, there are conflicts. Regimes are “*sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.*” (Feldstein, 1994:737).

Regime principles and norms are anchored on the assertion that there are universal practices and patterns of behaviour that regulate relationships and interactions among states. For instance, international trade are guided by certain principles such as trade liberalization, reciprocity, and nondiscrimination principle. Hence, basic rules and regulations tends to emanates from this broader trade principles and norms which influence behaviours of nations in their relationship and transactions with each other.

Today, we have significant numbers of International regimes that are closely linked with international organizations (IOs), because of their very nature as an institutions with official roles and responsibilities, with a minimum of three member states. It is pertinent to note that international organizations operate within formal bodies that are guided by international regimes. For instance, the IMF, World Bank and WTO operate within the frameworks of international financial regimes.

Robert Keohane argues that it is stress-free to uphold regimes than to construct new ones and that there is the tendency for countries to benefit from a regime and it is ease also for states to unilaterally preserve a regime even after there is hegemonic declines in the international system (Birdsall, et al 2005). It equally important to note that the regime theory has been used to study regime outcomes especially in the areas of international debt crisis, environment issues, transportation, and communications among others (Ffrench-Davis, 1988; Corbridge, 1993).

On the whole, to assess regime outcomes, regime theorists would investigate whether states accept the existing regime principles, norms, and regulations; or whether the existing regimes could successfully accomplish solve international problems; and whether regimes actually make states to widen their views of self-interest or not. All these questions are key in understanding regime system around the world (Feinberg, 1988). It is against this background that this study adopted the regime theory to examine the implications of contemporary international monetary relations on debt crisis in the global south.

International Monetary system and Debt Crisis in the Global South

Prior to the WWII the international mechanism’s for addressing debt crisis were restricted to either unilateral decisions taken by creditors or debtors country or a bilateral resolutions which was a situation whereby the creditors or debtors reached a consensus on how the can be addressed. However, after WW II the pattern of settlement of foreign debts involve tripartite parties such as the World Bank, IMF, Paris and London Clubs.



Though, the U.S sometimes acted as third party in Global South access to loan (Lindert et al 1989: 66-77).

The aftermath of WW II was characterized by the emergence of international debt regimes. Some of these international debt regimes covers one or more sector of the economy. Though the 1980's international debt regime cover specific regime within the framework of balance-of-payments financing regime because international debt regime focus on specific issue. The first international debt regime that emerged was the balance-of-payments debt regime. The principle of balance-of-payments financing was anchored on the notion that was sufficient but not unrestricted to alternative fund and was made available to countries for handling their balance-of-payment deficit challenges. The principle was also based on the notion that countries proving loan may attach conditions for the repayment of their loans, considered to be appropriate in addressing the debtors balance- of- payment financing regime on borrowers (Cohen. 2000).

Moreover, the 1970s balance-of-payments regime faced serious challenge from private banks that provided Global South with loan as significant numbers of Global South could not meet the creditworthiness required for the private banks loan. This was attributed to the harsh conditionalities attached to the loans received by most Global South as at that time. For instance, in 1982, Mexico declared that it would not be able to pay its loan. This prompted private banks to immediately cut their loan to developing countries. It was against this background that significant numbers of Global South to return to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for their loan assistance.

However, the reliance of Global South on official financing provided the platform for the United States and other international organisations to introduced the foreign debt regime, which replaced the pre-1970s balance-of-payment regimes. Therefore, the foreign debt regime was based on the principle that debt regime based on conditionality of Global South compliance and commitment to the market oriented reforms. It is important to note that the pre-1970 balance-of-payment regime differs in some area from the 1980 foreign debt regime. For instance, the foreign debt regime through the instrumentality of the United States of America and IMF imposed put more pressure on commercial banks to continue granting loans to indebted poor countries. Also, the Paris and London club were used in the 1980s and 1990s than the pre-1970s period.

Again, the World Bank and IMF became key players in the provision of structural adjustment loan to Global South from the 1980s. Moreover, the loans provided by the World Bank and IMF to the Global South in Africa and Eastern European countries were closely linked to their adoption of liberal economic reforms such as privatisation, deregulation and trade liberalisation. Though, the negotiation of Paris and London Clubs were anchored on three fundamental principles of imminent default, conditionality and burden distribution.

There are three types of negotiations that took place between the creditors (World Bank, IMF, Paris and London Clubs as well as other commercial banks) and the debtors (Global South in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe). The first negotiation was between the World Bank and IMF who accept to provide structural adjustment loans to the indebted Global South in order to implement economic policies and programmes that would address their balance-of-payment deficit. For instance, countries that were



formerly members of the Soviet Union that were indebted in the 1980s and those that needed World Bank and IMF to finance their infrastructure such as Poland, People's Republic of China, Hungary, Romania, Albania, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Czech Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina among others either adopted the World Bank and IMF economic policies or had adopted similar economic reforms such as the market socialist system that was characterised by workers self management.

The second negotiation was between the Paris and London Clubs. This negotiation often consist of members of the indebted countries, creditors countries, representatives from the World Bank, IMF, Regional Development Bank and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). A critical assessment of the *modus operandi* of the Paris Club is that it adopted three basic principles in its debt negotiation which include: imminent default which constrained the debtors demand for relief to countries with important needs to prevent unwarranted negotiation and to show the severity of the situation or needs. Conditionality is also adopted in the Paris Club principle to show that the debtor is creditworthy and will be able to pay thier debts based on the agreement signed with the International Monetary Funds (IMF) (Kuhn et al 1990:7). In some situation when the country in question is not a member of the IMF as at the time of requesting for the loan from the Paris Club as in the case of Cuba, Poland and Mozambique. The Paris Club usually reschedule it own conditionality programme that will ensure that the debtor country does not default on its payments.

The third principle of negotiation was based on burden sharing. This implies that the Paris Club ensures that it provide relief in relation to their loan accessible to the debtor country. As stated earlier under the first negotiation, the United States and IMF were instrumental to developing strategies to address the debt criss of the 1980s. The objectives of the international debt strategies according to Cohen (2000:180) was "*to prevent the collapse of the international banking and financial system, to restore capital market access for the debtor countries, and to minimize economic dislocation and restore economic growth in the debtor countries.*" This assertion shows that the goals of the international debt strategies was to prevent pre-1930 incidence of debt crisis, ensure that Global Southin need of loan were able to access the capital market for loan and to ensure that Global Southensure steady economic growth.

It is important to note that the World Bank and IMF adopted a number of strategies in addressing debt crisis since in the 1980s. For instance, the emergency measures and involuntary leanding was launched between 1982-1985 as an international debt strategy that invlove "firefighting" strategy. This strategy of managing the 1980 debt crisis was designed by the United States, IMF and other creditors to provide a short-term emergence financing to highly debted Global Southsuch as Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela just to mention a few in order to prevent similar financial crisis to the 1930s crisis. However, this short term measure did not brought the desired relief to the debted Global Southas envisaged by the creditors rather the debtor countries were worst off in terms of witnessing economic growth.

Also, the Baker plan was initiated between 1986-1988 following a meeting of G5 Finance Minister and Central Bank Governors organised by the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury James Baker III in New York City's Plaza Hotel in September 1985. The Baker's plan was introduced in late 1985 to assist debtor countries with a solution for dealing with their



debt crisis. The Baker plan was premised on the assumption that the postponement of some debt payments by Global South and the provision of new loans will help the debtor countries to grow their way out of their debt and could improve their export and be able to reduce their debt (Cline, 1995).

Nevertheless, the Baker plan did not do much to improve the situation of the indebted developing countries, rather their situation got worst as IMF and creditor banks were insisting on structural adjustment policies and programme as a top priority for developing countries. Again, the plan failed because the focus of the creditor banks and IMF were on Latin American countries with less emphasis on other Global South in other regions of the world. Besides, debtor Global South experience economic stagnation due to poor economic growth that affected the United States exports in Latin American markets.

Given the failure of the Baker's plan, the Brandy plan was introduced between 1989-1994 by the United States Secretary of the Treasury, Nicholas J. Brandy in March 1989. Under the Brandy plan each debtor country negotiate independently with the creditor. The debtor country is expected to accept the IMF and World Bank structural adjustment or liberal economic reforms. However, the Brandy plan differs from the Baker plan with its emphasis on debt reduction, or partial debt forgiveness of existing debt. In spite of the recommendations of the Brandy plan, the economic situation of debtor Global South did not improve as envisaged that the adoption of the liberal economic policies and programme will turn around the debt crisis in developing countries.

The outcome of the Baker plan requested that the value of other currencies should be increased through synchronized market interference and the US on the other hand will reduce its government expenditure. The outcome of this monetary arrangement led to significant decline in the dollar. This triggered any meeting of the G5 at Louvre, Paris in February 1987 to avert the declining state of the dollar. It was against this backdrop that the Plaza and Louvre agreements set the pace for a shift to managed floating, in which governments mediated to address the volatility and ineptitude of current. It is pertinent to note that current international monetary regime have remained more rickety as critics have envisaged and have been advocating for a paradigm shift to the old pegging order that allow for fixed exchange regime (49).

A critical analysis of the International debt crisis strategies adopted between 1982-1992 shows that 17 of the highly indebted countries listed under the Baker plan fell from 130% of the banks capital and reserves to only 27% in the United States Banks. In the British banks, the 17 countries fell from 85% of capital to 12%, and loan exposure of German and French banks fell from 31% to 19% and from 135 to 23% respectively (Cline, 1995:94). Again, most of the debtor Global South were able to return to the international financial markets far more rapidly after the 1980, debt crisis than they had after the 1930, debt crisis. Studies have also shown that scholars and policy makers who were inclined to liberal economic orientation sees that first and second objectives of international debt strategies as "successful" to have achieve its goals.

However, scholars and policy makers inclined to the Instrumentalist orientation are of the opinion that the objectives of the international debt strategies should be to restore economic growth to Global South of the world rather the debt strategies have failed to achieve its objectives. For instance, Davis (n.d: 60) have argued that "the major



creditors immediate payment capacity of the debtor nations are not their development” Again, IMF and World Bank emphasis is on Global South adoption of structural adjustment programmes and repayments of their loans rather than on the promotion of development in the developing countries.

It can be argued that any effort at ensuring a return to the old pegging exchange order will not be encouraged especially from the beneficiaries of present international monetary regime. The European Community developed the “snake agreement” which had limited exchange-rate fluctuations among nations with a constricted band of +2.25 to -2.25 percent (Cohen, 2016:205). Nevertheless, the “snake agreement” failed to achieve its goals because some European nations such as Italy, France, Ireland, and Britain national currency were weaker when compared to “snake agreement” band. Again, there was rising capital mobility and different macroeconomic policies among European Union member states, oil price increase of 1973-1974 that was triggered by war in the Middle East and the global economic crisis of 1975 (Cohen, 2016:205).

With the introduction of the European Monetary System (EMS), that only for individual EU member states to give up their currency for the Euro help to promote monetary stability in Europe. However, the European Union is faced with the challenge of the European sovereign debt crisis which has arguably is affecting its monetary stability. However, the future of the US dollars have been subjected to intense debate among scholars in the literature of International Political economy today. One perspective argues that the lingering United States deficits and the rising United State external debt challenge is likely to affect the confidence of the international community in the dollar. Another perspective has it that the given the economy of the United States in terms of its size, political stability of the United State Democracy, liberal economic system of the United States and the strength of the United States financial markets will ensure the sustainability of the US dollar as an international currency.

It important to note that the Japanese Yen became an international currency in the 1970s–1980s. During this period Japan witnessed remarkable economic growth making Japan the second largest economy in the world in 1968 and the largest creditor country in the world by the 1980s. However, the absence of financial system openness and a regulated capital market system till the 1990s impeded Japan competition at the international system. The aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008 made some analysts to predict that the Euro will replace the US dollar as an international currency for conversion. Despite the successes recorded by the Euro that were triggered by political stability, low inflation and increasing foreign direct investment among others. Without any form of obscurantism, the Euro is gaining ground in terms of its usage in international currency for conversion. The US dollars has remained a viable international currency for conversion within the international system.

A comparative analysis of the US dollar and Euro according to Cohen (2016:209-2010) noted that:

In 2007, the dollar was used as a medium of exchange in 86 percent of all foreign exchange transactions, compared with 37 and 16.5 percent for the euro and Japanese yen, respectively. Almost two-thirds of all countries that peg their currencies peg them to the U.S. dollar as a unit of account,



compared with one-third to the euro. The share of dollars as a store of value in central bank holdings declined from 70.9 percent in 1999 to 64 percent in 2007, while the share of euros rose from 17.9 to 26.5 percent. Although the dollar continued to be the key international currency, the euro had made impressive gains since its creation in 1999.

From the forgoing assertion, it is obvious that despite the successes recorded by the Euro as international currency for conversion between 1999 and 2007 due to its financial market stability. However, the existence of divergent Euro zone has impeded the success of the Euro against the US dollars. Today, the US dollars remain elegant as international currency for conversion among many countries in the world. On the contrary the continuous United States external debt is giving the increasing numbers of countries around the world using Euro, Yen and renminbi for international transactions, is presently put the US dollar in contention with other currency, thereby paving way for a multipolar international currency regime.

Nevertheless, the use of US dollar as bases for international conversion has continued to put the global south at disadvantage position within the International monetary system. Today, payment for international transactions and debt repayment are carried out using the US dollars. This has perpetually put the global south in debt crisis. It is pertinent to note that the modus operandi of the IMF and World Bank has arguably towards the global south has not changed remarkably since the 1980s and 1990s debt crises that weaken the capital based of the global south. The push for structural adjustment anchored on liberal economic reforms such as subsidy removal, currency devaluation or adjustments and austerity measures have remained unchanged over the years as the insistence of the IMF and World Bank is arguably more harder on the global south despite the negative effects of these liberal economic reforms that has further worsen the existing states of poverty and underdevelopment in the global south.

The relationship between exchange rate regimes and debt accumulation in the Global South remains one of the most contested issues in international political economy. Exchange rate systems not only influence domestic macroeconomic stability but also determine countries' exposure to external shocks, capital flows, and the capacity to manage sovereign debt. The contrasting realities of flexible regimes in advanced economies and pegged or managed regimes in developing ones reveal deep structural asymmetries in the global monetary system.

Flexible exchange rate regimes in the Global North, particularly in the United States, the eurozone, and Japan, are sustained by strong institutional credibility, deep capital markets, and the privileged position of their currencies as international reserves. These economies are able to borrow externally in their own currencies, insulating them from the exchange-rate-induced debt crises that plague the Global South (Ocampo, 2017). Conversely, when developing economies adopt flexible exchange rate regimes, their currencies often face volatility, depreciation, and capital flight during global financial shocks. Because most of their debt is denominated in foreign currencies such as the U.S. dollar, currency depreciation directly increases debt-servicing costs, thereby worsening the risk of debt distress (Obstfeld & Taylor, 2017).



Managed exchange rate systems, such as China's tightly controlled yuan regime, aim to stabilize the currency, promote exports, and mitigate volatility. Although not a classical currency board, China's managed peg demonstrates the advantages of state control in shielding the domestic economy from currency crises. However, when Global South countries attempt similar arrangements, the results are often destabilizing. Argentina's currency board experiment in the 1990s initially attracted foreign capital by promising exchange rate stability but ultimately collapsed under external imbalances, reserve depletion, and unsustainable borrowing. The breakdown of such systems frequently triggers abrupt devaluations and debt explosions (Eichengreen, 2008).

A key structural constraint faced by the Global South is the so-called "original sin"—the inability to borrow internationally in domestic currencies (Hausmann & Panizza, 2011). This forces developing countries to issue sovereign debt in foreign denominations, typically dollars or euros. Under flexible regimes, depreciation raises the local-currency cost of debt repayment. Under fixed or pegged regimes, governments are often compelled to borrow more heavily or implement austerity to defend the exchange rate, which in turn worsens debt sustainability when confidence wanes. Thus, exchange rate arrangements condition the trajectory of debt by magnifying the exposure of developing economies to foreign currency risks.

Besides, debt growth in the Global South is shaped not only by domestic policy choices but also by the asymmetries of the international monetary system. The dominance of Northern currencies means that monetary policies in the United States and Europe, such as interest rate hikes, reverberate through developing economies, leading to capital outflows, currency depreciation, and rising debt burdens (Obstfeld & Taylor, 2017). This structural imbalance highlights the debt trap faced by the Global South: while Northern countries enjoy monetary sovereignty, Southern economies remain vulnerable to exchange rate fluctuations, external shocks, and dependence on foreign-currency borrowing.

Existing exchange rate systems whether flexible in the North or managed/pegged in the South condition the growth of debt in the Global South by mediating access to capital, vulnerability to shocks, and the costs of debt servicing. Whereas Northern economies benefit from reserve currency status and relative insulation, developing economies face a structural debt trap embedded within the asymmetries of the global monetary order.

Nevertheless, the accumulation of debt in the Global South is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by domestic, regional, and international factors. Exchange rate regimes play a critical role by influencing borrowing conditions, external vulnerability, and exposure to global financial shocks. However, they operate alongside, and often interact with, other variables such as economic policy errors, corruption, mismanagement of public assets, and external interference. Understanding the relative importance of exchange rate systems requires situating them within this broader political economy of debt.

Exchange rate regimes condition the cost and sustainability of sovereign borrowing. Flexible regimes often expose developing economies to exchange rate volatility, with depreciations inflating the burden of foreign-currency denominated debt (Ocampo, 2017). Pegged or currency board arrangements, while promising stability, frequently



collapse under speculative attacks or reserve depletion, leading to sharp devaluations and debt explosions as illustrated by Argentina in 2001 (Eichengreen, 2008). Thus, exchange rate frameworks are structural variables that directly shape debt outcomes by linking domestic economies to international capital markets.

Policy missteps, such as procyclical fiscal spending, overreliance on external borrowing, and poorly sequenced liberalization, have been central to many debt crises. The Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s, for example, was partly driven by governments borrowing excessively during periods of low interest rates without adequate provisions for repayment when conditions tightened (Pastor, 1989). In many African states excessive dependence on commodity exports and failure to diversify magnified exposure to price shocks, thereby fueling debt accumulation (Iyoha, 1999). In these contexts, exchange rate regimes mattered, but policy mismanagement often amplified vulnerabilities.

Corruption and poor governance contribute to debt accumulation by diverting borrowed funds from productive investments into private hands. According to Ndikumana and Boyce (2011), "illicit financial outflows" from Africa frequently exceed inflows of development loans, creating a paradox where external borrowing actually undermines development. Mismanagement of public enterprises, overvalued contracts, and non-transparent procurement practices weaken debt sustainability by preventing external loans from generating adequate returns. In such cases, debt crises are less about exchange rate regimes per se and more about domestic governance failures.

External interference also plays a critical role. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s promoted liberalization and austerity, which often deepened debt burdens rather than alleviating them (Stiglitz, 2002). Similarly, shifts in U.S. monetary policy such as interest rate hikes in the early 1980s and post-2020 pandemic tightening triggered widespread debt crises in the Global South (Obstfeld & Taylor, 2017). These external shocks interact with exchange rate regimes by precipitating capital outflows, currency depreciations, and higher debt-servicing costs.

While exchange rate regimes are undeniably important, they are not the sole or necessarily the dominant factor in debt accumulation. Instead, their impact is mediated by policy choices, governance quality, and the global economic environment. For instance, a flexible exchange rate regime may be sustainable if accompanied by prudent fiscal management and effective institutions. Conversely, even a stable exchange rate system may fail if loans are misappropriated or if external shocks overwhelm domestic resilience. Thus, exchange rate regimes should be seen as one component within a broader constellation of variables influencing debt.

The degree of importance of exchange rate regimes in shaping debt in the Global South is significant but not absolute. They condition the external vulnerabilities of economies, especially given the prevalence of foreign-currency denominated debt. Yet, domestic policy errors, corruption, mismanagement, and external interference frequently play equal or greater roles in driving indebtedness. Debt crises in the Global South are best understood as outcomes of the interaction between structural exchange rate vulnerabilities and broader political-economic factors, both internal and external.



Further, the implications of the World Bank and IMF's structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and conditionalities on the Global South are profound, particularly in undermining long-term development capacity. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that these programmes, rather than fostering growth, often impeded investments in infrastructure, health service delivery, and education. Empirical studies show that conditionalities, which emphasized fiscal austerity, currency devaluation, and privatization, frequently resulted in reduced public spending on social services. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, health expenditure declined sharply under SAPs, with governments cutting subsidies for hospitals, introducing user fees, and reducing the availability of essential medicines. This worsened health outcomes, contributing to rising infant and maternal mortality in countries such as Ghana, Zambia, and Nigeria during the 1980s and 1990s (El-Said & Harrigan, 2006).

In education, SAP-related austerity measures led to reduced teacher salaries, increased student-teacher ratios, and the introduction of tuition fees in previously free primary education systems. A World Bank study itself admitted that these reforms created barriers to access for the poor, especially girls, thereby exacerbating inequalities in educational attainment (Cornia, Jolly, & Stewart, 1987).

On infrastructure, SAP-driven fiscal contraction limited governments' ability to invest in public works, transport networks, and power generation. Instead, privatization conditionalities often transferred control of key sectors to foreign corporations, sometimes resulting in higher prices and lower accessibility rather than improved efficiency (Mosley, Harrigan, & Toye, 1995). In Nigeria, for example, World Bank-backed privatization of utilities in the 1990s failed to expand access to electricity and water for poorer communities, but generated significant rents for political elites (Biersteker, 1990).

Finally, scholars have argued that these conditionalities constrained state capacity. By forcing governments to prioritize debt repayment and balance-of-payments stabilization over domestic investment, SAPs entrenched dependence rather than building self-sustaining development (Stiglitz, 2002). This explains why many Global South states emerged from decades of adjustment with weaker health and education systems than before the reforms, despite billions in loans.

Conclusion

The international monetary/financial system has been structured in a way that outcomes of various transactions are at the detriment of the global south. This study examines the implications of contemporary international monetary system and international debt crisis on development in the global south. This study argues that, beginning from the 1929/30s global financial crisis, 1980s debt crisis, 1990s Asian debt crisis, the 2008/2009 global financial crisis and the 2008 Euro financial crisis has produced various outcomes that have had negative implications on the growth and development of the global south within the international political economy. This study further argues that the both past and present international monetary systems are designed to work in favour of the global north at the detriment of the global south. Today, liberals blame the global south for faulty domestic policies and institutions while the historical structuralists blame it on the dependency relationships that long existed between the global north and south that is



characterised by exploitation of the global south at the development of the global north. Nevertheless, the regime theorists have argued that the international monetary system exist within the frameworks of various international regimes. It was argued here that existing international regimes especially trade and monetary/financial regimes are designed to promote the interest of the global north and in most cases where these frameworks are discussed and are to be implemented, using the global representative will not be involved. This has created a serious gap in the present international monetary system. Hence, this study make the following suggestions as a measure to address the rising incidence of debt crisis in the global south.

Recommendations

- a. Good governance and sound domestic economic policies are key in addressing the challenges pose by contemporary international monetary system and international debt crisis in the global south.
- b. The global south must combat the rising incidence of corruption that has eroded the culture of transparency, accountability and integrity in the country.
- c. The global south leaders must develop the political will and be committed in ensuring that issues of development are taken seriously and should be considered a top priority for engagement.
- d. Government in the global south should diversify their economy to ensure that focus of the country is shifted from a monocultural economy to multisectoral economy. This will help to ensure that a fall in the price of one commodity will not affect other sectors of the economy.

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A PROJEÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DE ANGOLA: CONDICIONANTES INTERNOS DA POLÍTICA EXTERNA E DA POLÍTICA DE DEFESA

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Resumo

Angola é um Estado de grande relevância na África Austral e Central. Após o acordo de paz, em 2002, entre as forças do governo, o Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola (MPLA), e da oposição, a União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), emerge como uma importante liderança africana. A compreensão da sua política externa e sua política de defesa implicam, primeiramente, entender a influência que os fatores domésticos, em especial a permanência do MPLA no governo, tem na formulação dessas políticas e nos objetivos impostos. O objetivo do presente artigo é analisar essa relação, utilizando o fim da guerra civil, em 2002, e a saída do poder de Dos Santos, em 2017, como momentos de mudança política interna decisivos. Espera-se demonstrar como a inserção internacional de Angola está pautada, em grande medida, por interesses internos, principalmente o desejo do MPLA de manter-se no poder.

Palavras-chave

África, Angola, política de defesa, política externa, potência regional.

Abstract

Angola is a highly influential country in Southern and Central Africa. Following the 2002 peace agreement between government forces, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the opposition, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), it has emerged as an important African leader. Understanding its foreign and defence policies requires, first and foremost, an understanding of the influence that domestic factors, particularly the MPLA's continued hold on power, have on the formulation of these policies and the objectives set. The aim of this article is to analyse this relationship, using the end of the civil war in 2002 and Dos Santos' departure from power in 2017 as decisive moments of internal political change. It is hoped to demonstrate how Angola's international integration is largely guided by internal interests, particularly the MPLA's desire to remain in power.

Keywords

Africa, Angola, defense policy, foreign policy, regional power.

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A PROJEÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DE ANGOLA: CONDICIONANTES INTERNOS DA POLÍTICA EXTERNA E DA POLÍTICA DE DEFESA¹

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Considerações iniciais

Angola surge, a partir de 2002, com o encerramento do conflito em seu território, como uma importante liderança africana. Ao contrário da África do Sul, que é reconhecida fora da África como um polo de poder, mas enfrenta resistência entre os vizinhos, Angola goza de uma significativa legitimidade entre os africanos, o que a coloca em uma posição singular, especialmente na África Austral e Central. Seu posicionamento geopolítico, na conexão entre essas duas regiões do Continente, também a credencia como Estado de suma importância para as relações intra-africanas.

O Estado tem um histórico de ingerência externa e conflito que, ainda hoje, impacta na sua construção. Ao longo do processo de colonização da África pelos Estados europeus, que se inicia com o estabelecimento de entrepostos litorâneos ainda no século XV e culmina com a ocupação efetiva de quase todo o Continente² no final do século XIX, o território angolano foi controlado por Portugal. A luta pela independência, que é conquistada em 1975, durou quase 15 anos, e imediatamente após, tem início a guerra civil entre as forças do governo, o Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), e a oposição, a União para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), que se encerrará apenas em 2002.

Mesmo que, desde 2008, tenham acontecido eleições periódicas e que estas tenham sido reconhecidas pelas missões de observação eleitoral de várias organizações internacionais, ainda que questionadas pela oposição, a permanência no poder do MPLA, sem dúvida, é um aspecto a ser considerado. A ausência de alternância no poder é uma problemática comum a vários países africanos. Existe o multipartidarismo e eleições periódicas, mas o mesmo partido mantém-se no poder. Partido esse, que, na maioria das vezes, tem sua origem em um movimento de libertação, como no caso de Angola.

Essa permanência de uma mesma elite política no poder desde a independência se materializa em uma ausência de separação clara entre partido, governo e Estado. E isso se reflete na formulação das políticas públicas, inclusive a política externa e a de defesa. Além disso, como destaca Clapham (2012) o fato de os partidos serem criados a partir

¹ O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - Código de Financiamento 001.

² É importante lembrar que a Etiópia logrou resistir independente.



de movimentos de libertação leva a uma subordinação das forças de repressão ao partido e não ao Estado.

Na verdade, em muitos dos casos, esse controle do aparato coercivo é ainda mais anterior, no próprio processo de colonização. Aeby (2019) argumenta que alguns dos partidos no poder em África assumem as estruturas de coerção deixadas pelo colonizador e as utilizam para se manter no poder, através da perseguição de grupos de oposição e restrição das liberdades.

Somado a isso, tem-se a problemática da construção de um sistema livre e em igualdades de condição antes, durante e depois do pleito. Quando não há essa clara separação entre partido e Estado, a oposição tende a ficar em desvantagem, já que, como lembra Thompson (2010), tanto a própria fraqueza das instituições quanto as já mencionadas práticas deliberadas adotadas pelo partido que está no poder tornam o ambiente assimétrico em condições de competição.

Essa falta de alternância no poder, para além de um problema democrático, também é reflexo de um problema partidário-institucional. Os partidos em Angola, e em África de um modo geral, tem a característica de estarem centrados em figuras emblemáticas e possuírem bases ideológicas frágeis ou já pouco conectadas com as realidades atuais dos Estados (Schutz, 2024). Isso, ao mesmo tempo em que facilita a manutenção do partido que está no poder, também enfraquece a oposição, já que não a identificação da população com os partidos e, portanto, não há mobilização para a mudança no poder.

Tanto a política externa quanto a política de defesa angolanas refletem as particularidades do seu contexto interno, ao mesmo tempo em que tentam responder às demandas do sistema internacional e aos anseios de ocupar um papel de maior destaque na África. Esta pesquisa, assim, tem como problema norteador compreender a relação existente entre as variáveis domésticas, em específico a manutenção do poder do MPLA, e a construção das políticas externa e de defesa, bem como a articulação existente entre elas.

Ancora-se nas perspectivas de análise de política externa que defendem o condicionamento da formulação dessas políticas não só aos objetivos do Estado, mas também aos fatores históricos e os aspectos domésticos. Hill (2003) irá afirmar que a estrutura constitucional e a distribuição e equilíbrio entre os poderes (executivo, legislativo e judiciário) do Estado irão influenciar diretamente na concepção da política externa.

Ainda sobre os as questões internas, tem-se o que se pode chamar de grandes mudanças ou rupturas, como processos revolucionários, guerras civis ou golpes de Estado (Halliday, 1999). Essas mudanças teriam um peso ainda maior, impactando não só na formulação da política externa, mas na viabilidade da sua implementação. Soma-se a esses aspectos, a própria disponibilidade de recursos do Estado (Bembe, 2016).

Parte-se do pressuposto de que a presença do MPLA no governo de Angola, desde a independência, criou uma ausência de clara separação entre interesses do partido e do Estado, e que isso também se reflete nas políticas externa e de defesa. Além disso, o histórico do partido, originário de um movimento de libertação imprime características específicas a essa elite política, entre outras coisas, uma grande participação dos militares em várias esferas políticas e decisórias.



A metodologia adotada é qualitativa com abordagem histórica-comparativa, empregando a técnica de comparação de um mesmo caso em períodos temporais distintos. A pesquisa tem caráter descritivo e explicativo. Será aplicada a análise de fontes bibliográficas primárias e referências secundárias já trabalhadas sobre o tema.

A primeira parte do artigo será dedicada a compreender a estabilização do país após o encerramento da guerra civil em 2002, em especial os processos eleitorais e as mudanças nas forças políticas de oposição. Em um segundo momento, será analisada a saída de José Eduardo dos Santos do poder para dar lugar a João Lourenço e as eventuais mudanças que decorreram dessa troca de liderança. Por fim, a última seção será dedicada a compreender a evolução das políticas externa e de defesa de Angola nas últimas duas décadas, com o intuito de compreender como essas alterações internas interferiram na projeção internacional do país e os desafios teóricos dessa análise.

Pacificação e reordenamento

Angola inicia uma nova fase no seu processo de consolidação estatal a partir de 2002, quando tem fim o conflito interno entre as forças que estavam no poder (MPLA) e a UNITA. O Memorandum de Entendimento de Luena Complementar ao Protocolo de Lusaka pôs fim aos quase trinta anos de guerra civil em território angolano e inaugura um período de paz nunca antes experimentado pelo país desde que o início do processo de colonização.

A partir desse momento, há a expectativa de que o país avance no caminho da democratização, com multipartidarismo, eleições periódicas e fortalecimento das instituições. É forçoso lembrar que, em 1991, o Acordo de Bicesse, que estabeleceram o cessar-fogo entre MPLA e UNITA, também determinaram a realização de eleições multipartidárias, que ocorrem em 1992. O resultado, contudo, não é reconhecido pela oposição, ainda que a Missão de Observação Eleitoral das Nações Unidas tenha atestado pleito como legítimo, e a guerra civil é retomada.

Os primeiros anos pós-Luena seguem conturbados e as primeiras eleições³, para o poder legislativo, vão ocorrer apenas em 2008. O MPLA conquista mais de 80% das cadeiras, refletindo a influência ainda exercida do Partido sobre as instituições. Como lembra Vidal (2024), o longo período entre o fim do conflito e a realização das eleições permitiu ao MPLA organizar e controlar grande parte das forças e processos preparatórios, incluindo a legislação eleitoral e o recenseamento.

Outro marco importante é, em 2010, a promulgação de uma nova Constituição, que institui a eleição indireta para o Chefe do Executivo; o Presidente, assim, passa a ser indicado pelo Parlamento. Importante destacar que a Constituição é aprovada por quase unanimidade, após a UNITA recusar-se a participar da votação.

É no bojo dessa nova legislação que ocorre um novo pleito em 2012. Mais uma vez, o MPLA sai vitorioso, e José Eduardo dos Santos se mantém na Presidência. É importante registrar que se teve a participação de um novo partido de oposição, a Convergência

³ Consoante o Acordo de Paz firmado em 2002, as eleições deveriam ocorrer em 2004.



Ampla para Salvação de Angola – Coligação Eleitoral (CASA-CE), formada a partir de dissidências da UNITA.

A manutenção da periodicidade das eleições, ainda que não seja garantia de democracia, é uma sinalização importante. Na visão de Solar-Crespo (2019), existem três fatores a serem determinantes no processo de democratização dos países africanos. O primeiro diz respeito ao acordo político estabelecido quando o grupo dominante sobe ao poder; importa, nesse caso, se há ingerência de atores externos e se há mobilização efetiva da sociedade civil. O segundo aspecto refere-se ao nível de predominância do movimento de libertação vitorioso em relação aos demais. Por fim, é importante que haja uma clara separação de poderes e o estabelecimento de limites constitucionais ao poder do Chefe do Executivo.

O contexto angolano, nessa perspectiva, é bastante preocupante. Para além das alterações da Constituição, que, entre outras coisas, extinguiu a eleição direta para Presidente, a relação bastante desigual entre MPLA e UNITA – seja no imediato pacificação, seja nas disputas eleitorais posteriores – pode ser um fator de desestabilização e de dificuldade de avanço democrático.

O fim da Era “Dos Santos”

Como previsto na legislação, em 2017 são realizadas eleições parlamentares. O pleito é de grande relevância para a história angolana. Isso porque, depois de quase 40 anos no poder, José Eduardo dos Santos deixa de ser o candidato do MPLA. No seu lugar, assume João Lourenço, antigo Ministro da Defesa e antigo Vice-Presidente do Partido. A mudança de candidato, que já havia sido anunciada no ano anterior, trouxe, tanto para a população como um todo, quanto para os partidos de oposição, a visualização de uma real possibilidade de mudança. Na visão de Matsimbe e Domingos (2018), o pleito foi marcado por uma campanha mais acirrada da oposição e uma participação mais ativa da sociedade civil.

A vitória do MPLA já não foi tão expressiva quanto nas eleições anteriores, ficando com menos de 75% das cadeiras, o que, nominalmente, representou 25 a menos que na eleição anterior (Morris, 2017). A subida ao poder de um novo governante, ainda que do mesmo Partido, gerou uma significativa expectativa de mudança para o povo angolano, assim como para a comunidade internacional.

Não se pode olvidar, contudo, que a saída de Dos Santos da Presidência não significou sua retirada da cena política angolana. Dos Santos continuou ocupando a presidência do Partido por mais um ano⁴ e, antes de deixar a chefia do Executivo, garantiu, com mudanças nos períodos de mandato de cargos, que seus aliados se mantivessem no governo em posições estratégicas, em especial nas forças de segurança (Almeida e Satula, 2018).

Além disso, como destacam Herbst e Mills (2018), não necessariamente a troca da figura do governante significa alguma mudança efetiva. Para que ela ocorra, é preciso que outros atores políticos e burocráticos também sejam modificados, o que, como será visto,

⁴ Foi a primeira vez que a presidência do MPLA não foi ocupada pelo Presidente do país.



não foi o caso de Angola. A mudança do Presidente, assim, sem a mudança do Partido, tem poucas chances de resultar em transformações expressivas.

Lourenço inicia seu mandato fazendo algumas mudanças e dando sinais de que adotaria uma nova postura no governo. Nesse sentido, são emblemáticos: a retirada da filha de Dos Santos, Isabel dos Santos, da presidência da SONANGOL e a mudança de grande parte dos governantes locais (Augé, 2018; Almeida, 2019).

As mudanças mais profundas, especialmente aquelas relacionadas às forças de segurança, todavia, não acontecem. Como destacam Bye, Igles e Orre (2021), as forças militares e de segurança são um dos principais círculos de poder ao redor do Presidente, com uma grande influência, não só na política de defesa, mas também na política externa e em outros âmbitos domésticos. E, nesse setor, Lourenço mantém os membros já conhecidos da gestão de Dos Santos, inclusive combatentes da luta de libertação, o que para Augé (2019), evidencia a sua ligação com as bases tradicionais do Partido.

É importante ressaltar que Lourenço também vai promover algumas alterações no próprio Partido. A mais notória envolve a ampliação, tanto do Comitê Central quanto do Bureau Político, com a nomeação de novos membros. Para Vines (2021), isso reflete a intenção de Lourenço de exercer maior controle do MPLA, reduzindo a proporção de pessoas ligadas diretamente ao Dos Santos.

Em 2022, temos novas eleições e, mais uma vez, uma vitória do MPLA, mantendo Lourenço na Presidência. O desempenho do MPLA, todavia, foi o pior desde que se iniciaram as eleições periódicas, garantindo apenas 51% dos votos e 124 cadeiras no Parlamento. Destaque-se que a eleição acontece em um cenário bastante turbulento, marcado pela morte recente de José Eduardo dos Santos⁵ (Schutz, 2024).

O segundo mandato de Lourenço já começa sem grandes expectativas de mudança. A população angolana demonstra desgaste e descontentamento depois de vários anos de recessão econômica, somados a crise internacional gerada pela pandemia de COVID-19 em 2020. Além disso, as medidas anticorrupção, que tinham sido a grande simbologia de renovação do primeiro governo de Lourenço, seguiam concentradas apenas na família Dos Santos, sem avançar para os setores militares, o que era o anseio de grande parte dos angolanos (Schutz, 2024).

Reinserção angolana

A compreensão da inserção angolana no sistema internacional passa por um entendimento prévio de como os Estados africanos enfrentam os desafios de se consolidarem, ao mesmo tempo que almejam se projetar internacionalmente. As teorias tradicionais de relações internacionais, em especial as da vertente realista, concentram a sua atenção nas ameaças externas do Estado. Os Estados africanos, contudo, estão inseridos em um contexto distinto e muito mais complexo, no qual, grande parte das ameaças tem suas origens dentro das fronteiras nacionais.

⁵ É igualmente emblemático que UNITA tenha conquistado 44% dos assentos, seu melhor resultado em um pleito e, em Luanda, ter garantido 63% dos votos, quase o dobro do MPLA que, na capital, fez apenas 33% dos votos.



É o que alguns autores irão denominar de dilema de segurança interno⁶. A preocupação central do Estado não está no vizinho ou no temor de algum ataque externo, mas sim nas dificuldades de consolidar a soberania doméstica e conter forças insurgentes ou que ameacem a estabilidade internamente. Ayoob (2002), em sua análise que ficou conhecida como realismo subalterno, irá defender que, no caso dos Estados periféricos, as estruturas internas e externas estão intimamente interrelacionadas, e que as ingerências externas terão interferência nesse processo de construção do Estado.

Nos Estados africanos como um todo, mas, mais especificamente no caso angolano, o processo de colonização, evidentemente, tem um grande peso nessas dificuldades de consolidação estatal e, por consequente, projeção internacional. Para além da própria ocupação do território, tem-se os conflitos originários desses processos, tanto de independência quanto a posterior guerra civil, marcados por forte interferência de outros Estados além de Portugal, notadamente Estados Unidos da América, União Soviética/Rússia, China e África do Sul.

A própria ideia de que o Estado é a única fonte possível de garantir os seus interesses, ou seja, a ideia de que apenas o grupo político que está no poder gozará os seus direitos, é uma fonte de instabilidade e conflito (Ngubane, 2004). Uma parcela significativa dos países africanos, a exemplo do que acontece em Angola, tem um mesmo partido no poder desde a independência, o que, como já foi visto, não só é um problema do ponto de vista da construção da democracia, mas também uma fonte de instabilidade e conflito doméstico.

Mais especificamente quando se trata da análise da política externa, o que também pode ser ampliado para a política de defesa, deve-se ter em mente as dinâmicas específicas que envolvem o processo decisório e de formulação de políticas. A dificuldade de separação entre Estado e governo, ou Estado e partido, já mencionada anteriormente, também traz à tona a peculiaridade das figuras políticas de destaque, os *big men* ou *warlords* (Dunn, 2001; Reno, 2001). A própria fragilidade das instituições e da democracia, gera uma centralização do governo em torno de um líder e não do Estado (Matlosa, 2010).

Essas lideranças políticas, no caso de Angola, em especial José Eduardo dos Santos, utilizam das instituições e políticas estatais para garantir a sua manutenção no poder. Nesses casos, a própria fragilidade do Estado, contrastando com a sua soberania externa formalmente reconhecida, é percebida como um ativo valioso. A permanência no poder, assim, é vendida como uma necessidade e a existência de conflitos e instabilidades justificam essa figura forte de liderança.

Sob outra perspectiva, trata-se de garantir a segurança do regime, e não a segurança do Estado (Clark, 2001). Quem governa, assim, age preocupado com as possíveis ameaças ao seu poder o que, não necessariamente, seria uma ameaça ao Estado. Deriva daí, por exemplo, a tolerância e o favorecimento a grupos internos que, em muitos dos

⁶ Em uma alusão ao termo "dilema de segurança", conceito central das abordagens realistas de relações internacionais e que faz referência ao fato de que, quanto mais um Estado amplia seus recursos militares para se sentir seguro, mais inseguro o sistema fica, tendo em vista que os demais Estados, sentindo-se ameaçados e sem saber as intenções do outro, irão reagir, também ampliando suas forças e criando uma escalada de violência.



casos, significa a manutenção de estruturas de poder oriundas do próprio processo de colonização.

É o caso de Angola e da relação de Lourenço com as elites militares do MPLA. Como enfatiza Clark (2001:95):

[...] o que o governante africano típico precisa com mais urgência para garantir seu regime no poder? Mais importante ainda, ele precisa da boa vontade ou tolerância daqueles que estão em posição de ameaçar diretamente o controle de seu regime sobre o aparato estatal. [Isso] inclui membros importantes das forças armadas nacionais, os líderes de potenciais grupos insurgentes domésticos, os líderes de estados vizinhos (por meio de seu potencial apoio a insurgências) e os governantes de grandes potências no exterior.

Fica evidente, assim, porque as transformações e mudanças esperadas na condução do governo angolano com a troca de dirigentes foram pouco expressivas. Isso não se restringe ao campo das políticas domésticas, mas também da política externa e de defesa.

Ao longo dos anos, a política externa angolana respondeu, em grande medida, às necessidades do MPLA, ameaçado pela UNITA, de se manter no poder. Da mesma forma, a política de defesa também era pensada sob uma perspectiva de ameaça doméstica. Isso impacta diretamente na própria estruturação das Forças Armadas Angolanas, com uma forte preponderância do Exército sobre as demais forças.

É importante lembrar, também, a própria origem das Forças Armadas Angolanas, que residem no Exército Popular de Libertação de Angola, do MPLA. No bojo dos Acordos de Bicesse, se previa a desmobilização e formação de forças armadas únicas (as Forças Armadas Angolanas), num processo a ser concluído até as eleições de 1992; o não reconhecimento do pleito de 1992 e a retomada das hostilidades comprometem o projeto de estruturação das FAA, a raiz das suas origens, contudo, está nesse processo (Bernardino, 2013).

A encerramento da guerra civil, em 2002, é o primeiro grande marco de mudança na política externa angolana. Até então, a principal preocupação do governo angolano, e que se refletia diretamente não só na política externa mas também na política de defesa, era conter as forças da UNITA. Isso traduzia-se em uma ação externa voltada para impedir os auxílios externos da UNITA e isolar eventuais apoiadores do grupo.

A pacificação permitiu uma reestruturação das políticas pensadas por Luanda. É importante destacar, contudo, que isso não significou que o Partido tenha abandonado a sua prioridade, ou seja, manter-se no poder. O que se altera são os meios e estratégias pensadas para esse fim. A inserção angolana no sistema internacional, desta forma, é vista como um instrumento de fortalecimento e construção de legitimidade.

No imediato pós-2002, grande parte dos esforços angolanos estarão concentrados na melhoria da imagem internacional do país com dois objetivos específicos: do ponto de vista econômico, atrair investidores externos através da garantia de um ambiente estável e seguro para as atividades econômicas e, assim, estimular o crescimento econômico;



no âmbito político, demonstrar que o país estava seguindo no caminho da democracia e que os processos e instituições estavam sendo fortalecidos.

A política externa nesse momento, assim, tinha uma característica de normalização e (re)construção de parcerias. Essencialmente, o objetivo era assegurar que Angola não era mais um país em guerra e que estava evoluindo em uma transição gradual para a paz e a democracia. Nesse sentido, Roque (2013) afirma que o governo de Dos Santos é caracterizado pela preocupação em reconstruir a imagem do regime liderado pelo MPLA, ao mesmo tempo em que almeja tornar-se um Estado com maior influência regional.

Também é um marco, a partir de 2002, a maior ênfase que se passa a dar à diplomacia como instrumento de promoção do desenvolvimento (Ginga, 2014). É importante lembrar que a pacificação do território, ao mesmo tempo em que significa a resolução de um grande problema interno, também representa a necessidade de lidar com outros desafios, notadamente, as condições socioeconômicas da população.

É evidente a conexão entre o contexto doméstico e as eventuais mudanças na política externa; mas é igualmente importante compreender como os contextos regionais e internacionais também foram considerados. Entre os vizinhos, a conjuntura, como lembra Malaquias (2011), era bastante favorável, levando em conta uma África do Sul muito mais cooperativa desde o encerramento do *apartheid* e a volta ao poder de Denis Sassou Nguesso na República do Congo, além, obviamente, da queda de Mobuto, na República Democrática do Congo.

Do ponto de vista internacional, Angola valia-se da importante e longeva parceria com a China, que seguia bastante fortalecida. Além disso, a cooperação sul-sul estava em franca expansão, possibilitando outras relações, como com o Brasil. Garantia-se, desta forma, a ampliação das relações comerciais e de investimento, aproveitando uma conjuntura internacional também favorável.

Essa relação entre o doméstico e o internacional, tão evidente quando se trata do caso angolano, também tem reflexos na intersecção entre política externa e política de defesa. Sobre essa questão, um aspecto em específico merece maior atenção: a participação dos militares, ainda que da reserva, tanto na formulação quanto na execução da política externa.

Esse papel desempenhado pelos militares em outras esferas, em parte, é um reflexo da fragilidade das demais instituições angolanas, nesse caso, o corpo diplomático, preteridas ao longo das décadas de conflitos, em favor das forças de segurança (Castellano, 2015). Não se pode olvidar, todavia, que as relações entre força e diplomacia são históricas. Aron (2002) já trazia à tona a importância desses dois instrumentos e a impossibilidade de um Estado atuar no sistema internacional sem equilibrar esses dois aspectos, simbolizados por ela na figura do soldado e do diplomata.

Não se trata, portanto, de excluir os militares da diplomacia; sua presença é desejada e necessária. O que é preciso é que essa participação, de fato, esteja inserida em uma política externa e de defesa pensadas e concatenadas para a inserção qualificada de Angola, e não baseada nos interesses pessoais da elite militar. Ginga (2014), por exemplo, defende o que ele chama de diplomacia securitária, com a participação ativa das Forças Armadas Angolanas na diplomacia, como no caso das operações de paz



conduzidas por organizações africanas, como União Africana (UA) e Comunidade para o Desenvolvimento da África Austral (SADC).

É também no âmbito da defesa e segurança que Angola tem demonstrado esforços de aproximação com vizinhos, o que também está relacionado com sua intenção de posicionar-se como um líder regional. Para Almeida (2016), Angola surge como uma importante, se não a principal, força estabilizadora na região africana centro-austral.

Uma relação, em especial, merece maior destaque: Guiné-Bissau. A presença angolana em Guiné-Bissau, é multifatorial, já que Angola tem investimentos importantes nos país e, auxiliou, em 2010, no processo de reforma do setor de segurança, dentro de um esforço mais amplo de estabilização (Roque, 2013). Vale ressaltar, contudo, que esse auxílio enfrentou problemas e a Missão de Angola na Guiné-Bissau (MISSANG) encerrou-se depois de um ano.⁷

Para alguns autores, essa relação demonstra tanto os desafios que Angola enfrenta na região, quanto a postura de liderança que deseja demonstrar. De acordo com Roque (2013:7), a experiência possibilitou que Luanda entendesse "a importância de angariar apoio regional e multilateral, o que poderia, como resultado, levar a um papel mais responsivo e ativo no fortalecimento da arquitetura de segurança do continente".

Ainda no tocante à região, é forçoso mencionar a relação Angola – África do Sul. Após o fim do *apartheid* na África do Sul, em 1994, os dois Estados mantêm relações bastante próximas, ainda que com algumas oscilações, com um relativo distanciamento durante a gestão Mbeki. Ainda assim, temos o estreitamento importante da cooperação em defesa, com a assinatura de um acordo em 2012 (Roque, 2013).

O lócus mais evidente onde é possível vislumbrar não só a possibilidade, mas a necessidade de conexão entre as políticas externa e de defesa de Angola e que, por sua vez, é também um imperativo para a sua projeção internacional é a estratégia marítima. O Atlântico Sul, desta forma, apresenta-se como um promissor ambiente estratégico para Luanda.

A importância do mar para Angola é incontestável. Passa pelos aspectos econômicos, com a concentração dos recursos energéticos no mar e região litorânea (Pegado, 2014), até as questões securitárias, com a defesa do território e garantia da segurança das rotas marítimas. Vale lembrar que Angola possui cinco portos no Atlântico e que são importantes alternativas aos portos da África do Sul (Scholvin, 2017). O fortalecimento da política marítima, portanto, também é um instrumento de projeção regional.

Quanto a isso, dois aspectos destacam-se: primeiro é a preferência angolana em atuar em organizações multilaterais em detrimento de acordos bilaterais, dando grande peso para a Zona de Paz e Cooperação do Atlântico Sul (ZOPACAS⁸) e a Comissão do Golfo da

⁷ A MISSANG se estabeleceu em março de 2011 através de acordo bilateral entre os dois governos. A presença das Forças Armadas Angolanas no território guineense, contudo, foi conturbado, com os militares angolanos acusados de colaborarem com a liderança política que havia sido destituída e de não entregarem às forças guineenses o material bélico previsto no acordo.

⁸ A Zona de Paz e Cooperação do Atlântico Sul foi criada em 27 de outubro de 1986. À época de sua criação, a ZOPACAS refletia, em parte, o temor dos países da região de que as tensões da Guerra Fria acabassem impactando na região de maneira mais acentuada. Atualmente, fazem parte Brasil, Argentina, Uruguai, Angola, Benin, Camarões, Cabo Verde, República do Congo, Costa do Marfim, República Democrática do Congo, Guiné



Guiné (CGG⁹). Angola esteve na liderança da revitalização da ZOPACAS, em 2007, promovendo a sua VI Reunião Ministerial em Luanda.

Da mesma forma, Luanda sedia a CGG e reconhece a importância que o Golfo da Guiné tem, não só para Angola, mas para toda a segurança da África. A Comissão, ainda que com uma estrutura institucional insipiente, é um importante ambiente de relação entre os Estados da região que, por sua vez, são percebidos por Angola como parceiros importantes. Além disso, através da CGG, Angola coloca-se como uma alternativa à liderança nigeriana na região (Almeida; Bernardino, 2013).

O segundo aspecto a ser considerado é a fragilidade da política naval angolana como um todo e, em específico, a debilidade da Marinha de Guerra Angolana (MGA). Historicamente, em função dos próprios conflitos internos, o foco das Forças Armadas Angolanas estava nas forças terrestres. Com a pacificação, em 2002, inicia-se uma tentativa de reestruturação e modernização que, em grande medida, envolvia ampliar recursos e o papel da MGA.

Luanda reconhece essas debilidades afirmando que sua “consciência marítima não avançou nas mesmas proporções de suas necessidades” e que isso é resultado não só dos esforços impostos pelo conflito terrestres, mas também pelas “dificuldades financeiras” restringindo a visão do Estado em relação ao mar e às políticas conjunturais, permitindo a actuação descoordenada dos organismos que intervêm no mesmo, com iniciativas individuais.” (Apresentação da Delegação de Angola, 2008:32)

A condução da política externa e da política de defesa entre 2002 e 2017, assim, são marcadas pela necessidade de estabilizar economicamente o país e reconstruir a sua imagem no exterior. Lourenço sobe ao poder em um contexto diverso, com Angola já posicionada nos principais fóruns regionais e apto a implementar reformulações mais significativas.

Grande parte das linhas gerais de política e das eventuais mudanças que Lourenço visa conduzir foram contempladas na Estratégia de Longo Prazo lançada em 2023, conhecida como Agenda Angola 2025. No documento, é possível vislumbrar as prioridades do governo e suas principais diretrizes: 1) foco no desenvolvimento econômico como prioridade das ações externas de Angola, com a menção, inclusive do desenvolvimento socioeconômico sustentável como algo a ser garantido pela segurança nacional; 2) preferência pelo multilateralismo, tanto nos aspectos políticos quanto econômicos, com referência aos principais organismos africanos; 3) expressa vontade de ampliar o protagonismo na África, especialmente através da participação ativa em arranjos regionais, mencionando explicitamente o intuito de “continuar a liderar o processo de manutenção da segurança e estabilidade política a nível regional (República de Angola, 2023:422)”; e 4) fortalecer a inserção internacional a partir do mar, reestruturando as FAA, ampliando a MGA e construindo uma estratégia marítima alinhada com o Plano de Ação da Estratégia Marítima Integrada da África 2050.

Equatorial, Gâmbia, Gabão, Gana, Guiné Conacri, Guiné Bissau, Libéria, Namíbia, Nigéria, São Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal, Serra Leoa, África do Sul e Togo.

⁹ A CGG⁹ foi criada em 2001 para funcionar como um âmbito de resolução de conflitos e harmonização da exploração dos recursos naturais da região. São membros: Angola, Camarões, República Democrática do Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Guiné Equatorial, Gabão, Nigéria e São Tomé e Príncipe.



A política externa implementada por Lourenço, em nenhum momento, rompe com aquela conduzida por Dos Santos, ao contrário disso, mantém suas linhas gerais e suas principais relações estratégicas, como China e Rússia. O que ocorre são ajustes de condução mais sutis, notadamente a ampliação do multilateralismo, em contraste com a preferência do governo anterior pelas tratativas bilaterais, em específico na economia, e uma maior abertura para novos parceiros, em especial a Europa.

O que se percebe, assim, é que Lourenço, ao mesmo tempo em que não deseja desagradar à elite do MPLA, busca construir uma inserção angolana mais concatenada com os desafios atuais do país: desenvolvimento socio-econômico e projeção regional mais qualificada. Aqui aparece, novamente, a ligação entre os aspectos domésticos, com o governo tentando manter-se no poder, ao diminuir os descontentamentos da população sem criar instabilidades excessivas dentro do Partido.

Assim como na política externa, Lourenço também vai imprimir na política de defesa um novo tom. É marcante que, desde o início de seu governo, tem ocorrido uma redução dos gastos em defesa como percentual do PIB. Além disso, há um programa de redimensionamento do Ministério da Defesa e profissionalização das tropas (Schutz, 2022).

Importante destacar que, em abril de 2018, são publicados o Conceito Estratégico de Defesa Nacional, revogando o anterior, de 1993, e o Livro Branco de Defesa Nacional. Apear da pacificação, em 2002, é só com a saída de Dos Santos do poder que se tem a reformulação do principal documento de defesa angolano. Destacam-se alguns aspectos, como a manutenção da percepção de ameaça interna junto com a externa e a identificação das novas ameaças de segurança – cibercrime, terrorismo e mudanças climáticas – juntamente com os temas tradicionais – corrida armamentista tradicional e nuclear.

Além disso, os documentos também mencionam a necessidade de articular os objetivos e as ações de política externa e política de defesa e a importância das Forças Armadas como instrumento de expressão da política externa. Também afirma o desejo de protagonismo africano, com o objetivo de “ser uma peça importante na liderança política e econômica da África Central e Austral, na Conferência do Golfo da Guiné e manter uma influência e responsabilidade na manutenção da paz e da estabilidade política e social das sub-regiões em que se encontra inserida (República de Angola, 2018: 2316)”

Outro aspecto a ser considerado é o direcionamento para as atuações internacionais das Forças Armadas. Dado o contexto doméstico pacífico e os objetivos de protagonismo regional, Luanda começa a concentrar esforços nessa demonstração e projeção de poder na África. No Livro Branco de Defesa Nacional, inclusive, afirma que “as novas dinâmicas de ordem externa e interna determinam um novo modelo de inserção de Angola na arena internacional e obrigam as Forças Armadas Angolanas a assumir novas responsabilidades, compatíveis com o nível de ambição política do nosso país (Angola, 2018:2350)”.

No último discurso sobre o Estado da Nação, em outubro de 2024, Lourenço deu especial ênfase à questão marítima, ressaltando a relevância de modernizar a MGA e ampliar os investimentos nas infraestruturas. Avanços importantes já haviam sido feitos, com inauguração o Centro Nacional de Coordenação e Vigilância Marítima em janeiro de 2024,



ainda que com quatro anos de atraso, e a modernização da Base Naval de Luanda. A política de defesa de Angola, desta forma, também traduz a necessidade do Estado de articular as demandas domésticas com os objetivos internacionais. Para Plácido (2016), fica evidente que a preocupação com a integridade territorial e a manutenção da soberania caminha junto com o desejo de projeção regional e, também, as preocupações com o desenvolvimento econômico.

Angola tem se posicionado, assim, como uma importante liderança africana. É importante lembrar que, como já foi mencionado, o país ocupa uma posição estratégica no Continente, atuando como um vértice entre as regiões ocidental e central. A partir de 2025, Angola passou a ocupar a presidência da União Africana o que, para Lourenço, representa uma oportunidade do país de implementar e influenciar as iniciativas na promoção do desenvolvimento do Continente (CIPRA, 09/11/2024).

Em sua fala na Assembleia Geral da Nações Unidas, em setembro de 2024, Lourenço destacou o empenho de Angola com a pacificação da África, invocando a sua experiência na pacificação de seu conflito interno (CIPRA, 29/09/2024). O posicionamento de Angola nos últimos anos tem refletido, desta forma, uma maior constância no objetivo de consolidar-se como liderança regional. Tanto em declarações públicas, quanto em documentos oficiais, essa menção é recorrente e, por certo, intencional.

A evolução da política externa e da política de defesa de Angola, ao longo das duas últimas décadas, dessa forma, pode ser compreendida pelas necessidades internas, mas também pelo "facto de Angola ser uma nação africana, com uma identidade histórica e cultural partilhada com nações vizinhas, com uma condição geoestratégica particular decorrente da sua maritimidade e da localização no cruzamento regional entre as regiões central e austral do continente Africano, e como uma plataforma para a pacificação dos conflitos a nível dos Estados africanos (Bembe, 2016, p. 27-28)".

Considerações finais

Angola é um país complexo e com um histórico de violência em seu território que imprimi marcas até os dias atuais. Ainda que tenha sofrido por mais de quatro décadas – se somadas a guerra de libertação e a posterior guerra civil – com conflitos internos, atualmente, Angola é identificada como uma liderança e uma força de estabilização da região centro-austral africana.

Ao analisar a política externa e a política de defesa angolanas torna-se latente a necessidade de compreender como essas mudanças domésticas impactaram na sua inserção externa. Ainda que a atuação angolana no sistema internacional possa ser compreendida a partir dos seus objetivos, existem condicionantes internos que não podem ser ignorados.

Dentre esses fatores, o mais complexo e, muito provavelmente, aquele que tem mais influência é o próprio MPLA. O MPLA, assim como vários outros casos africanos, é um partido originado de um movimento de libertação que está no poder em Angola desde a sua independência. Essa combinação, como foi visto ao longo do trabalho, imprimi características muito particulares ao contexto interno angolano.



A ampla participação dos militares em outras esferas políticas, a percepção de lealdade das forças de segurança ao Partido e não ao Estado e a permanência de um mesmo governante por quase 40 anos caracterizam uma Angola onde Partido, governo e Estado se confundem. O interesse nacional acaba transformando-se no interesse do regime e a definição da agenda estatal é pautada pelo desejo de permanecer no poder.

É esse contexto doméstico que influencia a formulação da política externa e de defesa de Angola. E é por isso, também, que as mudanças políticas que acontecem dentro do Estado tem um peso tão significativo na postura e papel que este tem nas relações internacionais.

É possível, a partir dos dois grandes marcos recentes da história angolana – a pacificação em 2002 e a saída de Dos Santos do poder em 2017 – identificar duas fases da inserção do país no sistema internacional. Ainda que, tanto a política externa quanto a política de defesa, apresentem uma continuidade expressiva, fruto, em grande medida, da própria manutenção do MPLA no poder, algumas mudanças importantes podem ser percebidas.

O período que abarca de 2002 a 2017 é marcado pela necessidade de normalização das relações exteriores e reinserção de Angola, através da busca pela melhora da imagem do país no exterior. É um período em que a diplomacia econômica ganha mais força e a política de defesa ainda mantém traços do período do conflito, em certo descompasso com a nova conjuntura. Por outro lado, amplia-se a cooperação multilateral na área da defesa, especialmente com países do Sul global; em um contraste com a esfera econômica, na qual a preferência segue sendo a bilateralidade.

Com a subida de Lourenço ao poder, o rearranjo e a modernização das Forças Armadas Angolanas ganham maior força, assim como uma reorientação mais clara da política de defesa que, agora, passa a ser voltada para o papel das FAA no exterior, entrelaçada na própria política externa. Essa, por sua vez, amplia a atuação multilateral, fazendo dessa uma das principais características da inserção angolana e enxergando nas organizações e fóruns internacionais uma plataforma para a projeção angolana na África e no mundo.

Angola segue enfrentando desafios importantes nessa inserção, notadamente sua debilidade na estratégia marítima e as fragilidades econômicas derivadas de sua economia baseada no petróleo. O governo de Lourenço, contudo, ao contrário de Dos Santos, parece reconhecer mais claramente esses problemas e, talvez, possa enfrentá-los com políticas mais adequadas. Isso, é claro, se isso não representar nenhuma ameaça a sua manutenção no poder.

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O PROCESSO DE INCUBAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS PARA O FOMENTO DO EMPREENDEDORISMO EM ANGOLA: NA VISÃO DOS INCUBADOS

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Resumo

O tema desta investigação é justificado pela relevância do empreendedorismo e do processo de Incubação de empresas para o desenvolvimento e sustentabilidade de novos empreendimentos. O objetivo geral consiste em analisar a contribuição do processo de Incubação de empresas para o fomento do empreendedorismo em Angola, através da capacitação dos empreendedores, por meio de ações de formação, conhecimentos e competências. Formulou-se a seguinte questão: Como pode o processo de Incubação de empresas contribuir para o fomento do empreendedorismo em Angola? A investigação adotou uma abordagem quantitativa, descritivo-explicativa e de natureza hipotético-dedutiva, aplicando um questionário estruturado a 64 empreendedores incubados em incubadoras públicas de 11 províncias. Os dados, recolhidos online com consentimento informado e garantia de anonimato, foram tratados com recurso ao Excel, SPSS e Python 3.8.6, permitindo análises estatísticas descritivas e cruzamentos de variáveis. Os resultados mostraram que o processo de incubação é um fator relevante para o fortalecimento do empreendedorismo, sobretudo entre jovens licenciados, mas limitado pelo fraco acesso a financiamento e pela insuficiente transferência de conhecimentos estratégicos. A revisão de literatura foi atualizada com contributos recentes (menos de cinco anos), reforçando a pertinência académica e prática desta investigação e situando-a no debate contemporâneo sobre incubação em economias emergentes.

Palavras-chave

Empreendedorismo, Incubadora de empresa, Incubação.

Abstract

The theme of this research is justified by the relevance of entrepreneurship and the business incubation process for the development and sustainability of new ventures. The overall objective is to analyze the contribution of the business incubation process to fostering entrepreneurship in Angola through the empowerment of entrepreneurs by means of training, knowledge, and skills. The following question was formulated: How can the business incubation process contribute to promoting entrepreneurship in Angola? The research adopted a quantitative, descriptive-explanatory, and hypothetico-deductive approach, applying a structured questionnaire to 64 entrepreneurs incubated in public incubators across 11 provinces. Data were collected online with informed consent and anonymity ensured, and analyzed using Excel, SPSS, and Python 3.8.6, allowing for descriptive statistics and cross-variable analysis. The results showed that the incubation process is a relevant factor in strengthening entrepreneurship, particularly among young graduates, although limited by



restricted access to financing and insufficient transfer of strategic management knowledge. The literature review was updated with recent contributions (last five years), reinforcing the academic and practical relevance of this investigation and situating it within the current debate on incubation in emerging economies.

Keywords

Entrepreneurship, Business Incubator, Incubation.

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Introdução

O empreendedorismo é um tema marcado por uma diversidade de conceitos de diferentes autores. É importante entender que não se trata de uma arte ou ciência, mas de uma atividade comercial que pode ser ensinada e aprendida. Em todo o mundo, a relevância do empreendedorismo para o fomento das economias é amplamente estudada, tanto em países desenvolvidos quanto em desenvolvimento.

Em Angola, o espírito empreendedor é intrínseco à população. A atividade empreendedora cresceu especialmente durante o período de instabilidade política e social, quando muitos cidadãos a adotaram como meio de subsistência. Atualmente, o Estado angolano tem dado atenção redobrada ao processo empreendedor, promovendo políticas e programas que incentivam o empreendedorismo por oportunidade. Isso não apenas gera riqueza, mas também favorece a diversificação dos setores da economia, contribuindo para o crescimento do país.

O governo angolano tem criado políticas e programas para apoiar a atividade empreendedora, mas a mortalidade de empresas e o insucesso dos empreendedores permanecem altos. Muitos empresários operam sem formação ou conhecimento adequado, o que os deixa despreparados para o mercado. O aumento de novas empresas que rapidamente falham demonstra que muitos empreendedores não conseguem elaborar um plano de negócios devido à falta de competências de gestão, redes de contatos e recursos financeiros. Essa realidade evidencia a necessidade de mentoria para orientar e apoiar os novos negócios no caminho certo.

A incubadora de empresas é um espaço com infraestrutura e serviços de apoio dedicados à criação de micro, pequenas e médias empresas em diversas áreas. Assim como as incubadoras para recém-nascidos, elas garantem condições para a sobrevivência de projetos empresariais em fase vulnerável. No entanto, o empreendedorismo não resolve todos os problemas de um país. Em Angola, o Executivo busca provocar mudanças estruturais tanto nos negócios quanto na sociedade.

Para além das referências clássicas sobre empreendedorismo e incubação (Schumpeter, 1934; Drucker, 1974; McClelland, 1972; Kirzner, 1983), esta investigação foi atualizada com contributos recentes (menos de cinco anos), que reforçam a sua pertinência científica. Estudos internacionais e africanos (Correia, Marques & Silva, 2024; Rosado-



Cuberoa et al., 2024; Ibwe & Mwantimwa, 2025; Parish et al., 2023; Motlhaudi, 2025) oferecem novas perspetivas sobre incubação, redes de apoio e impactos diferenciados em contextos emergentes.

Atualmente, os maiores estudos sobre dinâmicas empreendedoras são realizados pelo Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), criado em 1999 pelo Babson College e pela London Business School. O GEM avalia anualmente a atividade empreendedora, aspirações e dificuldades em vários países. Angola participou do GEM pela oitava vez em 2020/2021, após edições anteriores em 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016/2017 e 2018/2019. Diante dos imperativos de diversificação do Executivo, esta pesquisa aborda o tema: O Processo de Incubação de Empresas para o Fomento do Empreendedorismo em Angola: Na Visão dos Incubados¹, questionando como pode o processo de Incubação de empresas contribuir para o fomento do empreendedorismo em Angola?

Objectivos

Esta investigação procura compreender o processo de Incubação de empresas para fomentar o empreendedorismo em Angola, formulando e comprovando proposição.

Em Angola, apesar do crescente reconhecimento do empreendedorismo como motor do desenvolvimento económico, a literatura sobre incubadoras de empresas é escassa e pouco sistematizada. Esta lacuna justifica a presente investigação, que se propôs analisar como o processo de Incubação de Empresas contribui para o fomento do empreendedorismo, com base em um estudo realizado entre 2012 e 2018. O estudo gera conhecimento original para a academia, subsidia políticas públicas mais eficazes e oferece recomendações práticas para melhorar a atuação das incubadoras no apoio à micro e pequenas empresas.

E tem como objetivos específicos: (1) Caracterizar o perfil sociodemográfico e académico dos incubados; (2) Identificar os serviços e conhecimentos transferidos pelas incubadoras; (3) Avaliar as principais dificuldades enfrentadas pelos incubados; (4) Examinar os contributos das incubadoras para o desenvolvimento dos negócios; (5) Discutir as implicações do processo de incubação para a prática, a teoria e as políticas públicas.

Marco Teórico Conceptual

A Evolução Histórica do Empreendedorismo

O termo “empreendedorismo” deriva do francês “entre” e “prende”, referindo-se à interação entre fornecedor e consumidor no mercado (Sarkar, 2014).

O conceito de empreendedorismo evoluiu desde Cantillon (1755), que destacou o risco, Adam Smith (1776), descreveu os empreendedores como entidades que transformam a demanda em oferta (Sarkar, 2014), J. B. Say (1803) popularizou a ideia que os

¹ O autor expressa os seus agradecimentos aos dois revisores anónimos da primeira versão deste trabalho, cujos comentários muito contribuíram para a melhoria do mesmo.



empreendedores são agentes de transformação do crescimento econômico e John S. Mill (1848), realçou o papel do empreendedor na criação de novos produtos.

Já Alfred Marshall enfatizou que a função do empreendedor é garantir o fornecimento de produtos, Carl Menger definiu o empreendedor como aquele que cria oportunidades, Max Weber, por sua vez, investigou a função do empreendedor no crescimento individual e Frank H. Knight (1921) associou o conceito de "risco" a "incerteza" marcando uma nova fase nos estudos sobre o empreendedorismo.

A evolução do conceito ao longo dos séculos mostra a crescente importância do empreendedorismo como motor do desenvolvimento econômico e social. A ideia de que os empreendedores desempenham um papel crucial na inovação e na criação de novos mercados é amplamente reconhecida hoje. No entanto, o empreendedorismo não é apenas sobre riscos e inovações; também envolve a capacidade de identificar oportunidades e a habilidade de mobilizar recursos de forma eficaz.

Com o tempo, o empreendedorismo evoluiu para incluir não apenas a criação de negócios, mas também a promoção de mudanças sociais e a resolução de problemas comunitários. A capacitação e a formação de empreendedores têm se tornado essenciais, especialmente em contextos onde a falta de conhecimento e infraestrutura pode limitar o potencial de novos negócios.

Em resumo, a trajetória do conceito de empreendedorismo reflete a complexidade e a multifuncionalidade do papel do empreendedor na sociedade. Desde suas raízes nas teorias econômicas até suas aplicações contemporâneas, o empreendedorismo continua a ser um campo dinâmico, relevante para o desenvolvimento sustentável e a inovação em diversas áreas.

Schumpeter (1934) sobressaiu ao estudo do empreendedorismo, destacando o papel do empreendedor como motor do desenvolvimento econômico, inovador através da capacidade de criar novas combinações de recursos produtivos e serviços, nas transformações econômicas contemporâneas e um impulsionador do sistema capitalista ocidental (Godim, 2018).

Drucker (1974) reforçou que o empreendedor deve estar comprometido com a inovação, descrevendo como "ferramenta específica dos empreendedores". Ele evidenciou que o papel do empreendedorismo é garantir a eficiência dos negócios atuais no futuro, renovando e agregando valor e que o empreendedorismo não é nem ciência nem arte, mas uma prática que exige ação e adaptação.

McClelland (1972) salientou a importância da motivação no crescimento econômico de um país, identificando três fatores que influenciam a atitude do empreendedor: (1) a necessidade ou motivo de realização, que leva à busca de oportunidades; (2) a iniciativa individual, que vai além de características pessoais; e (3) a predisposição ao risco moderado, que inclui persistência e comprometimento (Franco e Gouveia, 2016).

Kirzner (1983) compilou diversas teorias sobre o papel dos empreendedores, apresentando-os como indivíduos que assumem riscos. Ele identificou várias funções dos empreendedores: inovadores, arbitradores, coordenadores e organizadores. Esses indivíduos proporcionam liderança e exercem a verdadeira vontade, atuando como



especuladores, empregadores e gestores, além de serem fontes de informação que identificam oportunidades ainda não exploradas no mercado.

A figura do empreendedor, portanto, é vista como central para a inovação e a adaptação no mercado, e essencial para a prosperidade econômica.

Em suma, as contribuições de Schumpeter, Drucker, McClelland e Kirzner destacam a complexidade do empreendedorismo, que envolve inovação, motivação e a identificação de oportunidades. Esses aspectos são cruciais para entender como os empreendedores desempenham um papel vital no desenvolvimento econômico e social, moldando o futuro dos mercados e contribuindo para o progresso da sociedade. A interação entre esses elementos forma a base do que significa ser um empreendedor em um mundo em constante mudança.

O Processo de Incubação De Empresas

Em 1989, foi criada a primeira incubadora de empresas em África, na Nigéria, pelo UNFSTD (Manuel; Simão, 2018). Nos anos 90, houve um aumento significativo de incubadoras, especialmente em países desenvolvidos, focadas em clusters industriais e tecnológicos, com ênfase na inovação e desenvolvimento de nichos de mercado (Caetano, 2012). Surgiram incubadoras setoriais, agrupando empresas de um mesmo setor (Correia, 2013).

Lumpkin e outros (1996) definem incubação como um esforço organizado para apoiar a criação e sobrevivência de novos negócios em um ambiente controlado, que oferece infraestrutura e serviços compartilhados, contrastando com a concorrência externa (Caetano, 2011). Em 1998, um novo modelo de incubação emergiu, aproveitando as Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação (TIC) para estimular o crescimento de empresas de base tecnológica (Lalkaka, 2001; Fernandes, 2014).

Grimaldi e Grandi (2002) destacam que muitas agências de desenvolvimento econômico adotaram incubadoras para reduzir falhas e acelerar a criação de negócios. Lalkaka (2002) considera essas iniciativas parte das políticas públicas dos governos, visando revitalizar economias, melhorar o ambiente de negócios e gerar empregos (Guillen; Veras, 2018). Assim, as incubadoras se consolidaram como uma ferramenta essencial para o fomento do empreendedorismo e inovação.

Grimaldi e Grandi (2005) destacam que, após o período de incubação, os empreendimentos devem se tornar negócios independentes e auto-sustentáveis. Embora as incubadoras ofereçam serviços comuns, cada uma possui características únicas que atendem a suas comunidades, resultando em diferentes modelos de incubação. O modelo adotado influencia diretamente o processo de incubação, afetando variáveis como o nível de investimento, a qualidade da equipe de gestão e a diversidade de serviços oferecidos (Valadão, 2017).

A elaboração de um plano de negócios é uma etapa essencial, pois o sucesso da incubadora depende da viabilidade dos projetos que concebe. O empreendedor deve explorar a natureza comercial do novo negócio durante esse processo (Monteiro e Gava, 2007). Dada a alta taxa de mortalidade de empresas nos primeiros anos, a incubação é comparada as incubadoras de recém-nascidos, proporcionando um ambiente seguro para



que os projetos empresariais nascentes possam se desenvolver e sobreviver (Saraiva, 2011).

Dornelas (2002) sugere que a incubação promove a interação entre universidades e empresas, transformando conhecimento em produtos e acelerando o desenvolvimento de novos empreendimentos. Essa dinâmica é crucial para criar empresas competitivas que se mantenham em desenvolvimento contínuo após a incubação (Godim, 2018).

Em África, a incubação assemelha-se a modelos utilizados em outros continentes, com foco em incubadoras de base tecnológica. Isso facilita a conexão entre investidores e jovens empreendedores, promovendo o uso de tecnologias como programação e software (Manuel; Simão, 2018). Assim, as incubadoras se tornam um pilar fundamental para o fomento ao empreendedorismo e à inovação no continente.

Para além das referências clássicas sobre empreendedorismo e incubação, esta investigação foi atualizada com contributos recentes (menos de cinco anos), que reforcem a sua pertinência científica. Estudos como os de Correia, Marques e Silva (2024) e Rosado-Cuberoa et al. (2024) evidenciam o papel das incubadoras na dinamização de ecossistemas empreendedores, sobretudo entre os jovens. No contexto africano, trabalhos recentes em Angola (Pinto, Alves & Rolo, 2023; World Bank Group & IFC, 2023) e em outros países, como Tanzânia (Ibwe & Mwantimwa, 2025) e Camarões (Parish, Tchoumi & Nguemta, 2023), oferecem evidência empírica sobre os desafios e oportunidades da incubação. Além disso, novas propostas de enquadramento, como o Apprenteneurship Framework (Motlhaudi, 2025), apontam caminhos para fortalecer incubadoras públicas. Assim, a presente pesquisa não apenas dialoga com a tradição teórica consolidada, mas também incorpora avanços recentes que ampliam a sua relevância académica e prática.

O Empreendedorismo e a Importância do Processo de Incubação de Empresa

Em Angola, o espírito empreendedor remonta antes da independência, com a prática de comércio informal em bancadas às portas das casas e serviços como lavadeiras e jardineiros. Após a independência, a guerra civil degradou as infraestruturas e gerou instabilidade política e socioeconómica, levando muitos angolanos a buscar o empreendedorismo como solução para suas necessidades, especialmente atuando no mercado informal.

Nos últimos 16 anos, o país enfrentou duas crises económicas (2009 e 2014), que afetaram gravemente a exportação de petróleo, a principal fonte de receitas, deteriorando as condições sociais. Diante dessa situação, o Estado angolano reconheceu a urgência de diversificar a economia e implementou políticas para fomentar o empreendedorismo, o emprego e a formação profissional.

Nesse contexto, foram criadas incubadoras de empresas públicas, como a IEMP, INAPEM e CLESE, que oferecem infraestrutura técnica e administrativa, além de serviços especializados para apoiar micro, pequenas e médias empresas (MPME). Essas incubadoras visam estimular a concorrência e a inovação na economia angolana, promovendo um crescimento económico sustentável.



Atualmente, o empreendedorismo é uma prioridade nas estratégias do governo, integrando-se ao currículo educacional em vários níveis. Além disso, Angola participa do Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), que analisa atitudes e aspirações empreendedoras e identifica fatores que influenciam o empreendedorismo em diferentes países. O país é classificado como uma economia orientada por fatores de produção, inserindo-se em um contexto geográfico e de desenvolvimento específico. Assim, o governo procura consolidar o empreendedorismo como motor de desenvolvimento econômico e social.

Metodologia

A investigação adotou uma abordagem quantitativa, de caráter exploratório, descritivo-explicativa, fundamentada no método hipotético-dedutivo, adequada para descrever fenómenos, identificar relações e propor inferências teóricas. Partiu-se da identificação de uma lacuna sobre o papel da incubação de empresas no fomento do empreendedorismo em Angola, formulando-se a proposição de que esse processo constitui um fator determinante para o desenvolvimento empresarial no país.

Procedimentos

1. Pesquisa bibliográfica e documental – revisão da literatura nacional e internacional sobre empreendedorismo e incubação, além da análise de relatórios do INAPEM e do GEM Angola (2012–2018);
2. Trabalho de campo – aplicação de questionários estruturados a empreendedores incubados em incubadoras públicas;
3. Instrumento de recolha – Foram enviados por e-mail os questionários com 17 questões fechadas, divididas em variáveis sociodemográficas e organizacionais, elaborado a partir da literatura e validado por especialistas. Foi realizado um pré-teste com seis empreendedores para verificar clareza e pertinência e enviado o termo de sigilo e confidencialidade para que fosse permitido o acesso a informações mais detalhadas.

Amostra

A amostra foi aleatória simples, composta por 64 empreendedores incubados em incubadoras públicas de 11 províncias de Angola. A taxa de resposta válida foi de 81,01% (64 de 79 questionários enviados).

Tratamento e análise dos dados

Os dados foram tratados com recurso a estatística descritiva e da análise de conteúdo, utilizando o Excel, o SPSS e a linguagem de programação Python 3.8.6 para análises não paramétricas e cruzamento de variáveis.

Limitações

- Amostra restrita a incubadoras públicas;

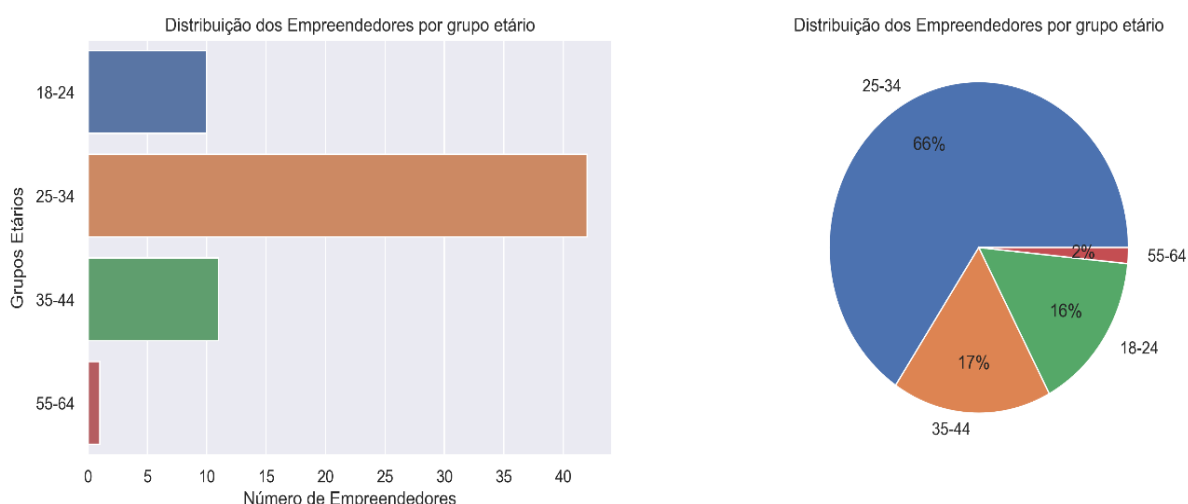


- Seleção não probabilística;
- Exclusividade de métodos quantitativos;
- Ausência de análises inferenciais avançadas.

Resultados

A atividade empreendedora na amostra apresenta maior incidência entre os 25 e 34 anos, com 42 empreendedores (66%). Seguem-se os 35 a 44 anos, com 11 empreendedores (17%), os 18 a 24 anos, com 10 (16%), e os 55 a 64 anos, com 1 (2%). Assim, 82% da amostra é composta por jovens empreendedores, evidenciando a predominância da faixa etária mais jovem no cenário empreendedor.

Figura 1. Distribuição dos empreendedores por faixa etária



Analisando a frequência da faixa etária em relação ao nível de escolaridade, 40 (63%) empreendedores têm grau de licenciatura: 28 na faixa de 25 e 34 anos; 6 de 35 a 44 anos, 4 de 18 a 24 anos e 1 de 55 a 64 anos. Apenas 4 empreendedores possuem o grau de mestre: 2 na faixa de 25 a 34 anos e 2 de 35 a 44 anos. Além disso, 11 empreendedores de 25 a 34 anos têm formação técnica média, seguidos por 6 da faixa de 18 a 24 anos e 3 da faixa de 35 a 44 anos, evidenciando a predominância de técnicos médios entre os mais jovens.

Na investigação, constatou-se que 53 empresas possuem entre 1 e 10 colaboradores, representando 83% da amostra. Apenas 11 empresas têm entre 10 e 100 colaboradores, correspondendo a 17%. Quanto à dimensão, 43 empresas são microempresas (67%) e 21 são pequenas empresas (33%), conforme ilustrado no gráfico abaixo.

A análise temporal dos inquiridos mostrou que 48% das empresas atuam entre 3 a 5 anos, 22% entre 1 a 2 anos, 20% entre 0 a 1 ano, 5% entre 6 a 10 anos, e uma percentagem semelhante para aquelas com mais de 10 anos de atividade.



Figura 2. Frequência da faixa etária por nível de escolaridade

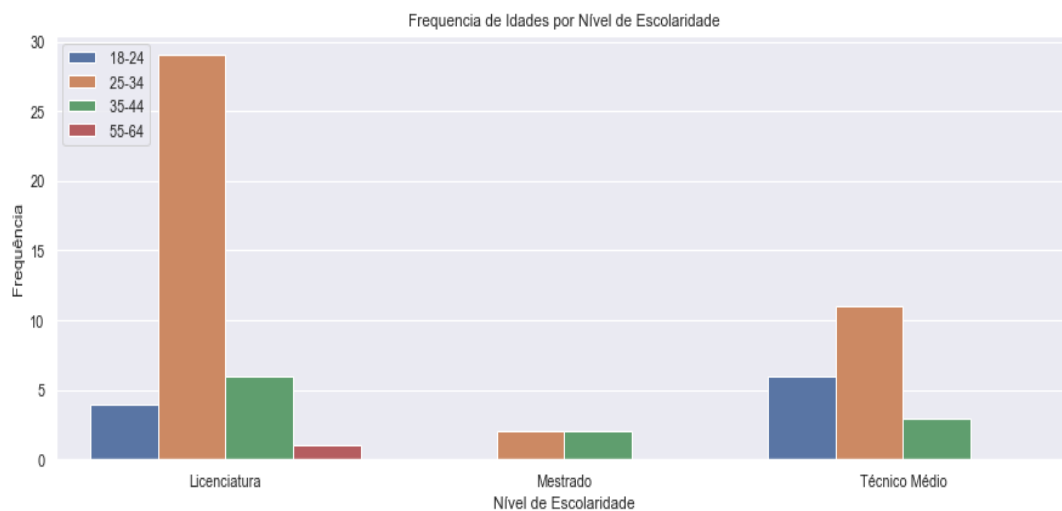


Figura 3. Taxa de frequência do Número de Colaboradores e Dimensão da empresa

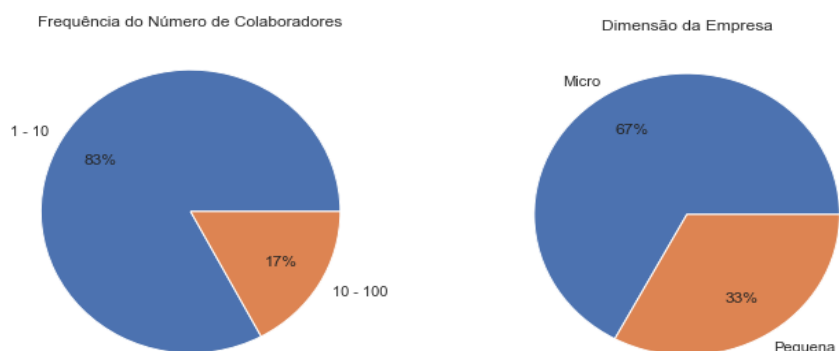
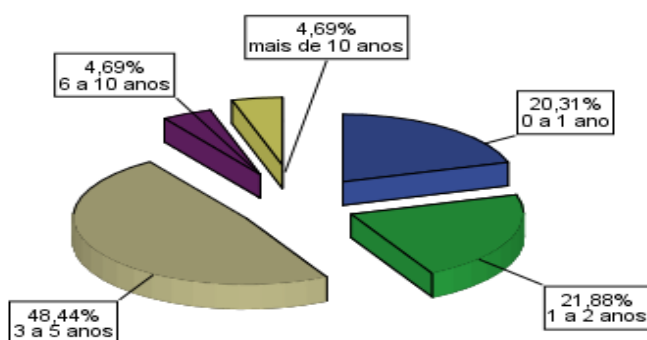


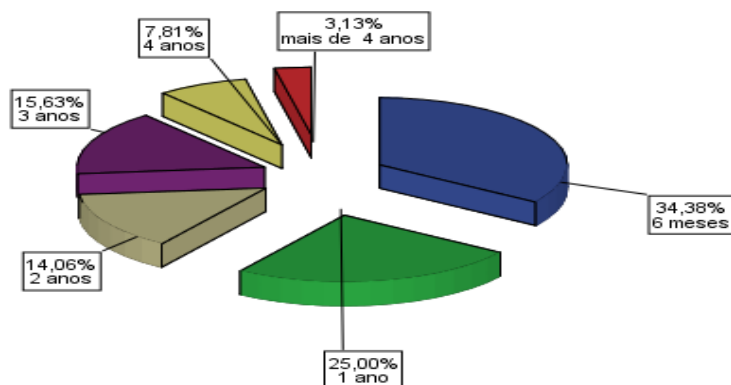
Figura 4. Tempo de actividade das empresas





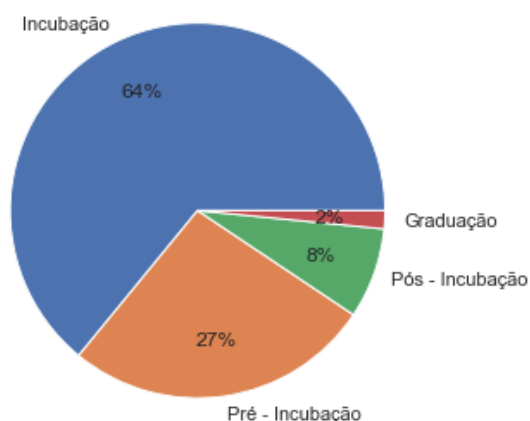
Quanto ao tempo de permanência na incubadora, 34% das empresas estão há menos de 6 meses, 25% por 1 ano, 16% por 3 anos, 14% por 2 anos, 8% por 4 anos, e 3% estão incubadas há mais de 4 anos, conforme ilustrado no gráfico abaixo.

Figura 5. Taxa de frequência das empresas por tempo de residência

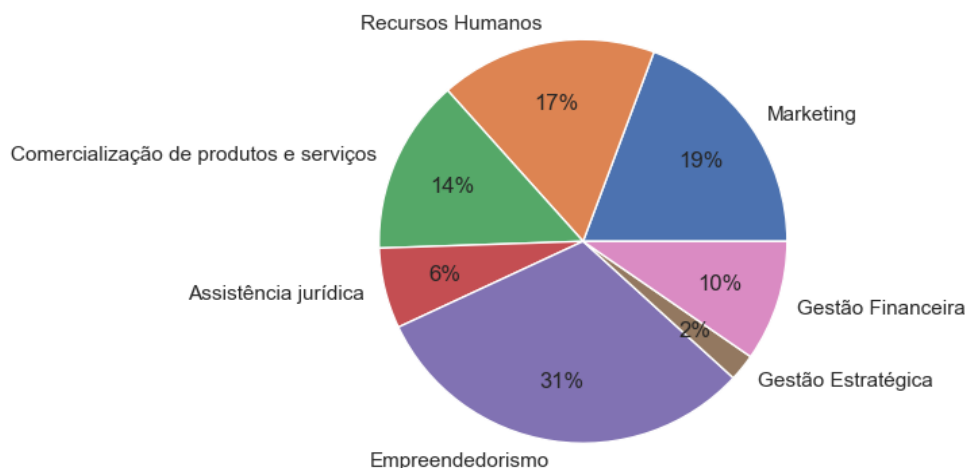


O processo de incubação em Angola envolve quatro fases, conforme ilustrado no gráfico n.º 6 e de acordo com Oliveira (2009). Verificou-se que 64% das empresas estão na fase de incubação, 27% na pré-incubação, 8% na pós-graduação e 2% na fase de graduação.

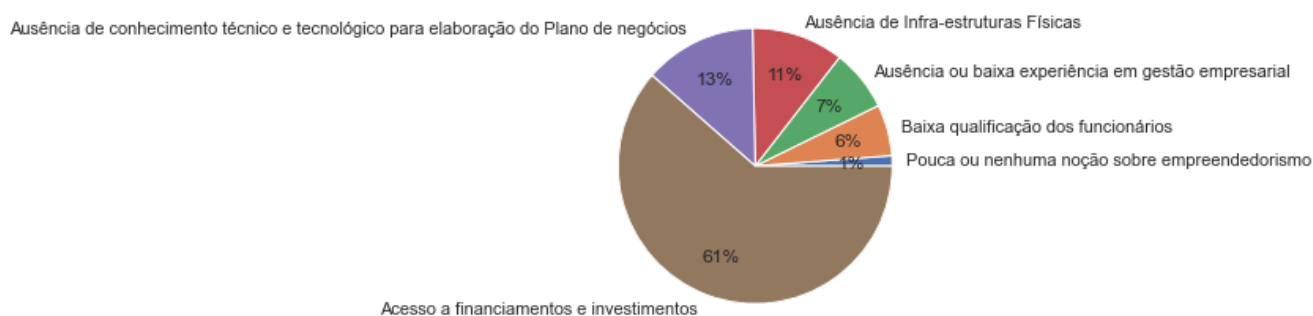
Figura 6. Taxa de frequência das empresas no processo de incubação



Sobre o tipo de conhecimento transferido entre incubadoras e empresas, o gráfico nº 7 mostra que 31% dos incubados receberam noções de empreendedorismo, 19% de marketing, 17% de gestão de recursos humanos, 14% de comercialização, 10% de gestão financeira, 6% de assistência jurídica e 2% de gestão estratégica.

**Figura 7.** Tipo de conhecimento transferido pela incubadora

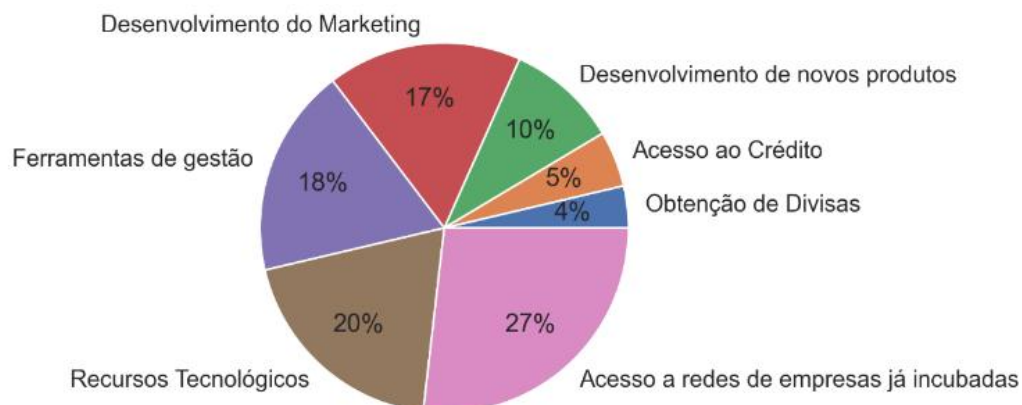
Conforme o gráfico nº 8, os empreendedores enfrentaram maior dificuldade no acesso a financiamentos e investimentos, com 61%. Em seguida, 13% mencionaram a falta de conhecimentos técnicos para elaborar o plano de negócios, 11% a ausência de infraestruturas, 7% a baixa experiência em gestão, 6% a baixa qualificação dos funcionários e 1% indicou pouco ou nenhum conhecimento de empreendedorismo.

Figura 8. Principais dificuldades das empresas durante o processo de incubação

O gráfico nº 9 destaca as contribuições das incubadoras para os incubados. O maior benefício relatado pelos empreendedores foi o acesso a outras empresas incubadas, com 27% da amostra. Seguem-se os recursos tecnológicos (20%), ferramentas de gestão (18%), desenvolvimento de marketing (17%), novos produtos (10%), acesso ao crédito (5%) e 4% consideraram que o processo possibilitou



Figura 9. Contributos sentidos durante o processo de Incubação a obtenção de divisas.



Discussão

Segundo o relatório GEM Angola 2018/19, a faixa etária predominante no empreendedorismo angolano é de 25 a 34 anos, com cerca de 51% de empreendedores. Em 2020/21, houve um aumento de 15 pontos percentuais, totalizando 66%. Essa variável é crucial para o fomento do empreendedorismo, pois a amostra é maioritariamente composta por jovens, que representam a força motriz do país. Os resultados confirmam tendências do GEM (2018/19; 2020/21) quanto à predominância de jovens empreendedores.

Para analisar a frequência da faixa etária em relação ao nível de escolaridade, a investigação revela que, assim como no relatório GEM Angola 2016/17, a maior taxa de Empreendedorismo por Atividade (TEA) ocorre entre aqueles com ensino superior (licenciatura). Confirmação da relevância da formação académica no sucesso do empreendedorismo (Ferreira et al., 2010).

Para verificar a relação entre o número de colaboradores e a classificação das empresas conforme o Artigo 5º da Lei 30/11, observa-se que 83% têm entre 1 a 10 trabalhadores, sendo classificadas como microempresas. No entanto, apenas 67% estão certificadas como microempresas, revelando uma desatualização de 16% na certificação, o que viola a referida lei. Isso representa um ponto fraco para o fomento do empreendedorismo em Angola.

Em relação ao tempo de atividade das empresas, 48% das que estão em incubação em Angola têm entre 3 a 5 anos de mercado. Além disso, 20% são empresas nascentes, com até 1 ano, que aderiram às incubadoras devido a dificuldades na fase inicial. Conforme Sequeira (2013), o processo facilita a inserção de start-ups no mercado, oferecendo serviços a preços mais baixos, contribuindo simultaneamente para o desenvolvimento de uma cultura empreendedora na sociedade, como destaca Caetano (2011).

Observou-se que empresas incubadas estão há mais de 4 anos na incubadora, o que contrasta com Almeida (2014), que afirma que o processo de incubação normalmente



dura até quatro anos, e para a Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação – SPI (2021, p. 13) o limita máximo é de 36 meses.

A maioria das empresas incubadas (64%) está na fase de incubação. Segundo Godim (2009), essa fase é crucial para orientar as empresas no desenvolvimento do plano de negócios, durante um período de dois anos, reduzindo o risco de insucesso e a mortalidade prematura.

De acordo com Lavieri (2010), citado por Pereira (2019), a disseminação da educação empreendedora e a inovação oferecem experiências enriquecedoras para empreendedores e empresas emergentes, sustentando sua presença no mercado. Esses conhecimentos aprimoram as empresas incubadas por meio da formação, contribuindo para o desenvolvimento de empreendimentos inovadores e para a formação de empreendedores autônomos, eficientes e bem-sucedidos.

As empresas que ingressam no mercado enfrentam diversas dificuldades, especialmente no acesso a financiamentos, representando 61%. As dificuldades no financiamento coincidem com estudos de Sarkar (2014) e Parish et al. (2023).

Limitações na gestão estratégica reforçam necessidade de mentoring (Motlhudi, 2025).

Os incubados reconhecem os contributos em redes e recursos tecnológicos recebidos durante o processo de incubação, confirmam achados de Rosado-Cuberoa et al. (2024).

Conclusão

O estudo evidenciou que o processo de Incubação de empresas constitui um instrumento fundamental para o fomento do empreendedorismo em Angola, sobretudo entre os jovens, que representam mais de 80% dos incubados. A predominância de empreendedores com formação superior indica que a incubação tem potencial para transformar capital humano qualificado em negócios sustentáveis, embora ainda haja fragilidades no acesso ao financiamento e na transferência de conhecimentos de gestão estratégica.

Do ponto de vista teórico, os resultados reforçam os modelos clássicos de Schumpeter e Drucker ao confirmarem que a inovação, a formação e a gestão eficiente são determinantes para a sobrevivência das empresas. A pesquisa acrescenta evidência empírica ao debate sobre a relevância das incubadoras em economias emergentes, como Angola, onde a literatura é ainda incipiente. Assim, contribui para preencher uma lacuna académica e oferece subsídios para o avanço de estudos comparativos no contexto africano.

No plano prático, ficou patente que as incubadoras geram valor ao proporcionar redes de contacto, recursos tecnológicos e ferramentas de gestão. Contudo, a limitação no acesso a crédito e a insuficiente formação em gestão estratégica revelam a necessidade de rever e diversificar os serviços oferecidos. A prática das incubadoras deve evoluir para integrar programas de mentoring, parcerias com universidades e maior aproximação com investidores, criando um ecossistema mais robusto para os empreendedores.

Para os decisores políticos, os resultados apontam para a urgência de políticas públicas que articulem incubadoras, instituições financeiras e programas de apoio à inovação. É



necessário criar mecanismos de financiamento mais acessíveis, incentivos fiscais e linhas de crédito específicas para empresas incubadas. Além disso, recomenda-se a implementação de sistemas de certificação e acompanhamento rigoroso das incubadoras públicas, de modo a aumentar a sua eficiência e o impacto na diversificação económica do país.

Em síntese, esta investigação demonstra que as incubadoras de empresas são uma alavanca estratégica para o fortalecimento do empreendedorismo em Angola. Ao mesmo tempo, desafia académicos, gestores de incubadoras e formuladores de políticas a reconfigurarem suas abordagens, de modo a transformar a incubação não apenas em um espaço de sobrevivência de empresas, mas em um motor de inovação e desenvolvimento sustentável.

Limitações do Estudo

- A amostra restringiu-se apenas a incubados de incubadoras públicas, o que limita a generalização dos resultados.
- O enfoque exclusivo em dados quantitativos reduziu a possibilidade de compreender em profundidade as experiências subjetivas dos empreendedores.

Contributos do Estudo

- Preenche uma lacuna na literatura sobre Incubação de empresas em Angola e em economias africanas emergentes.
- Oferece evidência empírica inédita para a academia, fortalecendo o debate teórico sobre o papel das incubadoras no fomento ao empreendedorismo.
- Apresenta recomendações práticas para a melhoria da atuação das incubadoras e para a formulação de políticas públicas de apoio ao empreendedorismo.

Sugestões para futuras pesquisas

- Ampliar a amostra, incluindo incubadoras privadas;
- Complementar com métodos qualitativos;
- Aplicar análises estatísticas avançadas;
- Realizar estudos longitudinais;
- Comparar com outros contextos africanos.

Assim, a incubação deve ser entendida não apenas como espaço de sobrevivência empresarial, mas como motor de inovação e de desenvolvimento sustentável em Angola.



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THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS

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Abstract

This study analyses the role of local entrepreneurship in social development in São Tomé and Príncipe, focusing on how entrepreneurs can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research was based on field research, conducted through a structured questionnaire applied to 100 entrepreneurs, selected representatively based on the latest national census. The instrument included closed questions on the main social indicators of the SDGs, allowing comparisons between the entrepreneurial population and the general population. The questions were adapted to the local context, considering educational and linguistic limitations, and validated with São Tomé nationals. The results show that entrepreneurs drive progress in the SDGs, exceeding the population average in 15 of the 24 indicators analysed. The study highlights how entrepreneurial ecosystems can be better leveraged to promote sustainable development and social inclusion.

Keywords

Local Entrepreneurship, Economic Growth, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), International Studies.

Resumo

Este estudo analisa o papel do empreendedorismo local no desenvolvimento social em São Tomé e Príncipe, analisando como os empreendedores podem contribuir para os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS). A pesquisa foi baseada em investigação de campo, realizada por meio de um questionário estruturado aplicado a 100 empreendedores, selecionados de forma representativa com base no último censo nacional. O instrumento incluiu perguntas fechadas sobre os principais indicadores sociais dos ODS, permitindo comparações entre a população empreendedora e a população no geral. As perguntas foram adaptadas ao contexto local, considerando as limitações educacionais e linguísticas, e validadas com cidadãos de São Tomé. Os resultados mostram que os empreendedores impulsionam o progresso nos ODS, excedendo a média da população em 15 dos 24 indicadores analisados. O estudo destaca como os ecossistemas empreendedores podem ser melhor aproveitados para promover o desenvolvimento sustentável e a inclusão social.



Palavras-chave

Empreendedorismo local, Crescimento económico, Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS), Pequenos Estados Insulares em Desenvolvimento (PEID), Estudos Internacionais.

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THE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS

PEDRO CABRITA

Introduction

Local entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized for its role in addressing social and environmental challenges, particularly in developing countries. This study examines the impact of local entrepreneurship on environmental protection and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in São Tomé and Príncipe, a small island nation with a unique context. By analyzing the daily practices of local entrepreneurs, this research seeks to understand their influence on SDGs related to water, climate, marine life, and terrestrial life, and ultimately contribute to the broader understanding of how local initiatives can support international development goals.

Literature review

The role of local entrepreneurship in social development

Entrepreneurship has traditionally been recognized as an economic growth and innovation catalyst. However, its pivotal role in driving social development is now gaining significant attention ([Urbano et al, 2019](#)). By utilizing local knowledge, networks, and resources, entrepreneurs enhance economic resilience, strengthen social infrastructure, and promote inclusive development ([Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017](#)). They create jobs, drive innovation, and empower communities, making entrepreneurship a vital tool for addressing social disparities and fostering societal progress ([Yani, A., & Ausat, A. M. A. 2024](#)).

Entrepreneurial activities often address the immediate socio-economic needs of local communities while creating opportunities for employment and innovation ([Toxirovna, 2024](#)). As previously noted by Audretsch and Keilbach ([2004](#)), local entrepreneurs act as change agents, generating economic dynamism that directly improves the quality of life in their communities. This is particularly impactful in rural and underserved areas, where entrepreneurial initiatives often bridge gaps in public services and infrastructure ([Henderson, 2002](#), [Ajide, F. M. 2020](#), [Robertson, et al 2020](#)).

Entrepreneurship also fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, encouraging self-reliance within communities ([Peredo & Chrisman, 2006](#), [Ademokun, F., & Ajayi, O. 2012](#), [Amri, et al, 2024](#)). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are often the backbone of local entrepreneurship, play a critical role in skill development, enhancing



human capital, and building community resilience ([Morrison, et al, 2017](#), [Bosma et al., 2020](#)).

At the same time social entrepreneurship, a specialized form of local entrepreneurship, aims to tackle societal challenges such as inequality, unemployment, and limited access to essential services ([Phillips et al, 2015](#), [Phan Tan, L. 2022](#)). With this, social entrepreneurs establish ventures that prioritize social value over profit, addressing systemic issues through innovative solutions ([Mair and Marti 2006](#)). For instance, initiatives focusing on marginalized groups, such as women ([Assaf, A. 2024](#)), youth ([Ong, 2021](#)), and people with disabilities ([Ortiz, 2021](#)), not only create economic opportunities but also promote social inclusion and cohesion ([Sundin, 2011](#)).

In the broader context of social development, social entrepreneurs often collaborate with local governments, NGOs, and community organizations to amplify their impact ([Kovanen, 2021](#)). Their work directly contributes to achieving societal goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by addressing social inequities and fostering inclusive growth ([UN, 2015](#)).

Additionally, local entrepreneurship plays a vital role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage ([Brinia, et al, 2024](#)). Entrepreneurs leverage traditional knowledge and local resources to develop businesses that celebrate ([Mars, 2022](#)) and sustain cultural identities ([Cohen & Winn, 2007](#)). This is particularly relevant in regions with rich cultural histories, where entrepreneurship can serve as a bridge between modernization and heritage preservation ([Lyon & Sepulveda, 2009](#)).

Despite its potential, the impact of local entrepreneurship on social development faces significant challenges, such as limited access to capital ([Odeyeme, et al, 2024](#)), inadequate infrastructure ([Ratten, V., 2023](#)), and unsupportive policy environments can hinder the growth and influence of local businesses ([Bruton et al., 2010](#)). Moreover, while entrepreneurship can promote inclusivity, uneven access to entrepreneurial opportunities may inadvertently reinforce social inequalities ([Welter et al., 2017](#)).

Empirical evidence underscores the connection between local entrepreneurship and social development ([Buratti, N., Sillig, C., & Albanese, M., 2022](#)). In developing regions, entrepreneurial ventures often drive economic diversification, reduce unemployment, and empower vulnerable populations ([Naudé, 2010](#)). For instance, microfinance initiatives in Africa and South Asia have enabled individuals, particularly women, to start small businesses, significantly improving household incomes and overall community well-being ([Yunus, 2020](#)). Case studies from Latin America further illustrate how community-based enterprises contribute to sustainable resource management and social equity ([Peredo & McLean, 2006](#), [Batista et al, 2022](#)). These examples highlight the transformative potential of entrepreneurship in addressing both social and environmental challenges.

Key contributions of local entrepreneurship to social development include:

- Economic Empowerment and Job Creation: Entrepreneurship empowers marginalized communities by creating jobs, increasing income levels, and improving living standards. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often the primary drivers of economic activity in underserved areas, providing opportunities that uplift



entire communities ([Kulmie et al, 2023](#), [Adenutsi, 2023](#), [Enaifoghe, & Vezi-Magigaba, 2023](#)).

- Social Inclusion and Equity: By breaking down systemic barriers to economic participation, entrepreneurship fosters inclusivity and equity. Initiatives led by women, youth, and minority groups often address societal issues such as education, health, and gender equality, while driving economic participation ([Khan et al, 2023](#), [Prasetyo et al, 2023](#), [Williams, T. W. \(2024\)](#)).

- Innovation for Social Progress: Local entrepreneurs develop innovative solutions tailored to the specific needs of their communities. From affordable healthcare to renewable energy projects, entrepreneurial efforts drive technological and social innovation, directly contributing to broader societal goals ([Kostakis and Tsagarakis, 2022](#), [Si, et al, 2023](#), [de Lucas Ancillo and Gavrila 2023](#)).

Local entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in driving both economic and social development, by fostering innovation, creating job opportunities, and promoting social inclusion, local entrepreneurs help build resilient and empowered communities.

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in driving social development, particularly in regions facing economic and social challenges ([Méndez-Picazo, et al 2021](#), [Aljuwaiber, 2021](#), [Anh, et al, 2022](#)). By promoting like already refereed innovation, creating job opportunities, and addressing pressing societal needs, entrepreneurship becomes a key factor in achieving sustainable development, contributing to employment generation and livelihood enhancement, especially in underserved areas where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form the foundation of local economies ([Rumasukun and Noch, 2023](#)). Research has shown a strong correlation between entrepreneurial ventures, reduced poverty levels, and improved living standards ([Si et al, 2021](#)).

Beyond its economic impact, entrepreneurship fosters social inclusion and strengthens community resilience, by focusing on inclusivity, entrepreneurial ventures create opportunities for marginalized groups such as women, youth, minorities and cultural ([Qu and Zollet, 2023](#)). For instance, women-led enterprises are often associated with increased household incomes and greater investments in education and healthcare, while entrepreneurial activities help build networks that enhance trust and cooperation within communities ([Okolie et al, 2022](#), [Simba et al, 2023](#)).

By addressing local systemic barriers and fostering supportive ecosystems, entrepreneurship can play a key role in achieving both local and global social development goals, ensuring sustainable and inclusive progress for future generations.

Entrepreneurship for the Social Dimension SDGs

Focusing on the impacts of entrepreneurship on social development, which can be defined as a condition of progress, equity, and inclusion that enables individuals and communities to achieve their full potential, entrepreneurship has referred before garnered significant attention. This is due to the increasing emphasis on social impact businesses and



practices that aim to address societal challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and access to education and healthcare, while fostering innovation and economic growth.

However, the understanding of how local entrepreneurial initiatives can address grand societal challenges, often framed through frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it's not clear, creating the opportunity of studying more the real impact of local entrepreneurs on solving local problems that are a world concern. Among the 17 SDGs identified ([2015](#)), the social dimension encompasses goals aimed at promoting equity, justice, and well-being, such as eradicating poverty, ensuring quality education, achieving gender equality, and reducing inequalities, and can be represented by:

- SDG 1 (No Poverty): Aims to eradicate poverty in all forms by 2030, focusing on income deprivation, access to basic services, and resilience to shocks. Key strategies include social protection systems, equitable resource access, and climate adaptation.
- SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): Seeks to end hunger and malnutrition while promoting sustainable agriculture. Targets include improving food access, doubling small-scale farmers' productivity, and enhancing agricultural resilience.
- SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being): Focuses on reducing preventable diseases, improving healthcare access, and addressing health disparities. Goals include lowering maternal and child mortality and combating epidemics.
- SDG 4 (Quality Education): Ensures inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities. It targets eliminating education disparities and promoting global citizenship.
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality): Aims to empower women and girls by eliminating discrimination, violence, and harmful practices while ensuring equal opportunities in leadership, education, and healthcare.
- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): Addresses economic and social inequalities within and among nations by promoting inclusion, equal opportunities, and fair resource distribution.

These SDGs are essential for fostering social development by addressing critical issues such as poverty, inequality, education, health, and gender equity. They aim to create inclusive societies where everyone has access to opportunities, resources, and services necessary for a dignified life. By prioritizing social justice, equality, and empowerment, these goals lay the foundation for resilient and cohesive communities, ensuring a fairer and more equitable future for generations to come.

São Tomé and Príncipe context

The decision to focus on a case study led to the choice of field research, as it allows for the collection of specific data and a deeper understanding of the actual conditions on the ground. This approach then prompted a reflective process, during which various regional



options were considered, ultimately leading to the selection of São Tomé and Príncipe for its alignment with the achievement of the SDGs.

The strategy for this research began by identifying the continent where such a study would have the most relevance. The primary criterion was the Human Development Index (HDI), a key indicator for measuring societal development ([OWID, 2024](#)). The aim was to target a region with significant development challenges, as this would increase the potential impact of the study's conclusions, given the pressing economic, social, and environmental issues ([Ballew, et al. 2019](#)).

Upon reviewing the HDI data, it was clear that Africa, with 28 of the 33 lowest-ranked countries in 2024 ([OWID, 2024](#)), faced the greatest difficulties. Given Africa's vast size of 30,370,000 square kilometers, the diversity of its cultures, societies, and geography is immense ([Barros, 1991](#)). This necessitated the search for a cultural group with similarities to the Portuguese language and customs, which would ease the field research process and provide richer, more intimate data collection.

This criterion led to the selection of the Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP), which include Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. After evaluating the geographical, political, economic, social, and environmental conditions of these five countries, it was clear that a smaller nation would facilitate more effective data collection and analysis. Consequently, Guinea-Bissau was excluded due to political instability, leaving Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe as the main options. Analyzing UN reports on SDG performance for both countries revealed that São Tomé and Príncipe, with its smaller geographic size and three islands compared to Cape Verde's nine, was better suited for field research.

UN reports were chosen for this analysis because they offer a comprehensive, reliable, and regularly updated overview of efforts to address global challenges ([UNSDCF, 2023](#)). São Tomé and Príncipe, an island nation in the Gulf of Guinea off Central Africa's west coast, is made up of two main islands, São Tomé and Príncipe, located 140 kilometers apart and about 250 kilometers from Gabon ([Atlas, 2011](#)). With a population of approximately 204,454 (2018), São Tomé and Príncipe is the second least populous country in Africa and the smallest Portuguese-speaking country ([CIA, 2023](#)). Although classified as an underdeveloped country, it is expected to be reclassified as a middle-income nation by the UN by 2024 ([UN, 2020](#)).

STP's Social Reality

Despite some progress in certain socioeconomic indicators, São Tomé and Príncipe continue to face persistent social inequalities. Poverty remains widespread, with many families dependent on subsistence farming. While access to healthcare and education has improved, these services are still limited, especially in rural areas. The gap between urban and rural regions intensifies disparities, with services and opportunities concentrated in the capital, São Tomé ([WBG, 2024](#)).

The healthcare system grapples with challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of medical professionals, and a reliance on external aid. Common health issues include malaria, respiratory infections, and malnutrition. Although life expectancy has



risen due to healthcare improvements, progress is still slow ([Uhatela, 2022](#)). Education is a priority, with the government aiming for universal primary education. However, high dropout rates, a lack of resources, and limited access to higher education hinder the country's development prospects. Educational reform is necessary to address these challenges and equip the population with the skills needed for a modern economy ([Luísa, 2022](#)). Since gaining independence in 1975, São Tomé and Príncipe has evolved into a multi-party democracy, with regular elections indicating relative political stability compared to other African nations ([Sanches, 2022](#)). However, issues like corruption and inefficiencies in public administration continue to pose challenges. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in addressing social issues and advocating for greater transparency and accountability ([Violante, 2022](#)). Despite these challenges, São Tomé and Príncipe benefits from strong social cohesion, which is rooted in its shared cultural identity and tight-knit communities. This social unity provides a solid foundation for collective action to tackle developmental challenges and create a more inclusive society ([Berthet, 2012](#)).

Insularity is a key factor in the development of São Tomé and Príncipe. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), the country faces structural constraints such as a small domestic market, dependence on imports, vulnerability to external shocks and exposure to extreme weather events ([UN, 2025](#)). These structural conditions shape not only economic policy but also entrepreneurial practices, forcing local agents to adopt innovation and resilience strategies adapted to the island context. The public policy framework in São Tomé and Príncipe is strongly influenced by the 2020–2024 National Plan for Sustainable Development, coordinated by the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Blue Economy ([PNDS, 2020](#)). This document establishes economic diversification, promotion of the private sector and enhancement of the blue economy as strategic growth priorities. Among the areas identified are tourism, sustainable agriculture, fisheries, and renewable energy, which are considered drivers of innovation and employment.

In conclusion, the social landscape of São Tomé and Príncipe is marked by both resilience and vulnerability. Overcoming its developmental challenges will require targeted policies, international collaboration, and the empowerment of its people to fully unlock the nation's potential.

Entrepreneurship in STP

Entrepreneurship in São Tomé and Príncipe is predominantly informal and concentrated in subsistence activities such as agriculture, handicrafts and local commerce ([UNDP, 2022](#)). Studies show that around 80 per cent of businesses in the country are micro and small, often run by families. These companies face challenges related to limited access to credit, poor infrastructure and low levels of technical training ([African Development Bank, 2021](#)).

Despite the limitations, there is growing interest in social entrepreneurship, with initiatives focused on areas such as sustainable tourism, environmental conservation and renewable energies ([Cardoso et al., 2016](#)). Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the São Tomé economy, contributing around 11% of GDP and directly employing



thousands of people ([UNSDCF, 2023](#)). The potential of ecotourism, community-based tourism and the promotion of local culture has attracted both foreign investment and local entrepreneurial initiatives. Entrepreneurs in areas such as sustainable accommodation, eco-guiding and traditional cuisine demonstrate the sector's capacity to generate economic value while contributing to environmental preservation and social inclusion. These areas have the potential to stimulate the economy and at the same time address issues of environmental and social sustainability. Entrepreneurs in São Tomé and Príncipe face several obstacles, including:

- Access to finance: Local banks have a low capacity to provide affordable credit, which limits business expansion ([World Bank Group, 2020](#)).
- Education and Training: The lack of specific training programmes in entrepreneurial skills prevents local entrepreneurs from becoming professionals ([UNESCO, 2024](#)).
- Limited infrastructure: Infrastructure problems, such as access to reliable electricity and transport, make it difficult for businesses to operate efficiently ([UNDP, 2022](#)).
- Despite the challenges, São Tomé and Príncipe presents significant opportunities for entrepreneurship:
- Sustainable Tourism: Unique biodiversity and ecotourism potential have attracted foreign investors and local entrepreneurs ([Brito, 2020](#), World Tourism Organization, 2022).
- Agriculture and Agroindustry: Agricultural modernisation projects, including organic cocoa production, show potential for adding value to local production chains ([FAO, 2020](#)).
- Digital Entrepreneurship: With increased access to the internet, there are emerging opportunities for startups in areas such as e-commerce and digital service provision ([Pontes, 2022](#)).

Programmes led by international organisations such as the UNDP and the African Development Bank have fostered entrepreneurship in São Tomé and Príncipe. These initiatives aim to improve access to finance, empower entrepreneurs and develop resilient value chains. In addition, the local government is working to promote policies that incentivise the private sector and attract foreign investment ([UNDP, 2022](#)).

International cooperation plays a structural role in São Tomé's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The United Nations Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development in São Tomé and Príncipe 2023–2027 ([UNSDCF, 2023](#)) sets priorities around green growth, social inclusion and climate resilience. Programmes from the African Development Bank, the European Union and Portuguese cooperation have fostered access to finance, training and infrastructure.

Entrepreneurship in São Tomé and Príncipe faces considerable challenges, but has enormous potential to boost socio-economic development. Building a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem requires integrated efforts in training, access to finance and improving infrastructure. Fostering entrepreneurship in strategic areas, such as



sustainable tourism and agro-industry, can promote the country's economic growth and sustainability, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

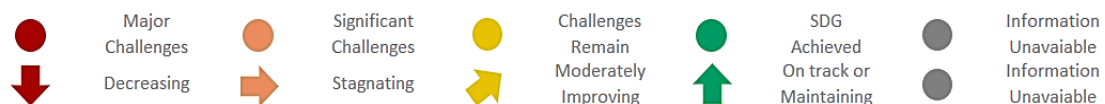
Field Research - Methods

SDG indicators

The question, "What is the influence of Local Development due to Entrepreneurship in achieving the SDGs?" serves as the basis for analysis. To answer it, understanding how the United Nations assesses progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is essential. The UN uses a structured approach with over 230 global indicators approved by the UN Statistical Commission to measure progress across all 17 SDGs. These indicators are disaggregated by factors such as gender, age, location, and economic status to ensure inclusivity. Progress is summarized in reports like the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) and the annual SDG Progress Report, which highlight advancements, gaps, and priority areas. Member states also present Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), outlining national progress and challenges.

Data for these reports is collected through partnerships with organizations such as the OECD, World Bank, IMF, and UN agencies like UNICEF and UNESCO. Countries adapt global indicators to local contexts, with national statistics agencies playing a key role. The UN has also embraced technologies like big data and satellite imagery to improve data collection in challenging regions. A public database provides detailed statistics for follow-ups at global, regional, and national levels. Tools like the SDG Index and Dashboards visually rank countries' performances using a "traffic light" system, while SDG Trend Panels track whether countries are on track to meet goals by 2030 based on historical growth rates. The HLPF serves as the main platform for reviewing SDG progress, fostering discussions on challenges, best practices, and shared experiences.

Image 1. SDG indicator panels SDG indicator panels



Source: UN SDG Progress Report, 2024

Review of indicators

The UN's comprehensive system for tracking SDG progress faces significant challenges, particularly in the context of entrepreneurship and its impact on achieving the SDGs. Despite the robust global indicators, reports, partnerships, and innovative monitoring technologies employed by the UN, there are notable data gaps that hinder comprehensive comparative analyses.

In São Tomé and Príncipe, which ranks 118th out of 167 countries with an overall SDG score of 63, the situation is particularly challenging. The country faces major risks and stagnant progress in several social SDGs, including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero



Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

The lack of specific data on entrepreneurs presents a significant obstacle in understanding their role in environmental protection and broader SDG achievement. To address this gap, a focused approach on collecting data from entrepreneurs—defined as individuals or groups running operational businesses as their primary income source—has been proposed.

This methodology aims to enable a comparative analysis between entrepreneurs and the general population, providing insights into how local entrepreneurship influences environmental protection and contributes to SDG achievement in São Tomé and Príncipe.

Image 2. Indicator dashboards of São Tomé's People SDG 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in 2024



Source - UN SDG Progress Report 2024

The methodology was grounded in the Sustainable Development Report 2024 (UN, 2024) and focused on identifying two indicators for each SDG with the poorest performance across two dimensions. This selection of the two weakest indicators aligns with the research objective of analyzing solutions to global challenges. By targeting the indicators with the worst outcomes, any improvement will be more apparent. In contrast, using indicators with average or positive results would limit meaningful comparisons.

The following indicators were selected for the four environmentally focused SDGs:

Table 1. Dashboards of São Tomé's SDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10 in 2024

SDG	Indicator	Value	Year	Rating	Trend
SDG 1 - No Poverty	Poverty headcount ratio at \$2.15/day (2017 PPP, %)	16.8	2024	●	→
	Poverty headcount ratio at \$3.65/day (2017 PPP, %)	43.8	2024	●	→
SDG 2 - Zero hunger	Prevalence of undernourishment (%)	13.1	2021	●	→
	Sustainable Nitrogen Management Index (best 0–1.41 worst)	1	2018	●	↓
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being	Traffic deaths (per 100,000 population)	11.7	2021	●	↑
	Universal health coverage (UHC) index of service coverage	59	2021	●	→
SDG 4 – Quality education	Participation rate in pre-primary organized learning (% children aged 4 to 6)	54.5	2015	●	●
	Lower secondary completion rate (%)	98.2	2022	●	●
SDG 5 – Gender equality	Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods (% of females aged 15 to 49)	78.8	2022	●	→
	Ratio of female-to-male mean years of education received (%)	53.6	2023	●	→
	Ratio of female-to-male labor force participation rate (%)	54.2	2022	●	→
SDG 10 - Reduced Inequality	Gini coefficient	40.7	2017	●	●
	Palma ratio	2	2017	●	●

Source - Data organized by the Author based on data from UN SDG Progress Report 2024



In this table, it should be noted that the indicator 'Traffic deaths (per 100,000 population)', which in the 2024 report appears with a rating of 'Moderately Improving' and a trend of 'On track or Maintaining', was initially chosen because in the 2023 report it had values for the 'Major Challenges' rating with a trend of 'Decreasing', having values of 27.9 in 2019 data, making it one of the worst indicators of SDG 3 in STP, a situation that has seen an extremely positive evolution, changing to the current values. This improvement was only made public after the field investigation, which meant that the indicator could not be changed, so we are keeping the same indicator, which can be analysed.

Research Methodology and Analysis

Based on the identified indicators and the absence of national data on entrepreneurs in São Tomé, it was determined that documentary analysis would not be feasible, necessitating field research to gather the required data for comparison. Various data collection methods were considered, including direct observation, interviews, questionnaires and surveys, focus groups, participant diaries, and ethnographic approaches.

Given the constraints of a 15-day timeframe for fieldwork and the need for nationally representative data, the use of a questionnaire was deemed the most suitable approach. This method not only facilitated efficient data collection but also allowed for brief direct observations of working conditions.

To ensure an equitable and representative analysis, a sample size of 100 respondents was established, enabling robust future analyses. The distribution of entrepreneurs to be surveyed was determined based on population data from the most recent census (2017).

Table 2. Coverage plan for sectoral and regional diversity in the purposive sample for a population of n=100

District	Population of São Tomé by District	Entrepreneurs to be interviewed (n=100)
Água Grande	75974	38
Mé-Zochi	49852	25
Cantagalo	19006	10
Caué	7132	4
Lembá	15891	8
Lobata	21569	11
Pagué	8277	4
TOTAL	197700	100

Source - Data organised by the Author based on data from STP census 2017



The questionnaire was structured into four sections (annexes) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the reality:

1. Description of the Respondent: Collected individual data regarding personal and family contexts to enable generic comparisons between groups.
2. Description of the Business: Gathered information about the entrepreneur's organization to facilitate comparative analysis between different businesses.
3. Closed-Answer Questions on the SDGs: Used limited-response options to quantitatively measure trends and assess progress on the selected SDGs.
4. Open-Ended Questions on the SDGs: Allowed unlimited responses to qualitatively capture respondents' opinions and perspectives on the SDGs.

For the closed-response section, adjustments were made following consultations with São Tomense nationals to accommodate the country's low education levels. The questions were adapted for clarity and simplicity, with each entrepreneur required to answer two questions for each SDG indicator:

- Whether the current situation could be categorized as "Yes," "No," or "More or less."
- Whether the situation since becoming an entrepreneur had "improved significantly," "improved slightly," "remained the same," or "worsened."

Responses were compiled and assigned values, allowing an average value to be calculated for each indicator. These averages, divided as necessary, corresponded to the predefined indicators established by the UN. The resulting values formed the basis for subsequent analyses.

Table 3. Question values per answer of the survey

Question I	Answer I	Value
	Yes	3
	More or Less	2
	No	0
Question II	Answer II	Value
	Significantly improved	4
	Slightly improved	3
	Remained Identical	2
	Got worse	1

Source - Data organized by the Author based on data from UN SDG Progress Report 2024



These values were selected to enable a consistent and well-founded basis for analysis. By calculating averages, the results could be categorized into the following response groups for further interpretation.

Table 4. Answers values per answer of the survey

	Value	0	0,1 - 0,99	1 - 1,99	2 - 2,99	3
Results Answers I	Icone					
	Meaning	Information Unavailable	Major Challenges	Significant Challenges	Challenges Remain	SDG Achieved

	Value	0	0,1 - 1	1,1 - 2	2,1 - 3	3,1 - 4
Results Answers II	Icone					
	Meaning	Information Unavailable	Decreasing	Stagnating	Moderately Improving	On track or Maintaining

Source - Data organised by the Author based on data from UN SDG Progress Report 2024

The two questions for each indicator had to be adjusted to preserve the objective of the indicator and at the same time align with local reality, vocabulary and level of knowledge. This change was necessary to ensure that entrepreneurs understood the question being analysed and that the questionnaire could continue uninterrupted. Some of the questions were changed in order to preserve the original meaning of the question, even if they were referred to in alternative ways. With this adaptation, it should be noted that in the first two questions it was necessary to convert from dollars to dobras, the national currency of STP. In the case of SDG indicator 5, the two questions 'Ratio of average years of schooling received between women and men (%)' and 'Ratio of labour force participation rate between women and men (%)', due to their similar placement of the question, mainly changed the theme to 'Should men and women have the same opportunities at school and at work?', thus managing to assess together these which had the same results in the UN report. After a first adaptation, the questionnaire was also presented to the São Tomenses to validate the perceptibility and suitability of the questions, which after a final revision resulted in the version used.

To enable comparison between the two dashboards, an analysis system was developed to assess progress based on rating and trend levels. This system evaluates 12 parameters, reflecting the evolution of levels within the available options. The evolution can be categorized as negative, neutral, positive, or not applicable. For positive and negative progress, the difference may involve three parameters or an improvement of 1, 2, or 3 levels.



Table 5. Questions adapted based on the dashboards of São Tomé's SDG 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in 2024

SDG	Indicator	UN, 2024	
		Rating	Trend
SDG 1 - No Poverty	Do you earn more, same, or less then 46 dobras/day?	●	→
	Do you earn more, same, or less then 70 dobras/day?	●	→
SDG 2 - Zero hunger	How many meals do you eat a day?	●	→
	Do you know if the products you consume are sustainable?	●	↓
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being	Have you ever had a driving accident?	●	↑
	Do you have access to health services?	●	→
SDG 4 – Quality education	Do you have carers at any pre-schools?	●	●
	How literate are you?	●	●
SDG 5 – Gender equality	Have you done any family planning?	●	→
	Should men and women have the same opportunities in school and labor?	●	→
SDG 10 - Reduced Inequality	Do you feel there are equal opportunities?	●	●
	Do you feel there is equal access?	●	●

Source - Data organised by the Author based on data from UN SDG Progress Report 2024

Table 6. Analyse system to compare the evolution according to rating and trend levels

Comparison	Value	---	--	-	=	+	++	+++	N/A
	Meaning	Negative difference of 3 levels	Negative difference of 2 levels	Negative difference of 1 level	Keep it the same	Positive difference of 1 level	Positive difference of 2 levels	Positive difference of 3 levels	No comparison possible

Source Data organised by the Author based on data from UN SDG Progress Report 2024

Validity of the results

The validity of the results may be affected by the specific focus on entrepreneurs as a distinct population group, which may not fully align with broader population-level indicators. Additionally, differences between the original indicator criteria and those adapted for this study could limit the comparability of the datasets.

Nevertheless, these findings provide valuable insights into the entrepreneurial ecosystem and its dynamics. They offer a detailed profile of entrepreneurs, emphasizing their unique challenges and contributions. While the results may not be entirely generalizable to the broader population, they highlight the significant role of entrepreneurship in addressing societal challenges and advancing development objectives. This perspective enriches discussions on the potential of entrepreneurship as a driver of social progress, particularly in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Results and Discussion

Table 7. Comparison of Dashboards of São Tomé's SDG 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 results

SDG	Indicator	UN, 2024		Survey		Comparison	
		Rating	Trend	Rating	Trend	Rating	Trend
SDG 1	Do you earn more, same, or less then 46 dobras/day?	●	→	●	↑	+++	++
	Do you earn more, same, or less then 70 dobras/day?	●	→	●	→	+++	+
SDG 2	How many meals do you eat a day?	●	→	●	→	=	=
	Do you know if the products you consume are sustainable?	●	↓	●	→	+++	++
SDG 3	Have you ever had a driving accident?	●	↑	●	→	--	-
	Do you have access to health services?	●	→	●	→	+++	=
SDG 4	Do you have carers at any pre-schools?	●	●	●	→	+++	N/A
	How literate are you?	●	●	●	↑	+++	N/A
SDG 5	Have you done any family planning?	●	→	●	↑	+++	++
	Should men and women have the same opportunities in school and labor?	●	→	●	↑	++	++
SDG 10	Do you feel there are equal opportunities?	●	●	●	→	++	N/A
	Do you feel there is equal access?	●	●	●	→	+	N/A

Source - Data organised by the Author based on data from UN SDG Progress Report 2024 and field research survey results

SDG 1 - No Poverty

Comparing the evolution of ODS 1, it is possible to see that the two indicators, associated with the amount received in terms of remuneration \$2.15 or \$3.65/day, had a similar rating and trend, being Major Challenges in the case of the rating and Stagnating in the case of the trend, showing that this remains a major challenge with no great prospect of positive development for the general population. These values are quite different from those achieved by the entrepreneurial population, which obtained SDG Achieved for both indicators, with regard to the trend of development, the difference being that for remuneration of \$2.15, the value obtained was 'On track or Maintaining' and for \$3.65 'Moderately Improving'. These figures allow us to make a comparison and show that in terms of rating there was a difference of 3 levels, thus obtaining the most positive evolution possible, and in terms of trending, for the first indicator the evolution maintained the evolution of 3 levels, while the second indicator had 2 levels. This evolution allows us to understand that, on average, entrepreneurs receive the amount indicated by the UN as an indicator for getting out of the poverty line. This evolution allows us to understand that, on average, entrepreneurs receive the amount indicated by the UN as an indicator for getting out of the poverty line. This result, when compared to the population, can lead us to conclude that because they are responsible for their own income and profits, they are able to earn more than when they are employed and even more so when they are unemployed. These figures also allow us to reflect that if there were more incentives for entrepreneurship, more entrepreneurs might emerge, which could increase the amounts received from the general population. Despite these positive indicators, the drop in the trending from the first to the second indicator indicates



that there is a drop in the amounts received between wage brackets, revealing that although it is positive, it does not obtain the amounts necessary to end poverty, and may indicate that although it is positive, the guarantees of this value being stable are not secure.

SDG 2 - Zero Hunger

In the second SDG, related to combating hunger, the indicators in the UN report show values for the indicator related to nutrition associated with the question 'How many meals do you eat a day?' with a rating of 'Significant Challenges' and a trend of 'Moderately Improving', while for the indicator associated with the efficiency of production and consumption of products to avoid inefficiency and waste, with the adapted question 'Do you know if the products you consume are sustainable?', it had a rating of 'Major Challenges' and a trend of 'Decreasing', proving to be a growing problem in São Tomé and Príncipe. These figures, when compared with those of the entrepreneurial population, obtained the same results in the first question, i.e. 'Significant Challenges' for the rating and 'Moderately Improving' for the trending, with a neutral evolution, while in the second indicator of this SDG, the figures were 'SDG Achieved' for the Rating and 'Moderately Improving' for the trending, representing a positive evolution. This evolution, seen in detail, was neutral for both indicators of the first indicator, but saw an evolution of 3 levels in the rating and 2 levels in the second indicator. This evolution can be interpreted as the fact that, in terms of food, there is not a great deal of variation between the target populations, possibly due to the reality of food in STP, which represents a great difficulty to overcome, but in terms of the quality of the products consumed, we can see that being an entrepreneur means that there is greater concern and the possibility of buying more sustainable products.

SDG 3 - Good health and well-being

With regard to SDG 3, the indicators for the general population are data associated with the rate of motor vehicle accidents with the question 'Have you ever had a driving accident?' and with the question of access to health care with the question 'Do you have access to health services?' The UN report's figures for the driving question were 'Challenges Remain' but with a trend of 'On track or Maintaining', while for access to health care they were 'Major Challenges' with a trend of 'Moderately Improving'. As for the values for entrepreneurs, for the rating of driving accidents they showed 'Major Challenges' and a trend of 'Moderately Improving', while for access to healthcare they showed 'SDG Achieved' and 'Moderately Improving'. These results, when comparing the values for the general population with the entrepreneurial population, show a negative evolution of 2 levels for the rating and 1 level for the trending, showing that the entrepreneurial population not only has more accidents than the general population, but also a more negative tendency not to contribute to solving this problem. Part of these figures can be explained by the greater need for transport, especially on an individual level, to keep businesses running, whether it's dealing with their own supplies and resources or travelling to sales, and with this need the number of journeys increases and with it the likelihood of accidents. As for the indicator relating to access to health care,



comparing the ratings of the report with that of the investigation, it improved by 3 levels, and in the trend it maintained the same level. This positive evolution in the rating and neutral evolution in the trend can be explained by the entrepreneurial population's greater access to and ability to use health services, which, linked to the SDG1 indicator in which it is perceived that they have better financial conditions, may make it easier for them to use health services.

SDG 4 - Quality education

For SDG 4 - Quality Education, both the indicators marked 'Do you have carers at any pre-schools?' and 'How literate are you?' show 'Major Challenges' in the 2024 report in terms of rating and 'Information Unavailable' for the trend. When questioned, the entrepreneurial population obtained 'SDG Achieved' ratings for both indicators and 'On track or Maintaining' ratings for the trend. For the first indicator of this SDG (carers at any pre-school), they obtained 'Moderately Improving' and for 'How literate are you?' they obtained 'On track or Maintaining'. These values, when compared to the target group, had a positive evolution of 3 levels for both indicators in the rating question and as the trend did not have determined values, an inconclusive analysis was obtained, however, given that for both indicators the trend presented represents the path of progress and/or resolution of the SDG, it can be said that these are satisfactory and positive values when compared to the other more negative trend options. This evolution shows greater access to education services by the entrepreneurial population and their families, sometimes benefiting the communities themselves and wider family circles.

SDG 5 - Gender equality

With initial values for the two SDG Gender Equality indicators of 'Major Challenges' in the case of 'Have you done any family planning?' and 'Significant Challenges' in the case of 'Should men and women have the same opportunities in school and labour?' and a trend of 'Stagnating' for both indicators, this SDG generally presents a delayed and challenging outlook for resolving the current challenges. With regard to the entrepreneurial population, the rating and trend values were the same for each indicator, with 'SDG Achieved' and 'On track or Maintaining' representing full fulfilment of this goal. These results allow us to compare the general population with the entrepreneurial population and show that the entrepreneurial population has a difference of 3 levels on a positive scale in terms of the rating of the indicator 'Have you done any family planning?' and for the remaining 3 indicators a positive evolution of 2 levels. These results show that the entrepreneurial population, for reasons possibly linked to their knowledge of the importance of business planning, also end up planning their family life, resulting in a more constructive structure and development of their families, rather than simply a lack of planning, thereby achieving decisive results for all other spheres of personal life. In terms of women's access to the same educational and work opportunities, entrepreneurs show an openness and concern for gender equality, seeking a society that is equal despite gender. Both indicators together are differentiated tools, but with extremely positive indicators through the lens of the entrepreneurial community.



SDG 10 - Reduced Inequality

Analysing the initial indicators for the general population of São Tomé and Príncipe, we found two indicators, 'Do you feel there are equal opportunities?' and 'Do you feel there is equal access?' with equal values both in terms of rating (Major Challenges) and trending (Information Unavailable), which does not allow for comparison in this second parameter. On the entrepreneurs' side, we can see that in the first indicator the result was "Challenges Remain" with a trending of "Moderately Improving", representing an evolution of two positive levels in the rating, while in the second indicator the evolution was one positive level, moving to "Significant Challenges". Although this progress is lower when compared to other SDG indicators, it is still a positive comparison when analysing the entrepreneurial population, because although their values are still a reality and a population that has challenges well represented in their day-to-day lives, they end up being a target group that has more opportunities and seeks to ensure that their workers also have fair and comparable opportunities and access. This evolution can be related, as contextualised above, to the level of broad knowledge of the difficulties faced by the community, customers and suppliers and the search for solutions to their reality based on other realities. However, the distance between the indicators and the fulfilment of the objectives also makes it difficult to resolve these challenges, which in many ways go beyond the physical aspect and also include the political aspect of rights.

Influence of local entrepreneurs in solving global social problems

By cross-referencing the indicators of the six SDGs analyzed in relation to social development, it becomes possible to comprehensively assess the influence of local entrepreneurs in addressing local problems with global significance and priority. From this analysis, it is evident that 10 out of the 12 rating indicators reveal that the entrepreneurial population performs more positively compared to the general population. In terms of trends, five of the 12 indicators show positive progress, while four are marked as "N/A" due to the lack of comparable data from the general population report. When evaluating the 24 indicators used, 15 exhibit more positive outcomes, three remain unchanged, four are inconclusive, and only two reflect more negative results. Among the 15 positive indicators, seven demonstrate an improvement of three positive levels, six show an improvement of two levels, and one reflects an improvement of one level. This pattern strongly suggests that, on average, the entrepreneurial population enjoys a higher and continuously improving quality of life compared to the general population, with the critical differentiating factor being their entrepreneurial engagement and professional activities.

This analysis highlights that entrepreneurs not only experience a better quality of life in social terms than the general population but also actively contribute to broader social development objectives. When juxtaposed with the factors identified in the literature review, these findings underscore the transformative role of entrepreneurship in empowering marginalized communities. By creating jobs, increasing income levels (SDG 1), and improving living standards (SDGs 2, 3, and 4), entrepreneurs begin by uplifting themselves and their immediate circles. Through breaking down systemic barriers to economic participation, entrepreneurship fosters inclusivity and equity (SDGs 5 and 10),



enabling these individuals to act as local agents of change. They develop and implement innovative solutions tailored to their communities' unique needs, driving social and economic progress.

This case study of São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) serves as a compelling example of how the entrepreneurial population effectively mitigates personal and community challenges. Their efforts directly reduce broader community and national issues, bringing these challenges closer to resolution. From a global perspective, this dynamic positions local entrepreneurs as critical contributors to addressing problems of worldwide concern. Their capacity to drive localized, scalable solutions highlights the potential for entrepreneurship to serve as an integral part of the global strategy to resolve pressing social and developmental issues.

Recommendations and Future Research

This study's findings highlight local entrepreneurship's significant role in addressing social challenges and advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in São Tomé and Príncipe. Based on the results, several recommendations can be made to amplify the positive impact of entrepreneurship on social development:

- **Strengthen Entrepreneurial Ecosystems:** Governments and international organizations could and should create policies and frameworks that facilitate access to financial resources, training, and technical support for entrepreneurs. Targeted efforts to develop infrastructure and reduce bureaucratic barriers can further empower local entrepreneurs.
- **Promote Inclusive Entrepreneurship:** Initiatives should focus on engaging marginalized groups such as women, youth, and rural populations. Tailored programs can provide these groups with the skills and resources needed to start and sustain businesses, reducing inequalities and fostering social inclusion.
- **Enhance Education and Training:** Integrating entrepreneurial education into formal curricula at various educational levels and offering community-based training programs can build a culture of innovation and problem-solving, directly addressing SDG 4.
- **Encourage Sustainable Practices:** Policies and incentives that promote sustainable entrepreneurship, such as green technologies and eco-friendly practices, should be prioritized to address pressing environmental and social issues.
- **Leverage Digital Transformation:** Expanding access to digital tools and technologies can enable entrepreneurs to scale their businesses, access new markets, and foster innovation, particularly in underserved areas.

Future research could explore the influence of entrepreneurship on social development in similar developing island nations, enabling cross-contextual analysis and the identification of best practices. Additionally, studies focusing on specific sectors, such as agriculture, tourism, and renewable energy, could provide deeper insights into how these industries drive sustainable development in local contexts. Longitudinal research tracking



the long-term impact of entrepreneurship on social and economic outcomes would offer valuable data for shaping policies and interventions. The integration of technologies like big data, machine learning, and geographic information systems (GIS) could further enhance the understanding of entrepreneurial impacts at both micro and macro levels. Moreover, future studies should examine the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to develop more nuanced strategies for fostering inclusive entrepreneurship.

By addressing these recommendations and pursuing the suggested research directions, stakeholders can better harness the transformative potential of entrepreneurship to create more equitable and sustainable societies.

Conclusion

This study underscores the pivotal role of local entrepreneurship in advancing social development, particularly in the context of São Tomé and Príncipe (STP). By analyzing the interplay between entrepreneurship and six Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on social progress, the findings demonstrate that entrepreneurial activity can serve as a catalyst for addressing systemic challenges, empowering marginalized communities, and fostering inclusive growth.

The comparison between the entrepreneurial and general populations reveals that entrepreneurs, through their professional engagements, tend to achieve better outcomes in social indicators related to poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, and inequality. Notably, they exhibit higher levels of income, improved access to education and healthcare, and greater commitment to gender equity and sustainable practices. These outcomes are indicative of the transformative potential of entrepreneurship in bridging gaps in socio-economic development and driving progress toward the SDGs.

Beyond the immediate benefits to entrepreneurs themselves, the broader impact of entrepreneurship extends to community and national levels. Entrepreneurs in STP have proven to be key agents in addressing local challenges, such as unemployment, limited access to services, and social inequities. By leveraging their innovative capacities and local knowledge, they contribute to solving problems of global concern within their localized contexts.

The findings of this research offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars. They reinforce the importance of fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems that prioritize inclusivity, sustainability, and innovation. Moreover, the case study of STP serves as a microcosm for understanding the global relevance of local entrepreneurship in achieving sustainable development.

With this, entrepreneurship emerges not only as a driver of economic growth but also as a transformative force for social progress. By empowering individuals and communities, fostering equity, and addressing systemic challenges, local entrepreneurs hold the potential to create more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable societies. This research underscores the need for continued investment in entrepreneurship as a means of advancing the SDGs, providing a roadmap for leveraging local solutions to address global challenges.



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RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND GUINEA-BISSAU BETWEEN DIPLOMACY, ECONOMY AND SECURITY

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Abstract

Guinea-Bissau is experiencing a difficult time for growth and development in this period. Political tensions and the impact of natural disasters make it difficult to build solid international relations that could allow the country to produce better infrastructures and to enter the scene in the region as well as in the world. The complex relations of the People's Republic of China with the country also fit into this framework. This element must be taken into serious consideration, in light of the important presence of the Asian country on the African continent, and of the volume of business and the support for infrastructure construction that it guarantees to many African nations. Diplomatic relations between the African country and its political parties with China have been fluctuating, and marked by internal issues as well as international events. To date, the People's Republic of China has outlined a major investment plan in Guinea-Bissau. The purpose of the article is to trace a brief history of relations between the African and Asian countries, and to understand the national and regional conditions of the new cooperation and trade projects, with respect to both the continental dimension and that of Guinea-Bissau's internal politics.

Keywords

Africa-Asia Relations, Decolonization, South-South Trade, Socialism, Belt and Road Initiative.

Resumo

A Guiné-Bissau está a atravessar um período difícil em termos de crescimento e desenvolvimento. As tensões políticas e o impacto das catástrofes naturais dificultam a construção de relações internacionais sólidas que permitam ao país criar melhores infraestruturas e entrar em cena na região e no mundo. As complexas relações da República Popular da China com o país também se enquadram neste contexto. Este elemento deve ser levado em consideração, tendo em vista a importante presença do país asiático no continente africano e o volume de negócios e o apoio à construção de infraestruturas que garante a muitas nações africanas. As relações diplomáticas entre o país africano e os seus partidos políticos com a China têm sido flutuantes e marcadas por questões internas, bem como por eventos internacionais. Até à data, a República Popular da China delineou um importante plano de investimento na Guiné-Bissau. O objetivo do artigo é traçar uma breve história das relações entre os países africanos e asiáticos e compreender as condições nacionais e



regionais dos novos projetos de cooperação e comércio, tanto no que diz respeito à dimensão continental como à política interna da Guiné-Bissau.

Palavras-chave

Relações África-Ásia, Descolonização, Comércio Sul-Sul, Socialismo, Iniciativa "Belt and Road".

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RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND GUINEA-BISSAU BETWEEN DIPLOMACY, ECONOMY AND SECURITY

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Introduction

The historical-political phase we are experiencing is characterized by the explosion of some territorialized criticalities which, however, pose imbalances that are difficult to heal within the world-system. On the one hand, the planet is experiencing an increasingly widespread phase of development, on the other, local crises and instabilities threaten to undermine this delicate order.

This is not entirely accidental, but it is part of an internal logic of the world economic system¹ which international political institutions try to put a stop to. At this stage it is possible to argue that Africa is growing, economically and infrastructurally. This is the framework in which the recent history of Guinea-Bissau fits. A country that has gone through a harsh phase of decolonization, it seeks to grow and stabilize in the globalized and interconnected world in which we live. After the separation from the Portuguese colonial regime, Guinea-Bissau was first led by the authority of the national liberation movement, and then entered a phase of serious political clashes and relative instability. Despite this, the country has many resources and great growth potential that must only be used to the best. In this sense, it is trying to grow in the infrastructural field and to build its own economic-political autonomy starting from the sectors in which it finds the greatest advantages. It is in this context that we can insert and read the relations between the Sub-Saharan country and the People's Republic of China. These countries

¹ "According to [David] Harvey's theory, the constitutive element of capitalist development is represented by the continuous production and reproduction of space to ensure favorable conditions for the accumulation of capital. In doing this, however, capitalism suffers from a space-time contradiction that derives from its double need to continually speed up the circulation of goods and capital and to create, at the same time, material structures and infrastructures anchored to the territory. The construction of spatial fixes, functional to absorb the accumulated capital, in fact requires long-term investment projects that slow down and limit the regeneration and replacement of capital. [...] The expansion of capitalism therefore determines a growth of antagonism between different actors who seek to acquire or destroy the assets of rivals through commercial and financial competition, or geopolitical maneuvers. The creation of new spaces for "endless accumulation" therefore also implies the devaluation and / or destruction of some pre-existing assets [...]. During a crisis of over-accumulation, certain economic assets abroad are in fact devalued by means of financial and / or military operations (US model), in conditions, for example, of low competition and political corruption, thus opening up to fierce competition for their hoarding at very low prices, where the strongest wins. The consequence of such crisis situations is therefore also manifested in the increase of geopolitical rivalry, in the context of which it is decided which territories will have to endure the attack of devaluation. The accumulation of capital can in fact be maximized only in conditions of limited competition and geographical concentration of wealth / power, otherwise distribution and fair exchange would prevail over accumulation and unequal exchange". Fabio Massimo Parenti, *Mutamento del sistema-mondo. Per una geografia dell'ascesa cinese*, Aracne, Rome 2009, pp. 31-34 [translated from Italian].



have actually experienced a very similar recent history, having both freed themselves from the colonial yoke, albeit in different ways and contexts. Not only this, but Guinea-Bissau has also received help from the Asian country in this delicate process, which has favored alternating diplomatic relations between these two political entities. The theoretical profile of Chinese politics has always been addressed both to the sector of countries emerging from colonization, and to the idea of development cooperation between decolonized countries. This is why the relations between Guinea-Bissau and China are so important and so strongly characterized in a political sense, although this profile may escape the less attentive analyst.

In this historical moment we see two trends that go to marry almost spontaneously: on the one hand, China seeks partnerships with African countries, both to follow the premises of its international economic policy, formulated since the early days of the revolutionary communist government, which to acquire through trade and cooperation of raw materials of great importance for the country's industry; on the other hand, there is the attempt of many African countries to grow and to guarantee ever greater stability and security, but in addition to that try to internationalize, accessing international markets and selling their raw materials becomes a necessity for these countries.

Internationalization, in the first form of export, is therefore of vital importance, as is the attraction of foreign investment.

These are significant historical trends, and despite all the elements of instability and volatility they cannot change overnight: they represent in many ways the structural nature of today's world economy. World economy marked by a restructuring of the specific weight of countries and continents, thanks to a greater diffusion (albeit slow) of economic development.

With this article we intend to demonstrate how the political history of Guinea-Bissau has determined all those political and economic trends that, to date, are relevant within a complex analysis of the actual condition of the country as well as its specific relations. In this case, the actual weight that the phenomenon of decolonization has had has conditioned in all respects the form that the country, its trade and its diplomatic measure have assumed. It is precisely this dimension that, as we will see, has put it in comparison with contemporary China, also born from a phenomenon of decolonization. This has structured, over time, a certain type of economic-political relationship between the two countries that intervenes in a context that is undoubtedly not easy (both at a regional and global level), but that moves at rapid speed in a world situation in complete restructuring.

Guinea-Bissau between risks and regional context

One of the examples that are often cited is that of the Congolese economic miracle, where the African country has experienced significant growth rates. This African country, now a symbol of renewed hopes for economic growth, has gone from a domestic product



growth rate of 5.8% in 2018² to an expected growth of 6.4% in 2022³, and this despite the uncertainties and difficulties caused by the impact of the pandemic⁴.

All this is part of a generally positive trend of the entire sub-Saharan region. The region's economy is expected to expand to 3.6% according to data from the World Bank⁵.

Even extending the analysis to the whole region, we see how the recovery from the difficult pandemic phase of Covid-19 has led to good economic outlets, again according to informations released by the World Bank:

"Prospects for the East and Southern African subregion show a sustained recovery (4.1 percent) from the recession, down to 3.1 percent in 2022, and then settling around 3.8 percent in 2024. The Western and Central Africa subregion is projected to grow 4.2 percent in 2022 and 4.6 percent in 2023. The 2022 forecast is revised up by 0.6 percentage point compared to the October 2021 forecast, largely reflecting upgrades in Nigeria.

Economic activity in Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to grow at 3.9 percent and 4.2 percent in 2023 and 2024, respectively. A recovery in global demand is expected in 2023 as most of the shocks dragging down the global economy are expected to dissipate."⁵

Guinea-Bissau fits into this context, experiencing alternating phases in its successes in terms of economic growth. According to the African Development Bank Group, despite the negative score of 1.4% in growth (due to the aforementioned difficulties of the specific period⁶), this country should have achieved growth of 3.8% in 2021⁷. Furthermore "GDP growth in 2022 and 2023 is projected at 3.7% and 4.5%, driven by recovery in trade⁹". Unfortunately, this is part of a context of serious volatility, due to events of a political or environmental nature. Starting with the former, we must remember that Guinea-Bissau is frequently harassed by climate shocks. In 2003, 2004 and 2005 the African country underwent severe flooding which damaged its infrastructure, villages and the agricultural sector, leaving a serious impact on the economy and society⁸.

"Floods are a recurring natural hazard in Guinea-Bissau, especially along its coast. Drought is a recurring natural disaster in Guinea-Bissau and has experienced some

²Africa News staff, DRC faces economic challenges, on Africa News: <https://www.africanews.com/2019/06/20/drcfaces-economic-challenges/>

³ Reuters staff, Congo an economic 'bright spot' in Africa, says IMF chief, on Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/congo-an-economic-bright-spot-africa-says-imf-chief-2021-12-08/>

⁴ "Georgieva said the world economy is recovering from the worst impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, but has lost a bit of momentum with the United States and China slowing down."

Reuters staff, Congo an economic 'bright spot' in Africa, says IMF chief, on Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/congo-an-economic-bright-spot-africa-says-imf-chief-2021-12-08/> ⁵The World Bank, The World Bank in Africa, on The World Bank website: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/overview>

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ "The agriculture-based economy suffered from lockdowns and closure of borders in 2020, recovering in 2021." African Development Bank Group, Guinea-Bissau Economic Outlook, on African Development Bank Group website: <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/guinea-bissau/guinea-bissau-economic-outlook>

⁷ African Development Bank Group, Guinea-Bissau Economic Outlook, on African Development Bank Group website: <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/guinea-bissau/guinea-bissau-economic-outlook> Ibidem.

⁸ Climate Change Knowledge Portal, Guinea-Bissau, on Climate Change Knowledge Portal – The World Bank website: <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/guinea-bissau/vulnerability>. Ibidem.



devastating droughts in the recent past. Heavier rainfall events in the future along with higher tides from rising sea level will continue to impact the coast. Sea level rise continues to affect Guinea-Bissau's coastal region and is a serious threat to 70% of the population who reside along the coast. [...] Water resources in Guinea-Bissau are diminishing due to the observed decrease in rainfall since 1961 causing: a slower recharge of aquifers and increasing the depth at which water can be accessed, a reduction in the volume of water in rivers, and an increase in saltwater intrusion on coastal aquifers."¹¹

Added to this are the high epidemic risks for the population, including that of meningitis⁹. According to the United Nations, Guinea-Bissau's environmental disasters could increase in the next period, especially in the areas already affected¹⁰. This for obvious reasons has very strong repercussions on the economy¹¹. Also according to the African Development Bank Group:

"Guinea-Bissau is 130 on the 2021 GCRI—ranked first as more exposed to extreme events—but data issues may muddy the picture. The climate change impact is widespread, and resources are being fast depleted, with fires destroying more than 120 ha of forest every year. Despite an overall decrease in rainfall, rain events are growing increasingly intense, often paired with strong winds, causing huge agricultural losses. In 2020, severe floods hit the rice-producing region in the south."¹²

Beyond that, the political factor must also be considered. Guinea-Bissau, which for a long time was governed by the movement that led it to anti-colonial national liberation, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, is experiencing a phase of political alternation which is expressed with very bitter clashes. Unfortunately, this type of political disruption and enmity took place immediately before decolonization took place.

"The national political arena has been marked since the assassination of Cabral in January 1973 by profound struggles for power among competing institutions, leaders, and ethnic groups that have been significantly affected by the rice-producing peasantry. Rather than ideological unity and cultural integration, the leadership has been weakened by personal antagonisms and serious ethnic divisions."¹³

Political tensions in the country must be kept in mind in a three hundred and sixty degree consideration of the country's future, because an unstable country attracts far fewer foreign investments, and does not allow governments to operate in a linear manner with

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ AA.VV., Guinea-Bissau Disaster Risk Profile – Floods & Droughts (2019), UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2019, p. 15: <http://riskprofilesundrr.org/documents/1521>

¹¹ "The amount of lost working days amounts to 44.000 under present climate conditions, and increase to 57.000 in the future. Under present climate conditions, 0.22% of the average number of working days in crop cultivation are lost and this is predicted to increase to 0.28% in the future. However, the number of working days lost, expressed as a percentage of the average amount of days required for harvesting, is approximately 7 times higher."

AA.VV., Guinea-Bissau Disaster Risk Profile – Floods & Droughts (2019), UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2019, p. 16: <http://riskprofilesundrr.org/documents/1521>

¹² African Development Bank Group, Guinea-Bissau Economic Outlook, on African Development Bank Group website: <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/guinea-bissau/guinea-bissau-economic-outlook>

¹³ Joshua B. Forrest, Guinea-Bissau Since Independence: A Decade of Domestic Power Struggles, in Modern African Studies, vol. 25 no.1 y. 2008, p. 96.



respect to the modernization measures necessary for the proper functioning of an economy within the international scenario. Also the political element, in this sense, is to be understood in its weight on the relations that Guinea-Bissau is developing with the People's Republic of China, given that the latter are aimed, among other things, at a lasting economic partnership, which it leads to the interrelation of the two countries in large commercial projects and, with the Belt and Road Initiative, infrastructural projects.

In this context, it becomes very important to take into account, as already mentioned, the regional instability, which extends to the whole of West Africa¹⁴ and which obviously can also have serious repercussions on Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau itself is experiencing political turmoil that will continue through 2024¹⁵ and 2025¹⁶. It is therefore essential to take into account these possible instabilities in order to understand the role of the country's political actors and its tendency towards growth.

China and Guinea-Bissau: a history of decolonization

When we talk about the relations that have developed diachronically between China and Guinea-Bissau we must bear in mind the most important element that has structured their existence and development, namely decolonization. Guinea-Bissau became autonomous in recent times after the national liberation struggle against Portugal. This was part of a continental movement which was that of rejection of the colonization that Western countries still exercised against African ones. This was a period of bitter clashes and transformations within not only the entire African continent or all the countries that belonged to what Mao called the "Third World"²⁰, but for the entire world power structure.

As has rightly been pointed out by various authors and thinkers of international politics, this period coincided with that of the re-dimensioning of the political-strategic influence of Europe, the so-called Old World, on the fate of the planet. Europe, in that specific historical phase, withdrew from its world influence to the advantage of other forms of political influence that projected themselves from other centers of radiation¹⁷. The two main ones, famously, were the United States of America and the Soviet Union, but over time the People's Republic of China was added. The latter was another country that, after an arduous war during the Second World Conflict, arose from a period of political prostration and lack of autonomy. Specifically, China, which boasted centuries and centuries of sovereign civilization, in modernity had found itself in conditions of

¹⁴ Héní Nsaibia, Conflict intensifies and instability spreads beyond Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, on ACLED website: <https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/sahel-and-coastal-west-africa/>

¹⁵ Dominic Wabwireh, Tensions rise in Guinea-Bissau over president's mandate expiration date, on Africa News: <https://www.africanews.com/2025/02/26/tensions-rise-in-guinea-bissau-over-presidents-mandate-expiration-date/>

¹⁶ Hany Wahila, Guinea-Bissau: Continued Turbulence in Struggle to Restrain Executive Power, on Africa Center for Strategic Studies website: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/2025-elections/guineabissau/> ²⁰ Mao Zedong, On Diplomacy, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1998.

Editorial Department of Renmin Ribao, Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism, Renmin Ribao, Beijing 1977.

Jiang An, Mao Zedong's "Three Worlds" theory: Political considerations and value for the times, in Social Sciences in China, vol. 34 no. 1 y. 2013, pp. 35-57.

¹⁷ "International relations were losing their Eurocentric character as a result of the rise of Russia and the U.S. as superpowers and the internationalization of the economy."

Paul Piccone and G. L. Ulmen, Schmitt's Testament and the Future of Europe, in Telos, n. 83 y. 1990, p. 4.



subordination with respect to Europe and the United States, and to Japan which was building the so-called "Coprosperity Sphere"¹⁸.

The Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao, had to free itself first of Japanese influence on the country, together with the Nationalist Party (in Chinese "Kuomintang") led by Chiang Kai-shek. After that it had to fight against his own previous Kuomintang allies, supported by various foreign powers. This type of victory proved to be the decisive moment for national and international politics, as well as for the economy of this country, which after some difficult periods took off and was able to maintain its autonomy from the centrifugal forces of the changing global scenario. Not only has China established its own perimeter of autonomy with respect to the West (European or American) and the Japanese Empire, but also towards the Soviet Union: as the French historian Maurice Meisner, biographer of Mao recalls, China entered into bitter conflict with the Stalinist leadership to guarantee the foundation of an autonomous communist state despite the contrary opinions of Moscow, which preferred collaboration between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang¹⁹. These disagreements escalated over time, until there was almost a complete break between the USSR and socialist China, where the latter accused the Soviet country of being a "social-imperialist" entity²⁰. It is very interesting for us to note how the rift between China and the Soviet Union led to an intensification of the leading role of the East Asian country towards the decolonized world, and in particular Africa, especially starting from 1962²¹. It could be said in fact that since that serious division in the socialist bloc, China has represented a much more important agglomeration point for Africa than the Soviet Union²².

This type of fracture did not damage, in the global political perspective and in world public opinion, the idea of bipolarity, the division of the world between communist countries and the capitalist world. The non-aligned countries became part of this political-internationalistic evaluation mode as elements of confirmation.

It is within this scenario that Guinea-Bissau gained its independence, through the political struggle of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde. The Party obtained the independence of the African country in 1973. Being the party of clear

¹⁸ Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2019.

¹⁹ Cf. Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait*, Polity, Cambridge 2006.

²⁰ "'Social imperialism' [...]. It was used to describe those Marxists of the Second International who acquiesced in the violent escalation of national rivalries in 1914: who made their peace, in other words, with the imperialist character of their respective nation-states. This was also an option for reform instead of revolution, an explicit legitimization of the gradualist practice into which most of the socialist parties had comfortably settled" [Geoff Heley, *Defining Social Imperialism: Use and Abuse of an Idea*, in *Social History*, vol.1 no.3 y. 1976, p. 266]. Later this term was used no longer against the European social democratic reformists but against the Soviet Union: cf. Mao Tse-Tung, *On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World: Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU (IX)*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1964.

²¹ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet split and its consequences*, in Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle [edited by], *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, Routledge, London / New York 2014, pp. 81-82.

"On 5 October, in a conversation with North Korean Vice Premier Yi Chu-yŏn, Zhou Enlai said that Albania, Cuba, Guinea, and Algeria had all requested aid from China in 1960" [Danhui Li and Yafeng Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959-1973: A New History*, Lexington Books, Lanham 2018, p. 146].

²² Robert A. Scalapino, *Sino-Soviet competition in Africa*, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 4 no. 4 y. 1964, p. 640. These were already the accusations that the Soviet leadership made against Mao in 1956: Mingjiang Li, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet Split: Ideological Dilemma*, Routledge, London / New York 2012, p. 32.



socialist inspiration, like most of the anticolonial political movements and groups of the time, the country quickly approached the communist camp:

"Ideology facilitated the interaction between the PAIGC and the communist states. The politics of Cold War brought the communist states to the same side of the national liberation movements; both claimed to fight Western imperialism. It is important to note that neither Cabral nor the PAIGC could be classified as Marxists; yet, in many ways, Marxism informed the organization's political work. Cabral's political analyses relied on the Marxist class-based approach and his political language included Marxist vocabulary. Additionally, there was a confluence of ideological precepts that linked the PAIGC to the communist states: anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, the legitimacy of national liberation struggle, and internationalism were at the heart of their political discourse."²³

This did not prevent Cabral, however, from maintaining excellent diplomatic relations with various religious denominations and many Western countries²⁴.

The first country to recognize its independence was socialist Romania²⁵ (whose influence fell under the USSR), but diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China were inaugurated shortly after. It should be remembered, however, that before this, the President of the country, Ahmed Sékou Touré, was considered as early as 1958 as a real "communist" by American officials, having also renounced maintaining close relations with the former French colonialists, and having also requested assistance from the Soviet Union for his country²⁶.

First of all, it must be remembered that the party in question was supported in the liberation struggle from China, in line with the internationalist plans of the communist political theory. Notoriously, however, there were some theoretical differences between China and the Soviet Union (as we have already mentioned) and one of these was that Maoist China followed a line that could be defined as national-communist, according to which national revolutions did not have to conform ideologically and politically to a central model, or to refer politically to a specific international institution²⁷. This could also be one of the reasons for the very specific evolution of the conduct and ideological line of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde.

The relations between the two countries were situated within an issue, identified by the Chinese President Mao, namely that of the "Third World"²⁸. This theory postulated the

²³ Abel Djassi Amado, The PAIGC 'Congratulatory' Diplomacy towards Communist States, 1960-1964, in *Lusotopie*, vol. 19 no. 1 y. 2020, p. 5: <https://journals.openedition.org/lusotopie/4640>

²⁴ António Tomás in Review of African Political Economy staff, Amílcar Cabral's life, legacy and reluctant nationalism – an interview with António Tomás, in Review of African Political Economy: <https://roape.net/2023/05/03/amilcar-cabrals-life-legacy-and-reluctant-nationalism-an-interview-with-antonio-tomas/>

²⁵ "Romania had a multidisciplinary and multifaceted economic and political approach in Africa, for example, Romanian media. It propagates the involvement in supporting liberation movements (the fact that Romania was the first state that recognized Guinea-Bissau's independence)." Cristian-Constantin Şipeţean, Economic and political relations between Romania and African countries during the totalitarian regime (1965-1980), in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "George Bariţiu" - Series Historica*, no. 51 y. 2012, p. 235.

²⁶ Jeffrey James Byrne, The Cold War in Africa, in Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle [edited by], *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, Routledge, London / New York 2014, p. 152.

²⁷ Orazio Maria Gnerre, In the Flow of History and International Relations: A Theoretical Profile of Contemporary China, in *Bulletin of the Institute of Oriental Studies*, vol. 2 no. 1 y. 2022, p. 109.

²⁸ "On 10 April 1974, Chinese vice premier Deng Xiaoping brought Mao's three-worlds thesis to the General Assembly of the UN. Deng labeled the Soviet Union and the US, the two superpowers that formed the First



principle that countries not aligned with US or Soviet global power should join in a struggle for independence and the acquisition of development capabilities. In this sense, Africa was a geopolitical hub of great importance, together with the colonized countries of Asia and Latin America. The attention of the People's Republic of China towards Africa has therefore always been of great importance. Suffice it to say that the theory on the Three Worlds was enunciated by Mao for the first time in the presence of the Algerian president Houari Boumediene²⁹.

China, during the decolonization, entered the political game of the Lusophone nations and subjected to Portuguese rule, including Guinea-Bissau³⁰. China has also developed the idea of South-South trade, a principle still considered valid by the Asian country and promoted by international institutions such as the United Nations³¹. This principle was launched during the Bandung conference of 1955. The official theme of the conference was, not surprisingly, that of dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Africa. China, as mentioned, was among the main promoters of the Conference, showing great interest in the project and favoring a theoretical line on how this type of cooperation relationship should work. This event is also so important for contemporary China, which laid the foundations for the development of the concept of South-South cooperation in contemporary history, that on the 60th anniversary of this conference, in 2015, a third session was held in Bandung and Jakarta, in which President Xi Jinping took part³².

At the first Bandung conference took part these African nations: Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Liberia and Sudan. But during the second, in 2005, so well after the period of decolonization, the African nations participating were 52. The cementing of Afro-Asian relations meant at the time and still means that of Sino-African relations.

As we were saying, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde almost immediately established diplomatic relations with China once colonial power was overthrown. Diplomatic relations with the Asian country were already underway in 1974, in line with political cooperation prior to the moment of decolonization. This cooperation

World, as "the two largest international oppressors and exploitators" and the "main war originators in the contemporary era." The Second World, composed of other capitalist/developed countries, while facing the attempts by the two superpowers to control them, demonstrated in their policies the legacies of their own past as colonial powers. The Third World, formed by the vast majority of developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, favored the "tendency of revolution" and opposed "the tendency of war," and they thus represented the "force playing a major role in promoting progress in the world."

Chen Jian, China's changing policies toward the Third World and the end of the global Cold War, in Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Sergey Radchenko [edited by], *The End of the Cold War and the Third World: New Perspectives on Regional Conflict*, Routledge, London / New York 2011, p. 106.

²⁹ "Mao [...] said to Algerian leader Houari Boumediene that "China belongs to the Third World, as politically and economically China is not in the same group of the rich and powerful, and thus can only be with those countries that are relatively poor." Mao's new expressions immediately became the basic guideline of the PRC's international policies."

Chen Jian, China's changing policies toward the Third World and the end of the global Cold War, in Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Sergey Radchenko [edited by], *The End of the Cold War and the Third World: New Perspectives on Regional Conflict*, Routledge, London / New York 2011, pp. 106-107.

³⁰ Steven F. Jackson, China's Third World Foreign Policy: The Case of Angola and Mozambique, 1961-93, in *The China Quarterly*, no. 142 y. 1995, pp. 388-422.

³¹ United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, About UNOSSC, on United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation website: <https://unsouthsouth.org/about/about-unossc/>

³² Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping Attends Activities Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Bandung Conference, on Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China website:

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/2015zt/xjpdjstjxgsfwbfydnxycxyfldrhyhlhy60znjnhd/201505/t20150505_704906.html



was interrupted at a certain moment due to political-ideological disagreements between the nationalist and pan-African movement for the liberation of Guinea and Communist China. Between the 1960s and 1970s the movement oscillated between alliances with the Soviet Union and China, reconsolidating the latter towards the end of this period³³.

In any case, after decolonization, after a few months, relations between China and Guinea-Bissau were re-established. This happened in the period immediately following decolonization, only to be interrupted, again in 1990, with the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde still in power. Until that date there had been economic exchanges between the two countries and China had provided for the construction of a stadium, a hospital and other facilities in the African country³⁴.

Relations broke off as Guinea Bissau began diplomatic relations with Taiwan³⁹. The relationship was then "mended" in 1998. This was done with a joint statement that between them said:

"The government of the People's Republic of China supports the efforts made by the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for maintaining the national sovereignty and development of economy. The government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau recognizes that the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole China and that Taiwan is a part of the inseparable territory of China. The People's Republic of China expressed its appreciation for the stand adopted by the government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau."³⁵

Despite the ups and downs of the political events in Guinea-Bissau, China has shown a continuing interest in the African country. Over time, the history of diplomatic breakups and estrangements has also given rise to as many rapprochements.

Today's relations between China and Guinea-Bissau

As we have said, Chinese policy in Africa continues to follow the principles emanating from the first Bandung conference in 1955, albeit renewed for the present time. One of the fundamental elements remains that of the political and economic relationship between Asia and Africa, as geopolitical entities close in interest and in recent history.

In fact, among the points proposed by Xi Jinping during the re-edition of the Conference in 2015, there was the expansion of south-south cooperation, and therefore the expansion of the number of countries that exchange and cooperate with each other, and also the increase in cooperation between Asia and Africa. In this sense, Xi Jinping said, relations between Asia and Africa are to be considered winning, given the complementarity of the growth projects of these two areas³⁶. We must also remember, to reiterate the centrality of the relationship between China and Africa in contemporary international politics, a relationship that therefore assumes importance also for Guinea-

³³ Julião Soares Sousa, Amílcar Cabral, the PAIGC and the Relations with China at the Time of the Sino-Soviet Split and of Anti-Colonialism. Discourses and Praxis, in *The International History Review*, vol. 42 no. 6 y. 2020.

³⁴ Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Guinea-Bissau, on China.org.cn: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/focac/183519.htm> ³⁹ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Xinhua staff, Xi raises three-point proposal on carrying forward Bandung Spirit, on China Daily: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015xivisitpse/2015-04/22/content_20511293.htm



Bissau, that Asia and Africa are areas of relative growth, in which some actors are performing very positively compared to their recent history. It is no coincidence that Asia and Africa have two of the BRICS countries (respectively China and South Africa), an economic and political alliance between growing countries. Africa, as we have already seen, is also experiencing growth processes in some specific territories which introduces it to a substantially positive trend.

The economic relationship between BRICS and Africa is in fact today becoming a topic of interest for world politics:

"The size of the BRICS economies, their economic potential and their increasing international demand for goods make them particularly relevant to Africa's development. The greatest impact of the BRICS on Africa will be achieved through three key channels: trade, investment and development assistance. Regarding Trade between the BRICS and Africa, it can be summarized under two key features: Africa's exports to the BRICS are dominated by fuels and primary commodities (mainly to China and India) and the BRICS' exports to African countries are dominated by manufactured goods. For resource-rich African countries, gains from the primary commodity boom should be invested to fund higher-value production (primarily in manufacturing). They also need to invest in physical infrastructure to address steep transport costs. Further, Africa's producers have to be more closely linked to global value chains, coordinating with them (to ensure that production and information are linked in a timely manner) and meeting global standards. [...] The size of the BRICS economies, their economic potential and their increasing international demand for goods make them particularly relevant to Africa's development."³⁷

Despite the political instability of the African country, China has started trading with the African country again. According to Chinese data, the volume of trade between the two countries in 2002 was \$ 4.504 million³⁸. To date, China continues to invest in the African country (including in a \$ 48 million project for the modernization of the country's telecommunications network³⁹), as in many other sub-Saharan countries. It was also noted that "China [is] a major bilateral donor in Africa and means they will overtake the US as the biggest aid donor to Africa"⁴⁰.

Guinea-Bissau also signed a memorandum with China in November 2021 regarding its adhesion to the Chinese project of the so-called "Belt and Road Initiative"⁴¹. The Belt and Road, or BRI, is a vast infrastructure construction project as well as an extension of commercial lines that will connect a whole series of countries and outlets to China and to each other, innervating from Eurasia to Africa. The extension of the Belt and Road to

³⁷ AA.VV., BRICS in Africa: Economic Ties and Impact. BCP Papers – v. 7 n. 1, on BRICS Policy Center website: <https://bricspolicycenter.org/en/publications/brics-in-africa-economic-ties-and-impacts/>

³⁸ Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Guinea-Bissau, on China.org.cn: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/focac/183519.htm>

³⁹ Chris Devonshire-Ellis, Guinea-Bissau Joins The Belt And Road Initiative, on Silk Road Briefing: <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2021/11/28/guinea-bissau-joins-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>

⁴⁰ Elling Tjønneland, The Changing Role of Chinese Development Aid, CMI Insight number 2 March 2020, p. 4: <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/7173-the-changing-role-of-chinese-development-aid.pdf>

⁴¹ National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China, Guinea-Bissau Joins Belt and Road Initiative, on National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China website: https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/news/mediarresources/202112/t20211210_1307485.html



Africa seems very powerful, and many African states have already joined the project, including South Africa.

This type of project could certainly guarantee Guinea Bissau some types of advantages, if exploited to the fullest in relation to increasing investments for development. Furthermore, the guarantee of the construction of infrastructure projects such as ports, highways and railways is of great importance for the Sub-Saharan countries.

Obviously, many variables remain in diplomatic relations between two countries, but Chinese investments tie the Asian country to the African one. These political-economic phenomena should be analyzed not only with a national focus but also with a regional one, to establish the development potential and external influences coming from the geographical sector in which a political unit (in this case Guinea-Bissau) exercises its administration.

It is interesting to note how the meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Guinea-Bissau President Umaro Sissoco Embaló in 2024 underlined what we have repeatedly expressed in this article, namely that the relations between the two countries are dictated by a common history: "Xi Jinping noted that China and Guinea-Bissau have a history of special friendship. China supports Guinea-Bissau in independently exploring a development path that suits its national conditions and intends to inherit the traditional friendship with Guinea-Bissau⁴²". The two presidents decided to elevate the relationship between the two countries to a strategic partnership⁴⁸. This type of partnership, demonstrating how the model of social and economic relations is very similar to that developed in the Mao era, would produce a type of multilevel exchange, ranging from economic aid to infrastructure construction to trade⁴³. In this meeting it was highlighted that "both China and Africa have splendid civilizations, both have suffered from the painful history of colonization and aggression, and both cherish and pursue national independence and liberation⁴⁴".

Currently, the two countries are working on the mining sector in Guinea, as Guinea-Bissau has signed an important agreement with Chinalco⁴⁵. Partnership (within the BRI project) therefore manifests itself not only in the construction of infrastructure⁴⁶, but also in commercial alliances.

That said, the level of infrastructure construction also plays a role in this type of partnership: "Speaking at Osvaldo Vieira International Airport in Bissau before his trip,

⁴² CRI Online staff, Colloquio tra Xi Jinping e presidente di Guinea-Bissau, Umaro Sissoco Embaló, on CRI online [translated from Italian]: <https://italian.cri.cn/2024/07/10/ARTIzKaE0xRoIehr3fAO8PhS240710.shtml> ⁴⁸ AfricaNews staff, Guinea-Bissau, China upgrade ties as presidents meet, on AfricaNews:

<https://www.africanews.com/2024/07/11/guinea-bissau-china-upgrade-ties-as-presidents-meet/>

⁴³ "Guinea-Bissau hopes to learn from China's development experience, and strengthen cooperation with China in areas such as trade, investment, infrastructure and mineral resources" [Xinhua staff, Chinese, Guinea-Bissau presidents hold talks, elevate ties, on Xinhua: <https://english.news.cn/20240711/89ecee3ff4694d5f8fe67ca686b244d2/c.html>].

⁴⁴ Xinhua staff, Chinese, Guinea-Bissau presidents hold talks, elevate ties, on Xinhua: <https://english.news.cn/20240711/89ecee3ff4694d5f8fe67ca686b244d2/c.html>

⁴⁵ Sarnali Chakraborty, Advancing Guinea-Bissau's mining sector with the newly signed agreement with Chinalco, on Al Circle: <https://www.alcircle.com/news/advancing-guinea-bissau-s-mining-sector-with-the-newly-signed-agreement-with-chinalco-112691>

⁴⁶ Wang Zizheng, Lyu Chengcheng and Zhou Chuyun, Feature: China-Guinea-Bissau partnership yields tangible benefits, empowers local fisheries, on Xinhua: <https://english.news.cn/20240712/726db3f9f1e74646b8f38bc3e8f3a575/c.html>



Sissoco Embaló said that China had committed a further US\$27.5 million to Guinea-Bissau to be allocated to new projects. Infrastructure currently being built with China's help includes an 8.2-kilometre, US\$14.8 million highway connecting the airport to the town of Safim. Upcoming projects include a conference centre, around 300 kilometres of road rehabilitation, and a university campus for 12,000 students⁴⁷.

Conclusions

We have seen how the history of Guinea-Bissau and the People's Republic of China has already been intertwined at the time of decolonization. This was due both to theoretical-political issues and to the material and geopolitical interests of both the actors in question. This type of gravitational field that was activated in the decolonial period between Asia and Africa is certainly not extinguishable due to transitory political issues, but manifests a long-lasting trend under which compelling reasons are harboring. These reasons must be kept in mind because they represent one of the key issues for interpreting contemporary international politics and the advanced stage of globalization processes. The latter, as President Xi Jinping himself reiterated in his 2017 speech at the Davos Forum⁴⁸, are not only the processes of deconstructing international security or political sovereignty created by uncontrolled market phenomena, but they are also the establishment of relations of mutual interest between global actors for the benefit of a spread of well-being and human development. This type of request was naturally processed within the political discourse of territorial and national realities that have experienced periods of subordination.

With this article we intend to demonstrate how the relations between China and Guinea-Bissau, which have developed over a long period of contemporary history, from the context of the Cold War to the present day in a phase of growing multipolarization, have occurred on a double track, that is, that of diplomatic dialogue permitted by a certain type of political-cultural attitude, and by a realistic approach towards the economic and trade needs of the two countries. Specifically, the colonial question is not of secondary importance with respect to these two areas, because decolonization provides both a framework of political meaning to the cooperation between the two countries (which therefore also occurs in areas other than the merely economic one), but also guarantees the development of a certain type of international trade that has its origins in the time of cooperation between non-alienated countries. The meaning we want to derive from this is that in certain global contexts a certain type of diplomatic, political and economic relationship is inseparable, and represents a unitary nexus that has been composed and stratified in recent history. This is why, despite ups and downs, the near future of Guinea-Bissau and China seem to be closely linked. The question, however, cannot be considered without bearing in mind the intercontinental relations between Asia and Africa, and the role that both of these continents are assuming on the face of the earth.

⁴⁷ The Macao News staff, Guinea-Bissau and China sign a strategic partnership agreement, on The Macao News: <https://macaonews.org/news/lusofonia/china-guinea-bissau-strategic-partnership/>

⁴⁸ Xi Jinping, Full Text: Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the World Economic Forum, on The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China website: http://www.china.org.cn/node_7247529/content_40569136.htm



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BETWEEN VISAS AND TOURISM: SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION, ANALYSIS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between visa policies and tourism, highlighting their relevance for global mobility and economic development. It aims to identify patterns and trends in scientific research on the topic, analysing how visa policies affect tourism flows and, consequently local economies. The methodology includes a bibliometric analysis of scientific production between 2000 and 2023, using Scopus, WoS and SciELO. The results highlight that visa policies have a significant impact on tourism, with implications for perceptions of safety, equity of access and sustainability. The implementation of technologies such as e-visa improves efficiency and user experience, although challenges remain in their widespread adoption. This analysis provides key information for designing more inclusive and effective public policies aimed at enhancing the benefits of global tourism while minimising its inequalities and adverse effects.

Keywords

Visa Policies, SDG 8.9 - Sustainable Tourism, Bibliometric Analysis, International Human Mobility, Public Policies.

Resumo

Este estudo examina a relação entre as políticas de visto e o turismo, destacando sua relevância para a mobilidade global e o desenvolvimento econômico. Seu objetivo é identificar padrões e tendências na pesquisa científica sobre o tema, analisando como as políticas de visto afetam os fluxos de turismo e, consequentemente as economias locais. A metodologia inclui uma análise bibliométrica da produção científica entre 2000 e 2023, usando Scopus, WoS e SciELO. Os resultados destacam que as políticas de visto têm um impacto significativo no turismo, com implicações para as percepções de segurança, equidade de acesso e sustentabilidade. A implementação de tecnologias como o visto eletrônico melhora a eficiência e a experiência do usuário, embora ainda haja desafios para sua adoção generalizada. Essa análise fornece informações importantes para a elaboração de políticas públicas mais



inclusivas e eficazes destinadas a aumentar os benefícios do turismo global e, ao mesmo tempo, minimizar suas desigualdades e efeitos adversos.

Palavras-chave

Vistos, ODS 8.9 – Turismo Sustentável, Análise bibliométrica, Mobilidade humana internacional, Políticas públicas.

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BETWEEN VISAS AND TOURISM: SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION, ANALYSIS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

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Introduction

In today's interconnected world, international mobility has become a cornerstone of socio-economic growth and cultural exchange (Aranibar & Olarte, 2025). Within this landscape, visa policies are far more than administrative procedures; they operate as pivotal instruments shaping tourist flows, cross-border interactions, and the global dynamics of human movement. Yet, the central problem persists: how can governments promote international tourism as a driver of development while simultaneously addressing pressing concerns of security, public health, sustainability, and migration control? This tension underscores the need for a deeper and more systematic analysis of the field.

Tourism, widely recognised as both an economic engine and a cultural phenomenon, has consistently demonstrated its capacity to generate employment, foster investment, and strengthen intercultural understanding. Policies of visa liberalisation and exemption programmes have stimulated arrivals and created tangible benefits for host economies (Whyte, 2008; Recchi et al., 2021; Abuhjeeleh, 2019). At the same time, restrictive or poorly calibrated measures risk producing adverse effects: they may heighten social inequities, exacerbate irregular migration, or strain destination infrastructures. Previous research (Neumayer, 2010; Song et al., 2012; Czaika & Neumayer, 2017) has shed light on these benefits and limitations, but further research is required to assess how these dynamics vary across contexts and to determine strategies that balance economic, social, and security imperatives.

Against this backdrop, the guiding research question of this paper is: what are the main patterns, trends, and thematic orientations of scientific production on visa policies and tourism, and what implications can be drawn for future research and policymaking? To answer this question, the study pursues three specific aims: first, to quantify and categorise the volume of academic output on the subject; second, to identify the dominant themes, methodologies, and disciplinary affiliations; and third, to evaluate the theoretical and practical contributions of this body of research.

Methodologically, the paper employs a bibliometric analysis combined with a systematic review of publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and SciELO between 2000 and 2023 in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Following the PRISMA framework, the process



ensured the rigorous identification, screening, and synthesis of relevant studies. Data analysis was supported by bibliometric tools such as Bibliometrix and VOSviewer, enabling the mapping of research streams and thematic interconnections.

The significance of this work lies in its contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of how visa policies intersect with tourism, informing the design of inclusive, efficient, and context-sensitive policies. By revealing both the strengths and the limitations of existing research, this paper advances scholarly debates while offering practical insights for policymakers, international organisations, and tourism managers concerned with mobility governance.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The theoretical framework situates visas within broader discussions of tourism, mobility, and regulation. The methodology section details the bibliometric and systematic review approach. The results are presented through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the literature, followed by a discussion that contextualises these findings within academic and policy debates. The paper concludes by outlining the main implications, limitations, and potential avenues for future research.

Theoretical Framework

International tourism is a multidimensional phenomenon deeply conditioned by the regulatory frameworks of host countries, among which visa policies play a decisive role (Aranibar, 2024). By determining travellers' entry for purposes ranging from leisure and education to business and family reunification, visas not only shape the volume of arrivals but also influence their origin, duration of stay, and overall economic contribution. Restrictions such as excessive requirements, lengthy bureaucratic procedures, or high processing fees act as barriers that constrain mobility and generate asymmetries in global travel opportunities (Karaman, 2016; Artal-Tur et al., 2016). Conversely, innovations such as electronic visas (e-visas) have reduced administrative burdens, improved perceptions of security, and facilitated broader access to destinations (Recchi et al., 2021).

Despite these advances, a review of academic databases reveals a scarcity of studies that explicitly examine the nexus between tourism and visa policies. Among this limited body of work, Young et al. (2023) highlight the case of a Liberian patient whose access to treatment for advanced head and neck cancer was severely delayed by the complexities of the U.S. visa process. Beyond the immediate health consequences, this case illustrates how restrictive regimes can undermine equity and efficiency in the delivery of cross-border services, raising ethical and administrative dilemmas that extend beyond medical tourism. Such examples underscore the broader challenge of ensuring that visa systems do not reproduce global inequalities by privileging certain categories of travellers while systematically disadvantaging others.

Although some previous studies have addressed specific aspects—such as medical tourism, labour mobility, or regional waiver programmes—there remains a lack of integrative research that comprehensively analyses how visa regimes shape international tourism. Addressing this gap requires moving beyond technical descriptions of entry requirements and situating visas as political and social mechanisms that structure global



mobility. In this sense, incorporating perspectives from international relations, public policy, and law becomes essential for understanding how visas function as instruments of diplomacy, sovereignty, and governance, not merely as administrative tools.

Indeed, visa frameworks often reflect broader geopolitical logics. Initiatives such as the Schengen Agreement in Europe (Wellings, 2022), or MERCOSUR's Residence Agreement in South America (Rivarola, 2021), exemplify how states use visas to negotiate reciprocity, integration, and security. These cases show that liberalisation or restriction policies transcend their immediate effects on tourism flows, operating as signals of political alignment, cooperation, or exclusion (Anastasiadou, 2011). The absence of such interdisciplinary approaches in the literature limits our understanding of the deep interconnections between tourism, mobility, and the international system.

In that line, technological innovations are reshaping the governance of mobility. The integration of digital platforms, big data, and predictive analytics into visa systems offers governments new opportunities to anticipate tourist behaviours, enhance border security, and streamline entry processes (Alauddin & Hassan, 2021). E-visa platforms, biometric identification, and AI-driven risk assessments represent a convergence between e-government and e-tourism that can expand accessibility while simultaneously raising questions of privacy, surveillance, and digital inequality (Adukaite et al, 2014). These developments confirm that visa policies must increasingly be analysed not only through the lens of tourism management but also within broader debates on technology, governance, and human rights.

Taken together, this theoretical framework positions visa policies as complex and multifaceted instruments at the intersection of tourism, governance, and global mobility. By bridging disciplinary gaps and highlighting emerging challenges, it establishes the conceptual basis for analysing the scientific production on visas and tourism, thereby illuminating both the opportunities and limitations that these regimes present for more inclusive and sustainable forms of international travel.

Method

This study employed a bibliometric analysis using a systematic approach to explore the scientific output on the impact of visa policies on tourism. This method allows for the identification of trends, publication patterns, and key contributions within the field, as indicated by Page et al. (2021). The PRISMA method was implemented to conduct a detailed process of identification, selection, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant studies, following the approach used in similar studies, such as those by Hermosa and Arco (2023) and Quispe et al. (2023). Table 1 provides further details about the procedures.

The document search was conducted in three internationally recognised databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and SciELO, targeting publications in English, Spanish, and Portuguese from 2000 to 2023. The strings employed were "visa AND touris*", "visa AND turis*", and "visto AND turis*" to the title fields, yielding a total of 33, 22, and 1 documents, respectively, prior to the removal of duplicates and the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The search results are detailed in Table 1, which includes a description of the selected documents by database, publication type, and analysed indicators.

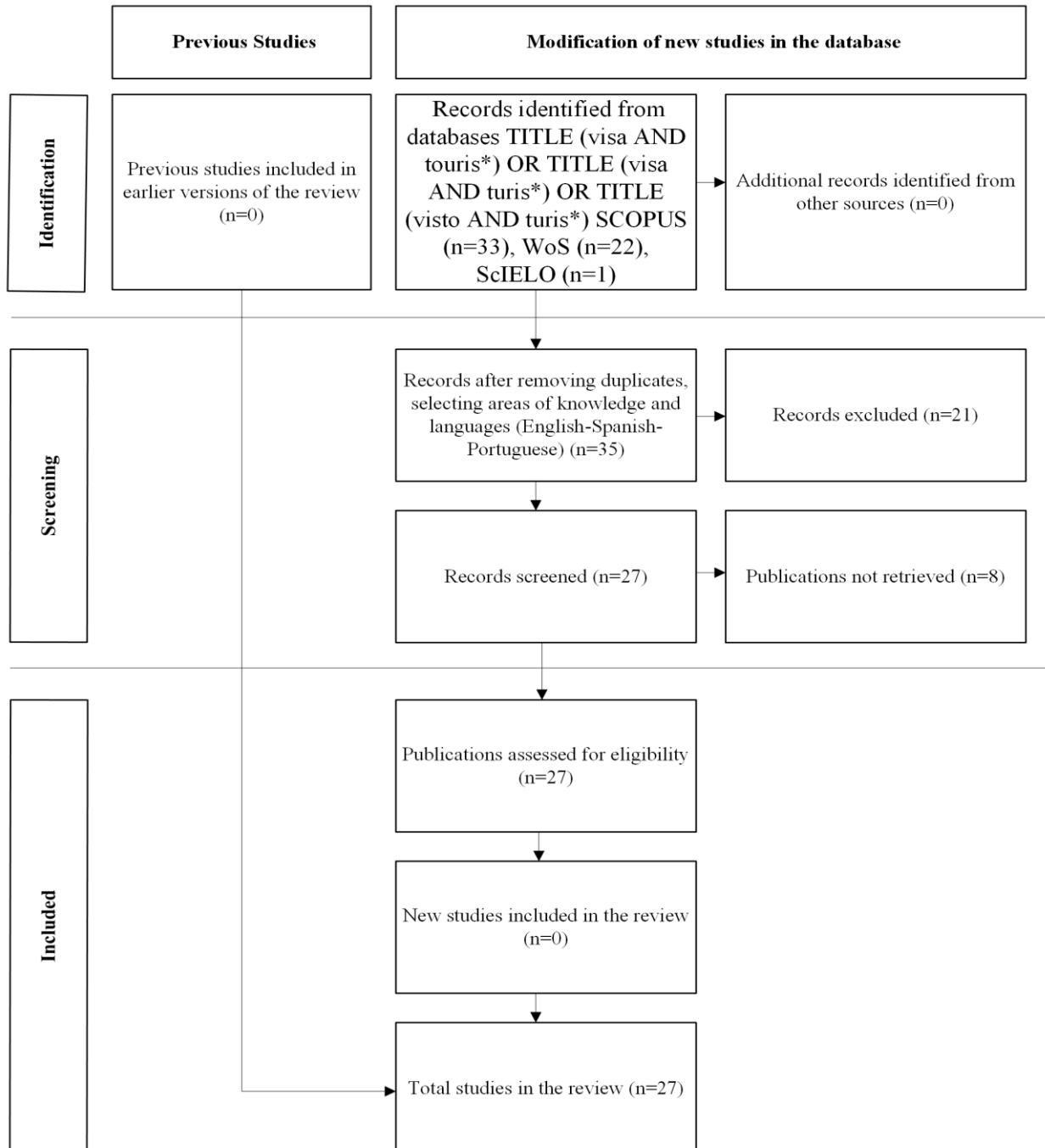
**Table 1.** Search Criteria and Analysis Parameters

Database	Scopus	Web of Science	SciELO
Language	English, Spanish, Portuguese		
Analysis Period	2000 – 2023		
Consultation Date	16 September 2024		
Document Types	Scientific articles, conference proceedings, and book chapters		
Source Type	Any indexed source		
Search Field and Terms	TITLE (visa AND touris*) OR TITLE (visa AND turis*) OR TITLE (visto AND turis*)		
Results	23 articles	19 articles	
	5 book chapters	1 news item	1 article
	2 conference papers	1 conference paper	Total: 1
	3 review articles	1 review article	
	Total: 33	Total: 22	
Bibliometric Indicators	Quantity Indicators: - Annual scientific output - Scientific output by country - Productivity by institution type Impact Indicators: - Most cited contributions - Impact factor of journals with the highest publication Quality Indicators: - Keywords and relation to other topics - Main research streams or trends (thematic map)		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 1 summarises the methodology used for searching and classifying the documents. From a total of 33 records obtained in Scopus, 22 in WoS, and 1 in SciELO, scientific articles, book chapters, and conference contributions were identified. This table also outlines the bibliometric indicators employed: quantity indicators, such as annual scientific output and productivity by institution type; impact indicators, including the most cited contributions and the impact factor of the journals; and quality indicators, such as the relationship between keywords and emerging thematic trends.

Figure 1 illustrates the systematic review process through a PRISMA flow diagram. This process began with 56 records, which, after rigorous screening based on relevance, duplicate removal, and accessibility, resulted in a final set of 27 documents. The screening stage involved reviewing titles and abstracts to ensure thematic consistency with the study's objective. Subsequently, an exhaustive evaluation of the selected documents was carried out to determine their eligibility and relevance.

**Figure 1.** PRISMA Flow Diagram on Tourism and Visas

Source: Own elaboration.

Specialised tools such as Bibliometrix and VOSviewer were utilised for data analysis, enabling the mapping of key research streams and thematic interconnections. These tools facilitated the examination of quantity, impact, and quality indicators, providing a comprehensive overview of the dynamics within the field of study and their implications for future research.



The combination of Table 1 and Figure 1 ensures a thorough representation of the methodological process, allowing for the replication and validation of the results obtained. This systematic approach guarantees that the findings significantly contribute to the understanding of the intersections between visa policies and tourism.

Results

Quantitative Meta-Analysis: 2000–2023

The quantitative synthesis of the 27 studies published between 2000 and 2023 reveals a diversified distribution of research efforts across six thematic categories (see Table 2: Thematic Categorization). *Impact of Visa Policies on Tourist Flows* emerges as the dominant area of inquiry, representing approximately 51% of the sample. Within this category, studies such as Chi et al. (2022) and Yudhistira et al. (2021) consistently report increases in arrivals ranging from 5% to 25% following visa liberalisation measures. The evidence demonstrates not only a significant positive elasticity of demand to visa exemptions, but also heterogeneous effects: while non-traditional destinations often benefited most, traditional hubs occasionally experienced diversion effects, illustrating the complexity of policy outcomes.

Technology and Visa Processes represents approximately 11% of the corpus, with studies focusing on the digitisation of visa services. The works from Bangladesh (Akhter et al., 2020; Alauddin & Hassan, 2021) report measurable improvements in processing times and tourist satisfaction following the adoption of online systems, while Adukaite et al. (2014) provide comparative data on the completeness and accessibility of visa information across 165 national tourism offices. Quantitatively, these contributions indicate that digitalisation reduces bureaucratic barriers, potentially broadening inbound flows by improving information quality and transaction efficiency, though significant variation persists between developed and developing contexts.

A further 11% of the reviewed studies fall under *Visa Policies Related to Tourism and Health*. Quantitative evidence here is particularly salient in the context of medical tourism and public health management. Young et al. (2019) document the growing demand for medical visas to the United States, while Weinberg et al. (2016) identify tuberculosis transmission risks among temporary visa holders employed in the U.S. tourism industry. Earlier findings from India (Chinai & Goswami, 2007) estimate the rising contribution of medical tourism to national GDP, with projections tied directly to the facilitation of visa access. These results confirm that health-related visa frameworks constitute both an economic opportunity and a regulatory challenge, especially in balancing patient mobility with public health safeguards.

Regarding *Migration and Tourism*, accounts for around 11% of the reviewed works. Quantitative assessments within this group, particularly in the United States, Australia and Portugal, highlight the extent to which visa-dependent programmes structure labour markets in tourism. For example, Terry (2018) reports recurrent patterns of precarity among J-1 and H-2B visa holders, while Robertson (2016) quantifies the overlapping contributions of student and labour mobility through the 417 and 485 visas in Australia. Together, these findings emphasise that migration-related visas sustain critical segments



of the tourism workforce, though often under uneven and vulnerable conditions, which in turn affects productivity and service quality in destination economies.

The category *Tourism and Security Issues* comprises 8% of the total, with a marked emphasis on the dual role of visas as facilitators and barriers under conditions of perceived risk. Kolker and Platzer (2021), for instance, estimate that nationals from Visa Waiver Program countries contributed nearly USD 190 billion to the U.S. economy, underscoring the magnitude of security-related visa facilitation. Complementarily, Cheng (2012) demonstrates that demand in Hong Kong is highly sensitive not only to visa policies but also to external shocks such as SARS, where the impact of health security concerns outweighed economic variables. This category quantifies the delicate balance between liberalisation and control, with evidence pointing to both large gains and significant vulnerabilities.

Finally, *Economic Implications* accounts for 8% of the studies, consolidating research that directly measures macroeconomic impacts of visa policies. Pham et al. (2018) estimate that a rise in visa fees for Chinese tourists would generate GDP losses exceeding potential revenue gains, with the elasticity of demand demonstrating a stronger negative effect than projected fiscal recovery. Similarly, Li and Song (2013) apply econometric models to show that restrictive visa measures during the Beijing Olympics produced unexpected negative economic externalities, contradicting the expected tourism boom. Together, these results provide robust quantitative evidence that poorly calibrated visa regimes can generate long-term inefficiencies and undermine the strategic role of tourism as a driver of national growth.

In terms of research provenance, the countries that contribute most significantly to the study of the relationship between visas and tourism are the United States, South Korea, and the United Kingdom, accounting for approximately 60% of the reviewed publications. Authors from the United States lead in studies on the economic effects of visa liberalisation on international tourist flows, while South Korea focuses on reciprocity agreements and their impact on regional tourism. The United Kingdom, in turn, contributes research exploring the relationship between tourism accessibility and security perceptions, a key topic in the post-pandemic scenario. Other countries such as Spain, Australia, and Indonesia have also made significant contributions in this area, examining both the economic and social and cultural effects of visa policies.

Moreover, there is a relatively stable trend in scientific production on visas and tourism over the past five years, especially between 2019 and 2023. During this period, studies have increasingly adopted quantitative approaches and broad data analyses to better understand how visa exemption policies affect tourist behaviour and the local economies of tourist destinations. This trend reflects a continued interest in balancing the benefits of simplified access with the need to ensure security and sustainability, adapting to current challenges in international tourism.

Table 2. Thematic Categorization

#	Title	Authors
Impact of Visa Policies on Tourist Flows		
1	Regional visa-waiver program for open tourism development	Kim, T., Bae, E., & Kim, D. (2023).



2	Visa waivers, multilateral resistance and international tourism: some evidence from Israel	Beenstock, M., Felsenstein, D., & Rubin, Z. (2015)
3	Causal effect of tourist visa exemption schemes on international tourist arrivals	Chi, P.-Y., Lee, K.-C., & Chang, K.-I. (2022).
4	Heterogeneous effects of visa exemption policy on international tourist arrivals: Evidence from Indonesia	Yudhistira, M., Sofiyandi, Y., Indriyani, W., & Pratama, A. P. (2021).
5	"Your papers for a tourist visa": A literary-biographical consideration of Isaac Bashevis Singer in Warsaw, 1923-1935	Stromberg, D. (2021).
6	Visa-free travel to Sri Kartarpur Sahib: Historic pilgrimage and religious tourism from Indian Punjab to Pakistan Punjab	Chawla, T., Hassan, R., & Kaur, D. (2020).
7	The Impact of Tourist Visas on Intercontinental South-South Migration: Ecuador's Policy of "Open Doors" as a Quasi-Experiment	Freier, L., & Holloway, K. (2019)
8	The role of visa exemption in Chinese tourists' decision-making: a model of goal-directed behavior	Song, H., Lee, C.-K., Reisinger, Y., & Xu, H.-L. (2017)
9	Do travel visa requirements impede tourist travel?	Lawson, R., & Roychoudhury, S. (2016)
10	The pernicious impact of visa restrictions on inbound tourism: the case of Turkey	Karaman, A. (2016)
11	Examining the impact of visa restrictions on international tourist flows using panel data	Artal-Tur, A., Pallardó-López, V., & Requena-Silvente, F. (2016)
12	The ideologies of national security and tourist visa restrictions	Webster, C., & Ivanov, S. (2016)
13	Would a single regional visa encourage tourist arrivals in southern Africa?	Douglas, A., Lubbe, B., & Kruger, E. (2012)
14	The impact of visa-free entry on outbound tourism: A case study of South Korean travellers visiting Japan	Lee, C.-K., Song, H.-J., & Bendle, L. (2010)
Technology and Visa Processes		
1	Technology Application for Visa and Immigration for Tourists in Bangladesh+B24	Akman, E., Karaman, A., & Kuzey, C. (2021)
2	Visa and Immigration for Tourists in Bangladesh	Akhter, N., Hassan, A., & Alauddin, M. (2020)
3	When e-gov deals with tourists: The case of visa information	Adukaite, A., Gazizova, E., & Cantoni, L. (2014)
Visa Policies Related to Tourism and Health		
1	Review of inbound medical tourism and legal details of obtaining a visa for treatment of head and neck cancer	Young, L., Vimawala, S., Ahmad, N., Kushnir, V., Bonawitz, S., Brody, J., Enriquez, M., & Koshkareva, Y. (2019)
2	Tuberculosis among temporary visa holders working in the tourism industry — United States, 2012–2014	Weinberg, M., Cherry, C., Lipnitz, J., Nienstadt, L., King-Todd, A., Haddad, M. B., Russell, M., Wong, D., Davidson, P., McFadden, J., & Miller, C. (2016)
3	Medical visas mark growth of Indian medical tourism.	Chinai, R., & Goswami, R. (2007)
Migration and Tourism		
1	Mobility through investment: Economics, tourism, or lifestyle migration? Narratives of Chinese and Brazilian golden visa holders in Portugal	De Fatima Amante, M., & Rodrigues, I. (2022)
2	Precarity and guest work in U.S. tourism: J-1 and H-2B visa programs	Terry, W. (2018)
3	Intertwined Mobilities of Education, Tourism and Labour: The Consequences of 417 and 485 Visas in Australia	Robertson, S. (2016)
Tourism and Security Issues		
1	Adding countries to the visa waiver program: Effects on national security and tourism	Kolker, A., & Platzer, M. (2021)
2	Tourism demand in Hong Kong: Income, prices, and visa restrictions	Cheng, K. (2012)
Economic Implications		
1	The economic impacts of a changing visa fee for Chinese tourists to Australia	Pham, T., Nghiem, S., & Dwyer, L. (2018)



2	Economic impacts of visa restrictions on tourism: A case of two events in china	Li, S., & Song, H. (2013)

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3 presents an annual breakdown of scientific production on tourism and visas between 2007 and 2023. Over these years, variability in the number of publications is observed, with periods of high and low production reflecting the fluctuating interest of the academic community in this field of study. Since 2007, when two publications were recorded, interest remained moderate, with significant peaks in 2016 and 2021, when 8 and 4 articles were published, respectively. This increase could be associated with changes in international policies or events that directly impacted mobility and tourism, such as the tightening or easing of visa issuance in various regions of the world.

Table 3. Annual Scientific Production on Tourism and Visas

2007	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2	1	2	2	3	1	8	2	2	2	2	4	2	1

Source: Own elaboration.

Although the years 2020 and 2021 coincided with the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and severe disruptions to international mobility, the four works published in 2021 (n=4) do not explicitly address pandemic-related restrictions or recovery strategies. Instead, their thematic orientations show continuity with pre-existing lines of research. For example, Yudhistira et al. (2021) measured heterogeneous effects of visa exemptions in Indonesia, Stromberg (2021) offered a literary-biographical reflection on mobility barriers in interwar Europe, Alauddin and Hassan (2021) examined digital innovations in Bangladesh, and Kolker and Platzer (2021) analysed the U.S. Visa Waiver Program in the context of security, with a short light in health issues. These studies reveal that the academic production of 2021 did not shift to directly incorporate COVID-19 as an explanatory framework, but rather extended ongoing debates on flows, governance, technology, and security. The clustering of publications in this year thus reflects productivity in established research lines rather than an immediate response to the pandemic.

By contrast, the single paper published in 2023 illustrates a different dynamic. Its focus on a regional visa exemption programme in Jeju demonstrates that scholarly attention remained concentrated on the structural and long-term effects of visa facilitation rather than short-term pandemic contingencies (Kim et al., 2023). The decline to one publication may therefore be interpreted less as a sign of “post-pandemic stabilisation” and more as an indication of thematic reorientation towards context-specific policy experiments and regional governance frameworks. The absence of direct engagement with COVID-19 between 2021 and 2023 underscores that, despite the pandemic’s evident disruption of tourism, academic research on visas did not immediately integrate this factor into its analytical core. Instead, the field appears to have prioritised structural



questions of accessibility, technology, labour, and security, leaving the pandemic as a contextual backdrop rather than a central object of study.

Table 4 highlights the institutions and authors with the highest production in tourism and visa-related topics. The university with the most contributions is The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, with a total of two publications attributed to the author Lee, C., who appears to be one of the most active academics in this field. This institution, along with others such as Clemson University and Kyung Hee University, represents a significant source of knowledge in the domain of tourism and visas, specifically in the United States, Hong Kong, and South Korea.

Table 4. Leading Producers in Tourism and Visa Research

No.	Institution(s)	Author(s)	Country(ies)	Source
1	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (2)	Lee, C. (2) School of Tourism and Entertainment, Kyung Hee University (South Korea)	United States of America (7)	Tourism Geographies (2)
2	Clemson University (2)	Hassan, A. (2) The Tourism Society (United Kingdom)	Hong Kong (5)	Journal of Travel Research (2)
3	Kyung Hee University (2)	-Aluddin, M. (2) Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Chittagong (Bangladesh)	South Korea (3)	Tourism Economics (2)
4	City University of Hong Kong (2)	Song, H. (2) College of Tourism and Fashion, Pai Chai University (South Korea)	United Kingdom (3)	Annals of Tourism Research (2)
5	Clemson University (2)	-	Bangladesh (2)	-
6	International Islamic University (2)	-	Turkey (2)	-
7	-	-	Australia (2)	-

Source: Own elaboration.

The analysis of these results indicates that research on tourism and visa policies is relatively dispersed rather than concentrated, with no single institution or author exerting clear dominance. Each of the universities and scholars listed with two contributions represents about 7.40% of the total corpus, while those with three contributions account for 11%, and the highest producers, with five and seven works respectively, represent



18% and 25.93%. This distribution shows that although there are recurrent contributors such as Lee, Song, Hassan, and Alauddin, academic production is spread across institutions in Asia, the United States, and other regions. In terms of disciplinary affiliations, the leading authors are rooted primarily in tourism, hospitality, and business administration, but notably, the field of international relations is absent, despite its evident relevance for analysing mobility, sovereignty, and cross-border governance. The journals where these works are published, such as *Tourism Geographies*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Tourism Economics*, emphasise quantitative and policy-oriented analyses centred on tourist flows, visa restrictions, and economic impacts. Taken together, these patterns suggest that the corpus, while modest in volume, is plural in institutional and regional representation, yet still narrow in disciplinary scope, leaving space for a stronger incorporation of perspectives from international relations, public policy, and law.

Table 5 displays the studies that have had the greatest impact in the field of tourism and visas, measured by the number of citations received. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University once again leads in this area, with research by authors such as Goswami, R., achieving up to 116 citations. This high level of impact suggests that the research from this institution has significantly influenced the field, possibly due to the relevance of its findings for visa policy and its implications for tourism.

Table 5. Highest Impact in Tourism and Visa Research

Highest Impact	No.	Institution(s)	Author(s)	Country(ies)
	1	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (86)	Goswami, R. (116)	Hong Kong (145)
	2	Suleyman Sah University (82)	Chinai, R. (116)	United States of America (119)
	3	Marmara University (82)	Lee, C. (90)	South Korea (90)
	4	Massey University (82)	Balli, H. (82)	United Kingdom (44)
	5	Hang Seng Management College (82)	Balli F. (82)	Turkey (22)
Most Influential Articles	No.	Title	Author(s)	Citations
	1	Medical visas mark growth of Indian medical tourism	Chinai, R. Goswami, R	116
	2	Impacts of exported Turkish soap operas and visa-free entry on inbound tourism to Turkey	Balli, F., Balli, H., Cebeci, K.	82
	3	Tourism demand in Hong Kong: Income, prices, and visa restrictions	Cheng, K.	59
	4	The role of visa exemption in Chinese tourists' decision-making: a model of goal-directed behavior	Song, H., Lee, C., Reisinger, Y., Xu, H.	54



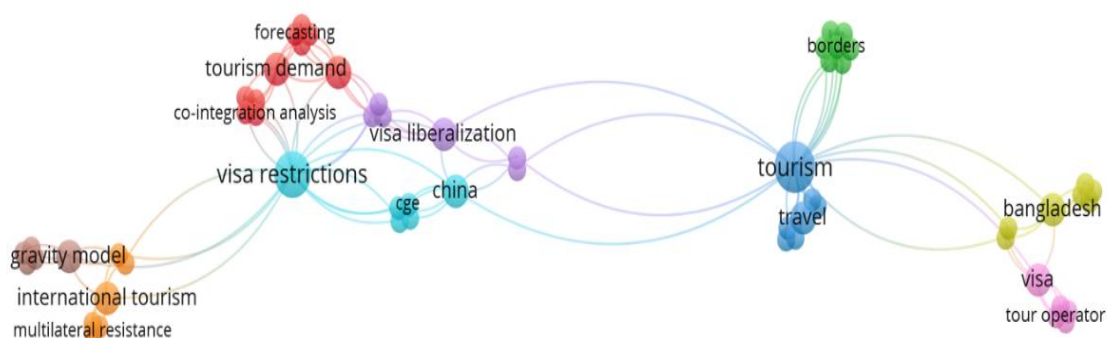
5	Economic impacts of visa restrictions on tourism: A case of two events in china	Li, S., Song, H.	44

Source: Own elaboration.

The analysis of these results shows that influence in tourism and visa research is not measured only by the number of publications but also by their citation impact, with the numbers in parentheses indicating the total citations attributed to each institution, author, or country. For example, Goswami and Chinai's joint work on medical visas has accumulated 116 citations, making it the most influential contribution in the field, while Balli et al.'s study on Turkish soap operas and visa-free entry has 82 citations, and Cheng's work on Hong Kong tourism demand has 59. This distribution suggests a relatively dispersed field where no single actor dominates, as institutions such as The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Suleyman Sah University, Marmara University, Massey University, and Hang Seng Management College.

On the other hand, Figure 2 presents a mapping of the main research themes in tourism and visas, categorised using relevant keywords. This diagram illustrates the connections between key terms such as "visa liberalisation," "tourism demand," "visa restrictions," "tour operator," and "borders," which cluster to represent different research foci in this area. The visualisation identifies relationships between concepts and how they group into various themes, offering a structured view of the predominant and emerging topics at the intersection of tourism and visa policies.

Figure 2. Themes in Tourism and Visas Based on Keywords



Source: Own elaboration

The keyword mapping reflects a thematic organisation highlighting several areas of focus. Terms such as "visa liberalisation" and "visa restrictions" are central themes strongly connected to "tourism demand" and "international tourism", indicating academic interest in how visa policies directly influence tourism demand. Visa liberalisation policies and travel restrictions are analysed in the context of their impact on international tourist flows



and destination accessibility, particularly in countries like China and Bangladesh, which are mentioned in the diagram.

Other terms such as "borders" and "travel" suggest the connection between mobility and the physical and regulatory boundaries faced by tourists, while terms like "tour operator" suggest a focus on the actors who facilitate or mediate the travel experience within the context of visa restrictions. Additionally, keywords related to econometric and analytical models, such as "gravity model" and "co-integration analysis", indicate the use of advanced quantitative tools to study tourism demand and flow dynamics.

Specific topics such as "visa-free travel" and "visa exemption" demonstrate interest in the effects of visa exemptions on tourism, particularly in emerging markets and destinations aiming to enhance their appeal through more flexible access policies. The combination of these keywords highlights the complexity of the interactions between tourism, mobility, and regulation, as well as the growing interest in travel facilitation policies that seek to balance security and accessibility to maximise tourism's economic impact.

Qualitative Meta-Analysis: Emerging Themes in Visas and Tourism

Analysing predominant themes and their trends is particularly relevant in bibliometric studies, as it enables an understanding of the evolution and connections within a field of research (Trip et al., 2021). In this context, the thematic development within this area of knowledge is discussed below.

Impact of Visa Policies on Tourist Flows

Visa policies represent a critical element in the international mobility of tourists and the configuration of global tourist flows. Previous studies show that these policies significantly influence the number of international arrivals and the choice of tourist destinations. Visa restrictions, which increase the cost and time required to obtain entry permits, can act as barriers for potential tourists, discouraging travel to countries with more restrictive policies. This particularly affects economies that rely on tourism as a source of income (Chi et al., 2022; Yudhistira et al., 2021; Stromberg, 2021). According to Song et al. (2017) and Artal-Tur et al. (2016), it is estimated that visa restrictions reduce bilateral tourist flows by an average of 40%, while their absence can increase flows to alternative destinations by 17%.

The impact of visa policies also depends on the region and economic context. In OECD countries, the implementation of visa exemptions has been shown to contribute to increased arrivals and tourism revenue, although this relationship is not always linear. Chi et al. (2022) and Freier and Holloway (2019) highlight that factors such as the quality of tourism services and the perception of safety play a key role in tourists' final decision-making. In developing countries, such as Ecuador, the opening of borders for tourism has brought economic benefits but also challenges, including an increase in irregular migration. This indicates that, in some cases, visa exemptions must be implemented cautiously to balance the benefits of tourism with local security concerns (Chawla et al., 2020; Webster and Ivanov, 2016).



National case studies provide evidence of the heterogeneous effects of visa policies. In Indonesia, for example, visa exemptions have shown varied effects depending on the country of origin of tourists and specific destinations within the country. This increase was notably higher in less traditional destinations and among tourists from developed countries, suggesting the need for tailored strategies to maximise the benefits of such policies (Yudhistira et al., 2021; Freier and Holloway, 2019). Similarly, the Chinese and Korean markets demonstrate that the expectation of visa exemptions can influence travel intentions, encouraging visits to destinations with flexible access policies. This underscores the importance of combining visa exemption policies with promotional campaigns and improvements in tourism service infrastructure to optimise their economic impact (Lawson and Roychoudhury, 2016; Lee et al., 2010).

In addition to general visa policies, visa waiver programmes emerge as a crucial tool for facilitating tourism from specific nationalities and mitigating traditional barriers that limit the flow of international visitors. These programmes, by reducing costs and simplifying entry procedures, have proven effective in generating significant increases in tourist arrivals. A notable example is Israel, where partial and full visa waivers increased tourism by 48% and 118%, respectively, demonstrating how the removal of restrictions can catalyse tourism and thereby contribute to the economic development of strategic destinations (Beenstock et al., 2015).

In the context of specific regional programmes, the visa waiver programme in Jeju, South Korea, stands out as a unilateral initiative applied solely to this region. Implemented to boost tourism in Jeju, this programme allowed visa-free access for tourists from certain countries, with a positive impact on tourism demand for the island. The data reflect how such programmes, when aligned with regional development policies, can significantly increase visits, despite challenges such as the need for direct flights to the destination or visa-free transit policies at selected airports to facilitate access (Kim et al., 2023).

At the regional level, initiatives such as the unified visa for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been proposed to facilitate cross-border tourism and simplify the entry process. Inspired by the Schengen visa system, this policy could reduce barriers and boost tourism in less developed countries, where international tourist flows remain low due to factors such as perceived insecurity and limited infrastructure (Douglas et al., 2012). These schemes not only promote bloc-wide tourism but also facilitate trade and other cross-border interactions that can generate significant economic and social benefits for local communities.

Similarly, the case of visa waiver programmes in Europe, such as the Schengen Agreement, demonstrates how coordinated and multilateral policies can foster not only tourism but also economic development and regional integration. By eliminating border controls between member countries, Schengen has promoted the free mobility of people, goods, and services, establishing itself as a reference model for removing barriers to tourism and trade on a larger scale (Beenstock et al., 2015).

The relationship between South Korea and Japan is a clear example of the benefits of visa waivers in a high-demand context. Following the implementation of the visa waiver in 2006, the number of South Korean visitors to Japan increased by 25% in the second year, resulting in a significant increase in tourism sector revenues. This exemplifies the economic potential of such policies in established tourism markets and reinforces the



importance of analysing their impact in each context to maximise their benefits (Lee et al., 2010; Karaman, 2016).

In this way, the elimination or simplification of visa policies can serve as a strategic tool to promote international tourism. However, their effectiveness depends on a comprehensive approach that considers security factors, infrastructure, and destination image. Countries with well-planned visa strategies can benefit significantly but must consider the particularities of their context and adapt their promotion and management policies to maximise the economic and social potential of tourist flows (Studzińska, 2014; Balli et al., 2013).

Technology and Visa Processes

The integration of advanced technologies in visa processes has been essential for improving efficiency and accessibility in international mobility, with significant implications for tourism. Akhter et al. (2020) argue that e-Government and e-Tourism platforms, which facilitate the electronic management of visa procedures, have significantly simplified tourist access to various destinations by reducing time and entry requirements. In this regard, Adukaite et al. (2020) add that tourism websites in various countries provide detailed information on visa applications, including steps, timelines, and required documents. This digitalisation has improved the relationship between tourists and governmental authorities, enabling more effective travel planning by making information accessible from anywhere.

The quality of the information provided on these websites is a critical aspect for the success of e-Visa systems, as a clear and comprehensive presentation of requirements directly influences the tourist's experience and perception of the destination. Alauddin and Hassan (2021) emphasise that quality information on digital channels helps overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, which is essential for hassle-free access. The ease of applying for a visa online and obtaining permission without needing to visit an embassy represents progress not only in terms of accessibility but also in optimising the resources of authorities.

Moreover, the use of big data and predictive analytics in visa technology systems enables governments to anticipate tourist behaviour patterns and adjust their policies and services in real time (Akhter et al., 2020). These advanced tools facilitate more secure and efficient management of tourist flows, helping to balance accessibility with security. In this context, Adukaite et al. (2020) note that the digitalisation of visa processes within the realm of e-Tourism fosters a convergence of user-oriented technological and governmental efforts, with the potential for global expansion towards more accessible and secure tourism.

Visa Policies Related to Tourism and Health

The intersection between visa policies and medical tourism plays a crucial role in accessing specialised healthcare treatments. It is highlighted that international patients face numerous obstacles in the process of obtaining medical visas, often delaying access to urgent treatments. Young et al. (2019) discuss an illustrative case in which a patient



from Liberia with advanced head and neck cancer had to overcome complex legal and administrative barriers to receive treatment in the United States, underscoring the need to simplify processes to facilitate quicker access to international medical care.

In addition, visa policies related to public health have been adapted in some countries to address the transmission of infectious diseases. According to the policy analysis of tourist destinations by Weinberg et al. (2016), certain countries have implemented medical examination requirements as a prerequisite for obtaining visas. This approach aims to mitigate the risks associated with communicable diseases, though the inconsistent application of these policies has limited their effectiveness. Notably, the need for a coordinated international framework to ensure uniform health checks for travellers is emphasised.

Furthermore, medical tourism has also been promoted as an economic development strategy in countries that have adopted specific medical visas. These visas, designed to facilitate the entry of patients seeking advanced treatments, have been successfully implemented in countries such as India, attracting thousands of medical tourists annually. However, Chinai and Goswami (2007) point out that, while these policies generate significant revenue, their impact on the equity of the local healthcare system remains a matter of debate, as access for the local population could be affected in favour of medical tourists.

Economic Implications

Visa policies have a direct impact on national economies, particularly in sectors reliant on tourism. According to Pham et al. (2018), increases in visa fees can deter tourists, negatively affecting the gross domestic product (GDP) of host countries. An example is Australia, where the implementation of multiple-entry visas with high fees led to a 21% decline in Chinese tourist arrivals, resulting in significant economic losses that exceeded the revenue generated by visa fees. This case underscores the need for balanced visa policies that maximise revenue without compromising tourist demand.

International events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics highlight the complex interactions between visa policies and economic benefits. During this event, visa restrictions significantly reduced tourism revenue, causing losses of approximately \$964 million (Li and Song, 2013). However, easing visa policies can reverse these trends, as projections indicate that relaxing restrictions could lead to a significant increase in global tourism and generate billions in additional revenue. These findings emphasise the importance of designing visa policies that balance mobility facilitation with security, thereby optimising economic benefits for host economies.

Tourism and Security Issues

International tourism depends not only on open and facilitative migration policies but also on the perception of safety in tourist destinations. Security policies associated with visa waiver programmes, such as the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) in the United States, are notable for their dual benefits: promoting tourism while maintaining high security standards. According to Kolker and Platzer (2020), the VWP imposes stringent security



requirements, such as the mandatory use of electronic passports and participation in information-sharing systems on terrorism and crime via INTERPOL. This dual function aims to balance tourism promotion with protection against potential threats.

On the other hand, Cheng (2012) highlights that the perception of risk is a crucial determinant of tourism demand, particularly following events such as terrorist attacks or health crises. The implementation of visible security measures, such as biometric controls and pre-travel checks, can alleviate tourists' fears and foster greater confidence in destinations. This is especially relevant in contexts where tourism is a major source of income, such as Hong Kong, which has implemented specific policies to ensure tourist safety while promoting economic growth in the sector.

Migration and Tourism

The relationship between migration and tourism has been reinforced by temporary mobility programmes that integrate work, study, and travel, reshaping labour and social dynamics in host countries. In Australia, for example, temporary work visas such as categories 417 and 485 allow young people to work, study, and travel, generating intersections between tourism and migration policies where work and educational experiences contribute to broader economic goals, such as labour diversification and regional tourism growth (Robertson, 2016). In the United States, programmes such as J-1 and H-2B visas have been essential to meeting seasonal demand in the tourism industry, particularly in hospitality and entertainment. However, these programmes have been criticised for producing precarious labour conditions, including low wages and limited access to social benefits. In this context, Terry (2018) stresses the importance of a more balanced approach that protects workers' rights while addressing the economic needs of the tourism sector. The growing reliance on migrant labour raises further questions about how visa policies can adapt to meet market demands without undermining equity and community cohesion.

Alongside these schemes, privileged mobility programmes such as Portugal's golden visas illustrate another dimension of the migration-tourism nexus, where residency permits are granted to individuals with substantial economic capital through real estate investment. As Amante and Rodrigues (2020) argue, these programmes not only promote elite migration but also stimulate residential and cultural tourism in key destinations such as Lisbon and Porto. This phenomenon highlights how international mobility is increasingly oriented towards the pursuit of desired lifestyles, reflecting the complexity of motivations that underpin contemporary migration. Together, these cases reveal the dual role of visa frameworks: on one hand, sustaining critical labour segments in tourism through temporary and seasonal schemes, and on the other, promoting elite forms of mobility that reconfigure urban spaces and local economies.

Discussion and Conclusions

The bibliometric review of scientific production on visa policies and their impact on tourism revealed significant insights into how mobility regimes shape international tourist flows and the socio-economic dynamics of destinations. The evidence shows that visa



exemptions and facilitation programmes consistently stimulate arrivals, with countries such as Israel and South Korea reporting notable increases in revenues after adopting more flexible entry schemes. These findings confirm that easing entry requirements can function as a powerful policy instrument for boosting tourism competitiveness. At the same time, however, they also highlight inherent risks. Destinations that liberalise access without parallel investments in infrastructure, environmental management, or cultural preservation face the danger of overcrowding, resource depletion, and weakened cultural sustainability. This indicates that the benefits of visa liberalisation are highly contingent on the capacity of destinations to integrate facilitation policies with responsible tourism planning.

A second contribution of the study lies in highlighting the transformative role of technology in visa processes. E-visa platforms, big data, and predictive analytics have significantly improved the efficiency of managing tourist flows, offering more secure and user-friendly experiences. These developments illustrate how the convergence between tourism management and digital governance is reshaping mobility practices. Yet, the results also reveal that technological adoption is uneven across regions, raising questions of equity in access. Moreover, visa programmes such as temporary work visas and golden visas demonstrate that, while economically beneficial, they often exacerbate inequalities by privileging certain groups of travellers or investors, thereby reinforcing socio-economic asymmetries within tourism systems.

Building on these findings, the paper suggests that future research should strengthen interdisciplinary approaches that bridge tourism studies with international relations, public policy, and law. Such integration would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how visas operate simultaneously as instruments of tourism management and foreign policy. Policymakers are encouraged to design visa frameworks that balance openness with sustainability, prioritise inclusivity, and incorporate technological tools responsibly.

This study is not without limitations. The reliance on bibliometric methods, while useful for identifying patterns and trends, does not capture the full complexity of policy implementation at the national or regional level.

In conclusion, visa policies emerge as complex governance tools at the intersection of mobility, security, and development. Their potential to promote tourism growth is evident, but their effectiveness ultimately depends on context-sensitive strategies that reconcile economic objectives with social equity and sustainability. By mapping the state of knowledge on visas and tourism, this study contributes to advancing both scholarly debates and the formulation of more inclusive and effective mobility policies for the future.

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ROLE OF FORENSIC SCIENCE IN PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENSURING JUSTICE

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Abstract

Right to Speedy trial has been recognized by the Supreme Court of India as an intrinsic human right. However, there is failure in adequately protecting this right of the victims because there is insufficient and inadmissible evidence that can stand the scrutiny of the court. The prosecution bears the burden of proof in criminal trials under the Anglo-Saxon type of jurisprudence that is adopted in India, with oral testimony serving as the primary source of proof. Experience has demonstrated that most of the time, oral testimony is not accepted because of some very pertinent issues. Witnesses examined long after the event are unable to remember the significant and minute details of the crime in question, or they provide false testimony in response to coercion, intimidation and incitement. Some even turn hostile in the Court leading to complete turnaround of the case having devastating results for the victim. Besides, due to lack of sufficient evidence and pressure to resolve the case within specified deadlines, the use of third-degree techniques and other criminal tactics, such as torture, is a trend among investigating officers. These practices can be completely avoided when evidence collected by using forensic methods which has a greater admissibility in the court of law and can fix the onus of crime on the accused resulting in delivering timely justice to the victim. The article focusses on the role of forensic Science for protecting human rights and covers cases both from primary and secondary sources to prove this hypothesis to be factual and real.

Keywords

Evidence, Security, Interrogation, Prosecution, Training.

Resumo

O direito a um julgamento rápido foi reconhecido pelo Supremo Tribunal da Índia como um direito humano intrínseco. No entanto, há falhas na proteção adequada desse direito das vítimas, pois não há provas suficientes e admissíveis que possam resistir ao escrutínio do tribunal. A acusação tem o ônus da prova em julgamentos criminais sob o tipo de jurisprudência anglo-saxónica adotada na Índia, com o testemunho oral servindo como fonte primária de prova. A experiência tem demonstrado que, na maioria das vezes, os depoimentos orais não são aceitos devido a algumas questões muito pertinentes. Testemunhas interrogadas muito tempo após o evento são incapazes de se lembrar dos detalhes



significativos e minuciosos do crime em questão, ou prestam depoimentos falsos em resposta a coação, intimidação e incitamento. Algumas até se tornam hostis no tribunal, levando a uma reviravolta completa no caso, com resultados devastadores para a vítima. Além disso, devido à falta de provas suficientes e à pressão para resolver o caso dentro de prazos específicos, o uso de técnicas de terceiro grau e outras táticas criminais, como a tortura, é uma tendência entre os investigadores. Estas práticas podem ser completamente evitadas quando as provas são recolhidas através de métodos forenses, que têm maior admissibilidade em tribunal e podem atribuir a responsabilidade pelo crime ao arguido, resultando na justiça oportuna para a vítima. O artigo centra-se no papel da ciência forense na proteção dos direitos humanos e aborda casos de fontes primárias e secundárias para provar que esta hipótese é factual e real.

Palavras-chave

Provas, segurança, interrogatório, acusação, formação.

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Introduction

The goal of forensic scientists is to collect and analyze evidence from the crime scenes with a purpose to help the investigation and prosecution of crime perpetrators and an intent to clear an innocent person of suspicion. The first forensic human rights expedition was conducted by the skilled forensic anthropologist Clyde Snow in Argentina. It was the grandmothers of the missing in Argentina had an ardent and tenacious desire to find out what had happened to their loved ones which had inspired this expedition. In addition to offering some closure and aiding in the healing process for friends and family, the forensic mission also produced evidence that may be used in criminal prosecution.

The first Central Fingerprint Bureau of India was founded in 1897 in Kolkata, India and started operating in 1904. Under the Department of Biotechnology, a cutting-edge Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD) has been built in Hyderabad. DNA profiling is currently being used by police departments, forensic institutes, and wildlife agencies to identify people and animals from biological fluids and tissue samples in criminal cases involving murder, suicide, sexual assault, terrorism, and other crimes. Over 80 colleges and universities can be found in India, including the National Forensic Science University in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, and Rashtriya Raksha University in Lavad, Gandhinagar, where the School of Forensic Science & Risk Management also provides education, research, and training to students., Police and Paramilitary forces for security (National Forensic Science University, 2024).

A deeper comprehension of the nature of unlawful acts and offenses, the essential qualities and innate disposition of criminal minds and social control mechanisms is made possible by the application of knowledge from science, technology, medicine and related fields in resolving disputes. Physical evidence, whether biological (such as a cadaver, skeletal remains, bloodstain, or saliva on an envelope) or nonbiological (such as projectiles, synthetic fibres, and other things pertinent to an investigation— are analysed to provide a scientific base and a tangible proof to the investigation process. The conclusions then are quantifiable and grounded in a sequence of observable procedures acknowledged by the judiciary.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that forensic science does not merely serve the criminal justice system but also plays a central role in the protection of human rights.



By providing impartial, scientific evidence, forensic methods protect individuals from wrongful convictions, reduce reliance on coerced confessions or torture, and strengthen the right to a fair trial. They also uphold the dignity of victims by identifying missing persons, restoring the truth of state abuses such as enforced disappearances, and ensuring accountability in cases of extrajudicial killings or custodial deaths. Thus, forensic science functions as both an investigative tool and a guardian of fundamental human rights.

Literature Review

In his book, "Forensic Science- An Introduction to Scientific Crime Detection", Wall (2008) presented an extensive and update understanding of the overall context for expert scientific evidence as well as how scientific methods are applied in the administration of law, particularly in the criminal justice system. The author without assuming any scientific background on the reader's part, has thoroughly discussed every advancement in technology in the field today. Lee & Pagliaro (2013) explained that, by using forensic methods and plan of action, advance law enforcers have remarkably increased their capacity to resolve crime offences. In present scenario, cases can often be solved with forensic evidence investigation and a thorough and careful crime scene examination. Forensic scientists play a vital role not just in criminal investigations and prosecutions but also in civil litigation, major natural and man-made disaster relief efforts, and the investigation of transnational crimes. Forensic evidence analysis requires a team-oriented system, advanced investigative tools and methods (such as GPS tracking, cell phone tracking, video image analysis, artificial intelligence, and data mining), and the ability to properly process a crime scene by locating, obtaining, and preserving all relevant physical evidence.

Rudin & Inman (2000) have proposed that reconstruction, or attempting to help ascertain the causes, process, timing and place of the incidence or criminal act and the associated or engaged offenders, is at the core of science's application to the legal field. evidence that has undergone forensic investigation to help the court establish tangible facts to settle a criminal or civil issue.

Further, Irons & Lallie (2014) identified the importance of digital forensic and suggested that, the ability of digital investigators to apply digital forensics and investigative procedures to obtain timely results is under increasing strain due to the rise in cybercrime, the complexity of the various types of cybercrime, and the constraints on time and resources—both computational and human—when addressing cybercrime. The limitations and capabilities of the forensic tools currently in use must be overcome to better utilise the resources at hand and address the issues.

According to Hollien (2002), voice-based evidence is a crucial component of many criminal investigations and frequently consists of recordings made during police questioning, robberies captured on camera, or threats left on an answering machine. In the era of mobile phones, voicemail, and speech recognition software, technology is everywhere. The book emphasizes strategies and procedures for assessing recorded data and aids in understanding the fundamental sciences underlying voice recognition along with exacting analysis of the scientific data regarding how well crime prevention works in the US, the UK, and other countries. It examines over 600 scientific assessments of



crime prevention initiatives throughout seven domains: households, schools, communities, workplaces, law enforcement, and courts/corrections, strategies and processes for reviewing documentary evidence. According to Fisher (2009), among the most crucial tools a forensic scientist uses is observation. The ability is used in two distinct contexts: one involves searching a scene or an object in the lab for goals or characteristics that could produce important evidence upon additional testing, and the other involves identifying a substantial category of evidence that we can broadly refer to as pattern evidence. The fundamental idea behind pattern evidence is that physical objects have the ability to create impressions on other materials. By analysing these impressions or marks, one can determine whether or not the object of interest left the mark. Therefore, without downplaying its significance, pattern matching is a skill that criminalists use as part of their evidence processing.

Additionally, the literature on forensic science increasingly emphasises its human rights dimensions. Scholars such as Ferrándiz (2013) and Wagner (2019) have highlighted how forensic anthropology has been used to address enforced disappearances in Latin America, especially in Argentina and Guatemala. Similarly, UN reports (OHCHR, 2016; UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, 2020) stress that forensic tools are indispensable in documenting torture, mass graves, and war crimes. This literature demonstrates that beyond crime-solving, forensic science is a mechanism for truth, reconciliation, and justice in societies dealing with human rights abuses.

Central Question - Protection of human rights is possible through forensic science

Many cases in the past have demonstrated that most of the time, oral testimony is not accepted. Examined long after the occurrence, witnesses often forget specifics of what happened or provide false testimony due to coercion or threats. These coercion and threats may vary due to the psychological as well as physiological aspects of eyewitness testimony. In contrast, forensic evidence is of a higher calibre and is more likely to be admitted into evidence in a court of law.

On the other hand, advancement in science and technologies has led to newer techniques and methods of criminal's 'modus operandi' widening the field of crime. Therefore, investigation techniques and further processes need to be modified to meet the demands of present criminal cases to combat increasing rate of the acquittal and protect the human rights of both side and at large give clear message in society also. To prevent the rising rate of acquittal and safeguard the human rights of all parties involved in criminal cases, investigation methods and subsequent procedures must be adjusted. In addition, when there is insufficient proof very often, the investigating police have a predisposition to utilise illegal measures, like torture and third-degree procedures. Such practices can be completely avoided when evidence gathering can demonstrate the accused person's innocence.

Forensic science therefore strengthens human rights in two ways: by protecting victims' rights to justice and dignity, and by protecting the accused from wrongful prosecution. It ensures that justice is based on evidence rather than coercion, aligning criminal justice with the constitutional guarantees of equality, liberty, and fair trial.



Realizing the significant & a positive role of forensics to play in various cases, huge funds have been given to States & Central forensic labs for building forensic capacities in India. Under the

Nirbhaya Fund and Police Modernization Scheme, forensic infrastructure is being developed. Specialised centres such as the University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, are being established, particularly following the 2018 Criminal Law Amendment Act. In the past two years, more than 200 crores have been approved for forensic science (Kathane, et al., 2021)

Main arguments on Protecting Human Rights with Forensics via case studies.

Case Study One

On 07-07-2015, the complainant Roshani Aged 13 years (daughter of deceased) resident of village Kalpa Distt Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh, India got recorded her statement U/S 154 CrPc. before Chowki Incharge Kalpa and stated that her father had died and she (complainant), her two younger brothers are living at Kalpa in a single room along with their mother (deceased). Amila was stated to worked in Rolling Rug Hotel Kalpa. She stated that on 05-07-2015 her mother namely Amila and aunt Kiran had gone to Kalpa Depot in order to bring kerosene oil. At about 11A.M. her mother and aunt Kiran brought kerosene oil and came back in a white-colored vehicle. After some time, her mother and her aunt Kiran had gone towards chuglig pangi in the same white colored vehicle inside of which one Surrender S/O Shyam Lal (accused) was sitting. While living kalpa the deceased Amila had told her daughter Roshani (complainant) that she will come back soon. But said Amila did not come back on that day and on this, the complainant kumari Roshani made search of her mother on her own and enquired from Hotel Rolig Rug wherein the deceased was stated to be working, and the complainant came to know that her mother had not come for work in the above stated hotel. Thereafter, the complainant lodged a missing report in Police Chowki Kalpa. Based on the above statement of complainant, a case FIR No. 27/15 Dated 07-07-2015, U/S 364 IPC was registered in P.S Reckong Peo. This was a blind murder case and there was no direct evidence. Even the corpus (dead body) of deceased could not be recovered for further investigation and as such whole of the prosecution case was based upon circumstantial evidence. However, the investigating agency collected all the important circumstantial evidence carefully against the accused *as a result of which the case ended in conviction.*

Last seen theory

There was sufficient evidence on record that during the evening/night of 05.07.2015 the deceased Amila was in the company of accused from Kalpa to Rampur and again from Rampur to Kalpa. During investigation the relevant register containing the necessary entries with respect to the movement of the vehicles passing from Police Check Post Chaura was checked and on the basis thereof, it was found that accused along with two female had crossed the barrier of above Check Post on 5-7-2015 at 4.40 P.M. in his vehicle i.e. white colored Tavera H.P.- 01A -2992 and on the same date had returned



from Rampur and had gone towards Kinnour in the same vehicle along with a female at 8.42 P.M. and that on the next day at about 1.55 P.M. he had gone towards Rampur in the same vehicle with four other persons. Also the woman travelling with the accused on above date and time was duly identified as Amila (deceased) by seeing her photograph by witness Hem Chand, who was posted at Police Check Post Chaura on 5-7-2015 from 6.00 PM to 10.00 PM. *It is a established law that because there was such a short period of time between when the accused and the deceased were last seen alive and when they were discovered dead, it was impossible for anybody other than the accused to have committed the crime.* In this case none has seen the deceased after she had gone missing nor had anyone heard anything about her.

Under the above circumstances onus was upon the accused to show that the deceased is still alive and further to explain as to how and what circumstances, the deceased had suddenly gone missing. Section 106 of Indian Evidence Act clearly provides that when any fact is especially within the knowledge of any person, the burden of proving of that fact is upon him. (*State of West Bengal Vs. Meer Mohammad, Umar & others 2000(8) SCC 382*). In this case the Ld. Court has held that the only reasonable conclusion which could be drawn from the aforementioned facts is that it was the accused who had done death of the deceased and thereafter, with the intention to save himself from the legal punishment had disposed of her dead body in all probability in Satluj River to destroy the incriminating evidence against him.

Call Detail Record (CDR) Analysis

During Investigation, the record of call details of accused, witness Kiran and of the deceased showed that on 05.07.2015 at about 8.50 PM the deceased and accused were at place Badhal. The above evidence corroborates the version of witness Kiran. Thus, in view of above CDR analysis, it could be safely concluded that the deceased was in the company of accused in his vehicle on the date and time in question and as such the last seen theory evidence in this case is fully established.

Presence of various personal articles and blood of the deceased on the road near the house of the accused

On the next morning i.e. 06.07.2015 at about 6.30 AM witness Bhag Chand made a report to ASI Narbeer Singh the then Incharge of Police Post Kalpa, that while he had gone for a morning walk on old Hindustan Tibbet Road, he had found near Vanvihar Ganghut Kalpa a jacket, chapal and some patches of blood on the road. On the basis of this information, said Bhag chand accompanied by Police personnel went to the spot and brought there from the above stated articles. All the articles stated above recovered by the Police from the road were later- on identified by witness Roshni to be of her mother Amila (deceased).

DNA Evidence

On 07.07.2015, the vehicle of the accused was found parked on the side of the road at place Dhali (Shimla) and accused was found sitting in the vehicle in an inebriated



(intoxicated) condition and appeared to have consumed some insecticide as two half-filled bottles were also found inside the vehicle and accused was also found vomiting. The vehicle of the accused was taken into possession by the I.O. and the same was sent to SFSL Junga, where the forensic team of the laboratory lifted blood samples from the cover of the middle seat and foot mat of the vehicle.

During investigation, blood sample of witness Roshni (daughter of deceased) was obtained. Blood samples lifted from the spot along with the jacket identified as of Amila (deceased) having blood smears and the blood samples lifted by the forensic expert from the seat cover of the middle seat and foot mat of vehicle of accused were examined by the serologist and DNA expert. After examination, they opined that blood samples lifted from the road near Van Bihar Kalpa, the jacket, the trouser of accused and the seat cover of the vehicle of accused matched with the DNA profile obtained from the blood sample of witness Roshani (daughter of deceased). During the trial of this case, the accused failed to explain and remain silent how and in what manner the blood of deceased was found on his trouser and also on the seat cover of his vehicle.

Act and Conduct of the Accused

After commission of crime, the accused left for Shimla and tried to commit suicide there. He was admitted in IGMC Shimla and Dr. Pradeep examined the accused. The accused again failed to give any explanation that why he left Kalpa, immediately after the occurrence and what were the circumstances which compelled him to commit suicide.

The above act and conduct of the accused give support to the case of prosecution that since accused had come to know that the police had suspected his involvement in the commission of the crime and had been searching for him, so on account thereof, he had come under the extreme mental pressure and had tried to commit suicide by consuming insecticide on 07.07.2015 with the intention to escape from legal punishment.

Interrogation of the accused

After his discharge from IGMC Shimla, the accused was formally arrested by S.H.O Laxman. While in custody accused confessed his guilt and disclosed that on the night of 05-7-2015 he had crushed Amila (deceased) with his vehicle at place near Van Bihar Kalpa when she had refused to oblige him to sexual intercourse with him and thereafter, he had put her body in a sack and thrown the body thereof in river Satluj from the cliff with the intention to destroy incriminating evidence against him. In this regard the statement of accused was recorded in presence of the witnesses and thereafter he gave identification of the place where he crushed the deceased with his vehicle and of the place from where threw the dead body of the deceased in Satluj river.

All above circumstantial evidence collected by the I/O during investigation was found sufficient as the chain of circumstantial evidence was complete in all respect to bring home the guilt of accused, therefore, the Ld. Court convicted the accused U/S 302, 201 and 309 IPC.

This case illustrates that even without direct evidence, forensic methods like DNA analysis preserved the right to justice for the victim's family while safeguarding due process.



Instead of relying on confessions extracted through force, the court reached its decision on the basis of scientific, verifiable evidence, reinforcing the principle of fair trial.

Case Study Two Rape on pretext of Marriage with minor girl of SC Category

In 2012 complainant Kumari Sheela lodged her statement that she is studying in 8th class at GSSS Sultanpur District Solan. Her father was working as Mason with Sh. Yash Pal Thakur and mother is working at Soolani University, Bazol. Anil Thakur working as driver, frequently loitered nearby to her house and compelled her for friendship, but she refused. He persuaded and promised to marry her and she agreed for friendship. In the month of December, 2011 when she was coming on foot from Rampur after tuition, towards her school, Anil Thakur took her to the secluded place near Veterinary Hospital and raped her. On 16/02/2012, she went to collect fuel wood from the forest, at about 12PM and Anil Thakur came there and have sexual intercourse with her. After sexual intercourse, he threatened her that if she discloses this matter, he will commit suicide. But she disclosed this matter to her parents. On disclosure of aforesaid matter, victim's parents tried to contact accused Anil Thakur, but he insulted and threatened to kill her parents. As this case was registered under Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, so as per the provisions of this Act, investigation of this case was done by Sh. Rajesh Kumar Chhabra, DySP the then SDPO Parwanoo.

On 17/02/2012, complainant Kumari Sheela got her statement recorded at PP Dagshai, which was sent for registration of case to PS Dharampur. After registration of case, ASI Mehar Chand immediately sent complainant for medical examination to Civil Hospital Dharampur. Thereafter, Medical Officer, CHC Dharampur referred her to Regional Hospital Solan on the same day, where she was medically examined. M.O preserved all the samples and handed over to Police for forensic examination. After medical examination of victim, the Medical Officer, Regional Hospital, Solan opined that "In my opinion there is nothing to rule out the possibility of recent sexual intercourse, however final opinion will be given after report of forensic analysis"

On 18.02.2012, based on the statement of the victim, the accused was arrested after adopting all codal formalities as warranted under law and interrogated. During interrogation, he revealed that victim is his friend and on the pretext of friendship, he had sexual intercourse with victim. Accused also revealed that victim agreed to marry him, but her parents and relatives were not happy with this episode. Accused Anil Kumar was produced before Medical Officer, CHC Dharampur for medical examination on 18/02/2012. M.O. issued MLC of the accused Anil Kumar. In the MLC of accused Anil Kumar, M.O. opined that "Mr Anil Kumar S/o Sh Amar Singh there is nothing to suggest that he is not capable of performing sexual intercourse however opinion is reserve *till the report come from forensic lab.*"

During the course of investigation IO/ DySP visited the Scene of Crime. Videography/photography of occurrence was conducted from all angles. Spot Map was prepared by indicating all necessary points of occurrence in the map. IO/Dy.SP inspected the spot in depth and collected the physical evidence's i.e. clothes of victim & accused and seized as per procedure. The dockets (clothes of victim, swab, vaginal slid, hair, FTA Card &



DNA) were sent to FSL Junga for further chemical examination & analysis. All exhibits preserved by Medical Officer i.e victim's clothes, vaginal swabs, vaginal slides, pubic hairs and accused person underwear, DNA test on FTA card and sent for chemical examination to FSL, Junga. Accused Anil Thakur was in judicial custody on 21/02/2012 for fourteen days, which was further extended and was ensured that accused, could not get bail upto the presentation of the final report. Prime facie case was made out against the accused person. Hence, challan U/s 376 IPC & 3(1) (XII) SC/ST Act 1988 was prepared by SHO Sh. Pritam Singh, Inspector, dated on 17/03/2012. After receiving expert report from FSL Junga same was produced before Medical Officer RH Solan for final opinion on MLC. The Medical Officer opined that "there is nothing to rule out the possibility of recent sexual intercourse and final opinion pertains to accused Anil Kumar is remain same as dated 18/02/2012".

The case was tried in the LD Court of Session Judge, Solan. The accused convicted by the LD Court on 26/08/2014. LD Court of Session Judge, Solan announced the decision in different penal sections i.e. on 26/08/2014 and 27/09/2014, respectively. The convict was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a period of 10 years and to pay a fine of rupees 25,000. Under the SC/ST Act, the convict is sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and to pay a fine of rupees 25,000.

Scientific investigation played a key role in the conviction of accused in this case. During investigation under garments, vaginal swabs, pubic hairs of victim, underwear and blood of accused were sent to FSL for chemical analysis and DNA profiling. DNA profile obtained from the exhibits of victim matches completely with the DNA profile obtained from the exhibits belonging to accused (Case Study, 2006).

Here, forensic science upheld the dignity and rights of a minor victim by substantiating her testimony through scientific evidence. The reliance on medical and DNA evidence meant that her claims were not dismissed as mere allegations, demonstrating how forensics can empower vulnerable groups in seeking justice.

Case Study Three

The use of cutting-edge forensic science tools has served as a vital link in solving the Kotkhai gangrape and murder of 16-year-old Gudiya.

The Central Forensic Science Lab of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was the only resource that allowed the CBI to solve the case in nine months. The CBI focused in on Anil Kumar, also known as Nilu, a 25-year-old man. A thick woodland is the crime site, where the victim was raped and killed. The cops began their search and gathered all the evidence, including clay from the crime scene, spirits bottles, blood samples and samples of semen. Afterwards, more than 250 local residents' blood samples were gathered to compare them with the semen and additional DNA samples.

Additionally, the police took statements from 400 persons and questioned nearly 2000 people. The first results were negative when the CFSL began comparing the DNA of 250 individuals with the accused's semen. Afterwards, the CFSL performed "lineage test" and "percentage test" on all 250 samples, and happily, the results matched the sample. Blood samples were taken from both parents once more after the sample matched with a



Kangra family. Investigation revealed that one of the family members has not been in contact with the family since September 2016, when he went missing.

The Kotkhai case highlights how forensic science becomes indispensable when crimes occur in remote areas with minimal witnesses. By scientifically establishing guilt, the state was able to fulfil its responsibility to protect the victim's right to life and security while ensuring accountability of the perpetrator.

Case Study Four

Mumbai serial rapist-murderer case

Rehan Qureshi from Navi Mumbai allegedly had raped several minor girls and was a serial killer. Two of the girls who died were four and nine years old. The entire police force was under pressure to solve the case after three girls, aged 5 to 9, were raped and killed in June 2010. One victim was discovered in a gunny bag, while another was discovered on the terrace of the police quarters.

Police conducted thorough investigations, searched history sheets, distributed their informers, visited mental hospitals in search of missing inmates, etc. and with the help of Maharashtra Forensics lab performed more than 500 DNA tests on all suspected individuals including the son of a top official. Although their efforts failed to find the murderer, it was discovered that two murderers were involved in the crime, one of whom was apprehended and sentenced to prison. The case remained unresolved till 2017, however, till it was handed over to Maharashtra CID in 2012. With the added assistance of CCTV, the police were able to narrow down their search this time to a suspect who was wearing a blue shirt and was usually on the phone, most likely listening rather than speaking. They suspected him of being a salesman. Despite being captured on camera, he remained unaccounted for, with a fresh assault case being reported every week.

One day police patrolled the vicinity of Mira Road in the Naya Nagar area, where Qureshi was frequently spotted. Sanjay Kumar, the commissioner of police for Navi Mumbai, was among the local police personnel dressed in civilian clothes. Kumar noted Qureshi's tilt movement when he was brought next to him, and the forensics lab received a sample of his blood. After spending 40 lakh rupees on 880 tests, the forensics lab responded with a smile and "Test no. 881 was a match" when another sample was submitted. This case is similar to the serial killer Colin Pitchfork case, which was the first in the world to use DNA testing.

The Mumbai case demonstrates how prolonged investigations without forensic precision can risk violating the rights of both victims and accused. Once DNA evidence conclusively identified the perpetrator, it restored faith in justice and prevented arbitrary suspicion of innocent individuals.

Case Study Five Neeraj Grover Murder case

Neeraj Grover was a television executive who worked for Synergy Adlabs, a production company based in Mumbai. He assisted Maria Susairaj in 2008 as she made her mark in



the motion picture industry. Maria was seeing Lieutenant Emil Jerome Mathew, with whom she was engaged to be married in two months.

Neeraj Grover disappeared on May 6, 2008, after going to see Maria. When Neeraj failed to return home for a full day that day, his parents reported him missing. Susairaj was questioned by police after they suspected her of being involved in the incident, but she steadfastly denied knowing Neeraj Grover's location. She persisted in telling the same lie for eight or ten days before coming to terms with the fact that her lover, Mathew, had killed him in front of her. She reported to the authorities that Neeraj Grover was fatally stabbed by his boyfriend, who, in the heat of the moment, observed Neeraj with Maria in a compromising position. Following the murder, they dismembered his body into 300 pieces so that it would fit in a suitcase. They then drove his friend Santro's car to the outskirts of Mumbai, where they burned the body and dumped it.

It was insufficient, though, as further proof was needed to connect them to the crime. The Forensics lab was therefore asked to compare the evidence. When there were no eyewitnesses, forensics was crucial in helping to convict the perpetrators. The fact that the forensic scientific officer was called upon more than twenty times in court to disclose the process employed in the assessment of evidence indicates the reliance on forensics examination.

The official told the court that they were able to collect DNA samples from washed bloodstains and though the charred bones of Neeraj were insufficient to identify him but three teeth, femur bones, and some other residue that was collected so as to extract the DNA sample matched positively with his parent's DNA. In addition, forensic analysis was used to compare the mud extracted from the tyre treads with the secondary crime scene—where the body parts were discovered—to establish a connection. The mud samples from the location where Neeraj's body was disposed of and the mud traces matched as well.

In this case, forensic science not only secured conviction but also ensured that gruesome human rights violations like dismemberment and concealment of a body were fully exposed. The case illustrates the role of forensics in upholding both the right to truth and the right of families to closure.

Case Study Six

Nirbhaya case: Delhi gang rape – 2013.

Forensic odontology, a relatively new science in India is already showing to be quite useful in both criminal and civil matters. Nirbhaya, a twenty-three-year-old woman, was raped many times aboard a private bus in Delhi, India on December 16, 2012. She had a male companion with her. She died on December 29, 2012, because of the terrible injuries she sustained in the violent attack. In a day, the suspects were located. Six males, one of whom was a minor, were convicted guilty. The accused's dental models were compared to the several bite marks found on the victim's corpse. Dr. Ashit B. Acharya (secretary of the Indian Association of Forensic Odontology and an associate professor at SDM College of Dental Sciences and Hospital in Dharwad) used computer software to evaluate the bite marks and hypothesized that two of the bite marks belonged to the same suspect. On May 6, 2013, the court approved the evidence that was



submitted. During his trial, one of the defendants committed suicide; the young person receiving the penalty was imprisoned for three years. The death penalty was applicable to the other four adults.

The Nirbhaya case is a turning point where forensic odontology and DNA evidence upheld the rights of a victim against systemic violence. By providing irrefutable evidence, forensic science became a voice for the silenced, advancing women's rights and strengthening public confidence in justice.

Forensic Science in Addressing Human Rights Violations

While much of the discussion has centered on gruesome crimes, it is equally important to examine how forensic science addresses gross human rights violations. Globally, forensic teams have been central in uncovering mass graves, documenting torture, and identifying victims of enforced disappearances. In Argentina, forensic anthropologists helped families of the *desaparecidos* trace missing persons and prosecute state perpetrators. In Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, forensic experts under the ICTR and ICTY meticulously documented genocide and crimes against humanity, ensuring accountability before international tribunals.

In India, too, forensic science has been significant in investigating custodial deaths, extrajudicial encounters, and riot-related mass violence. Reports by the National Human Rights Commission (2020) stress that proper forensic examination prevents impunity in such cases by ensuring that deaths in custody or disappearances are investigated with scientific rigour rather than dismissed. By focusing on impartial evidence, forensic science curtails abuse of power and strengthens the constitutional mandate of protecting fundamental rights.

Therefore, forensic science must be viewed not merely as a criminal investigative tool but as a safeguard against state and non-state violations of human dignity. It embodies the principle that justice requires truth, and truth can only be established when science replaces speculation and coercion.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The human brain is a repository of knowledge that includes every bit of information regarding crimes as well as good and bad things that people have done. As a result, if we have access to this data, we can prove their culpability and the role they played in a certain conduct. Thus, the forensic science can be utilized as an instrument to established Mens Rea and Actus Rea of the accused. Mens rea means to have "a guilty mind." The rule's justification is that it is unfair for society to penalise people who damage others without intent. Actus reus literally means "guilty act," and generally refers to an overt act in furtherance of a crime. *It can also save money, time, strength as well as, it can protect human rights by avoiding long, harsh, inhuman methods of proving guilt.*

By implementing forensic procedures and techniques, the ability of law enforcement to solve crimes has greatly grown in the modern era. These days, a crime can frequently be solved with a careful examination of the crime scene and forensic evidence. Forensic scientists' work is crucial not just for criminal investigations and prosecutions but also



for civil disputes, major natural and man-made disasters, and the investigation of international crimes. The basis for the analysis of forensic evidence is a system that places a premium on collaboration, state-of-the art investigative skills and instruments (such as GPS positioning, cell phone tracking, video image analysis, artificial intelligence, and data mining), and the ability to appropriately process a crime scene by locating, obtaining, and conserving all relevant physical evidence.

Establishing a link between forensics, AI, and high-tech crime Inter-disciplinary intelligent forensics utilises technical advancements and employs resources in a more intelligent approach to resolve or assist in an investigation. Computers have immediate, significant, and lasting social and ethical repercussions. The outcomes of the development of artificial intelligence, multimedia, and robotics brought about the biggest changes in daily life. However, it's equally crucial to comprehend all the potential risk factors like privacy invasion and the challenges of maintaining security information.

The rising backlog in forensic labs, which causes trial court cases to swell and convicts awaiting trial to sulk in cells. Recommendations by National Human Rights Commission of India in the webinar on forensic science conducted on 11th August 2020 are worth mentioning here -

- It is necessary to establish consistency under a Standard Operating Procedure for performing forensic examinations;
- To fill all open positions in forensic science laboratories and to equip them with the necessary resources and facilities.
- Introduce forensic law studies as a separate course curriculum in integrated BSc (Forensic) LLB; Introduce forensic study and training in MBBS courses.
- Increase the number of forensic labs in proportion to the number of cases to be examined to prevent delays in the administration of justice;
- Create the position of District Medico-Legal Expert; professionalize post-mortem photography and videography; Make post-mortem a crucial activity for medical professionals; advise doctors properly regarding medico-legal procedures;
- To ensure the protection of women, it would be important to boost the collection of digital forensic evidence. Mortuary setup needs to be improved with the right equipment and environment to enable conduct of post-mortem.
- To facilitate forensic investigation of such cases, sexual assault kits need to be made available to all forensic labs.
- Coordination between investigators and prosecutors is crucial when using results from these systems. The two agencies might work together to organise the arrest and legal action. Early collaboration on these situations has increased both agencies' efficacy. Due to the increasing reliance on forensic evidence and the dynamic way that crime patterns are changing because of the rise in cybercrime, it is urgently necessary to fill open positions in forensic laboratories to reduce backlog and provide for training. The judiciary and investigating agencies must be aware of the general procedures and principles followed in forensics when gathering and examining the physical evidence from the scene of the incident. Forensic Examination is very



important evidence in the criminal justice system for successful administration of justice. Additionally, there is a need to raise awareness among the media and public about the need to avoid disclosing private information or methods that can obstruct an investigation or legal proceedings.

In conclusion, forensic science serves as a bridge between criminal justice and human rights protection. It prevents miscarriages of justice, ensures that the guilty are punished while the innocent are protected, and strengthens accountability for both individual and state perpetrated crimes. Expanding forensic capacities, integrating rights-based training for investigators, and fostering international collaboration will ensure that science continues to serve justice while safeguarding fundamental rights. Thus, the role of forensic science is not only technical but profoundly ethical, as it protects the very foundation of human dignity and justice.

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SAFE BUT SEEN? EVALUATING THE PROMISE AND PERILS OF WITNESS PROTECTION IN INDIA AND THE USA

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Abstract

In the due course of justice, witnesses tend to face hardships such as mental agony caused by prolonged judicial proceedings, inadequate allowances with delayed payments and most importantly the lack of security given via provisions to witnesses while they face the costs of life-threatening risks for assisting the judiciary in attaining justice. United States has been the most successful while carrying out witness protection, this paper will discuss the need for India to tweak its witness protection schemes by using the US model as a base. The role of witnesses is to provide evidence from the learnings that they possess in relation to an offence, this information is used from the early stage of investigation to ascertaining a judgment. The formerly known *Indian Evidence Act 1872* now referred to as the *Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023*, although provides certain rights to witnesses, has not laid down the privileges and protection that need to be given to witnesses explicitly.

Keywords

Witness Protection scheme, India, USA, Article 21, Indian Constitution, Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, WITSEC.

Resumo

No devido curso da justiça, as testemunhas tendem a enfrentar dificuldades, tais como agonia mental causada por processos judiciais prolongados, subsídios inadequados com pagamentos atrasados e, mais importante ainda, a falta de segurança por via das provisões às testemunhas enquanto enfrentam os custos dos riscos que ameaçam a sua vida por ajudarem o poder judicial a alcançar a justiça. Os Estados Unidos têm sido os mais bem-sucedidos na implementação da proteção de testemunhas. Este artigo discutirá a necessidade de a Índia ajustar os seus esquemas de proteção de testemunhas, usando o modelo dos EUA como base. O papel das testemunhas é fornecer provas a partir do conhecimento que possuem em relação a um crime. Essas informações são utilizadas desde a fase inicial da investigação até à determinação de um julgamento. A antiga Lei de Provas da Índia de 1872, agora conhecida como *Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023*, embora conceda certos direitos às testemunhas, não estabelece explicitamente os privilégios e a proteção que devem ser concedidos às testemunhas.



Palavras-chave

Programa de Proteção a Testemunhas, Índia, EUA, Artigo 21, Constituição Indiana, Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, WITSEC.

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SAFE BUT SEEN? EVALUATING THE PROMISE AND PERILS OF WITNESS PROTECTION IN INDIA AND THE USA

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Addressing the Challenges of Witness Protection in India: A Comparative Study with the United States

"In search of truth, he plays that sacred role of the sun, which eliminates the darkness of ignorance and illuminates the face of justice, encircled by devils of humanity and compassion" (Abhyankar & Abhyankar, 2018).

According to Jeremy Bentham, *"Witnesses are the eyes and ears of justice"*. This information they possess is crucial from the stage of investigation to the time a judgement is ascertained. Witness protection has been emphasised in plethora of judgements wherein the need for an environment conducive to a fair trial was demanded, which included the protection of witnesses (*Gurbachan Singh v. State of Bombay*, 1952); statutes such as the *Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 (BSA)*, previously known as the *Indian Evidence Act, 1872*, and the *Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)*, previously known as the *Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC)*, have only attempted at defining them indirectly by asserting their roles. For instance, *S.180 BNSS* states that a police officer can examine an individual who is *"acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the case"* whereas *Chapter IX and Chapter X* of the *BSA* provides for the conditions that need to be complied with to check the competency of witnesses and their mode of examination. Even though, the term "witness" has not explicitly been defined in any Indian legislative text, it is a well-known fact that a witness is extremely crucial to a proceeding. This was reiterated in the case of *Sarwan Singh v. State of Punjab*, 1957, wherein *Justice Wadhwa* emphasised the importance of a witness and stated that *"a criminal case is built on the edifice of evidence, evidence that is admissible in law. For that witnesses are required whether it is direct evidence or circumstantial evidence"*. Further, recognising the issues faced by witnesses, the court pointed towards the dire need of a witness protection legislation and called upon to discourage obtaining adjournments in cases where witness is present and accused is absent (*State of U.P. v. Shambhu Nath Singh*, 2001). The court suggested that threatening witnesses should be



a ground for the cancellation of bail and maintaining anonymity for rape victims and carved out an exception for terrorism witnesses wherein right of accused was subjected to certain exceptions. The courts, realising the imminent threats faced by witnesses, allowed re-trial due to such apprehension. (Ram Govind Upadhyay v. Sudarshan Singh, 2002; Delhi Domestic Working Women's Forum v. Union of India, 1995; People's Union of Civil Liberties v. Union of India, 2003)

This paper is strictly based on a qualitative methodological framework, derived from existing legislation and secondary research. The authors' research approach is deductive with a combination of interpretivism and critical philosophy. This approach intends to determine the factors acting as limitations for witness protection, the improvements necessary to efficiently protect the rights of witnesses in India, and the effect on future generations. The United States has been the most successful while carrying out witness protection. Hence, the authors seek to examine whether there is a requirement for India to modify their witness protection programmes and use the US model as a foundation.

Thus, with this methodological schema, the paper centres upon the dilemma between the efficacy of witness protection through the existing laws, the need for the formation of stronger legislation to optimally tackle the legal issues arising out of coercion, threat, bribery, and the need to assess the effects of witness protection on the development of children. Additionally, a comparison of India with the US model of witness protection aptly exemplifies this dilemma, wherein they represent two very diverse models of protecting witnesses within their territories. As to the research limitations, firstly there exists a lack of access to confidential government records of the respective nations. Secondly, the inability to conduct quantitative data via interviews and other forms of data collection. Lastly, the absence of enough R&D carried out within India.

Finally, this paper contributes to the existing literature in a twofold manner; first it paves the path for countries to lean towards refining their witness protection laws, which in turn can not only provide a superior method of protection but also encourage witnesses to come forth, to meet the ends of justice. Second, it showcases how the justice system can stand triumphant in the battle against the exploitation and manipulation of witnesses along with the wellbeing of the children of witnesses admitted in the programme.

Witness Protection in India: A Legal Overview

Why Shielding Witnesses Matters: Why Witness Protection Is Crucial for India's Legal System

Protection of witnesses is largely two-pronged: safeguarding against harm to the body or property of a witness or their family, and ensuring anonymity. The current Indian statutes identify the role of witnesses in a trial but do not provide positive rights and protection from the hardships witnesses tend to face during trials like mental agony due to prolonged judicial proceedings, delay in providing adequate allowances, and most importantly the lack of security. Security concerns arise due to threats or bribery, witnesses from lower income groups feel threatened or are coerced to wrongfully testify especially in cases wherein powerful or influential parties are involved. These factors lead to witnesses often turning hostile or wrongfully testifying. *"One of the main reasons for witnesses to turn hostile is that they are not accorded appropriate protection by the*



State. It is a harsh reality, particularly, in those cases where the accused persons/criminals are tried for heinous offences, or where the accused persons are influential persons or in a dominating position that they make attempts to terrorize or intimidate the witnesses because of which these witnesses either avoid coming to courts or refrain from deposing truthfully. This unfortunate situation prevails because of the reason that the State has not undertaken any protective measure to ensure the safety of these witnesses, commonly known as 'witness protection' (Mahender Chawla v. Union of India, 2018; 2019). In the case of Mahender Chawla, the bench also recognises the loss of time when witnesses are made to appear years after the incident has occurred as it adversely hampers their ability to recall necessary details at the time of actual crime and they are not suitably remunerated for the loss of time and the expenditure.

Over the years courts have observed the reasons behind witnesses turning hostile which may be monetary, deployment of muscle or political power and other forms of threat and intimidation (Ramesh & Ors. v. State of Haryana, 2017). There have been cases where witness protection has proved to be a moot matter and court proceedings have thereby turned futile, which brought out severe defects in the procedure of the Indian police and judiciary (Manu Sharma v. State (NCT of Delhi), 2010). We have seen situations where witnesses have had to take matters in their own hands as in the case of *Bilkis Bano*, a key witness wrote a letter to the incumbent CJI on account of intimidation and threat to life. The protection was granted and the proceedings were relocated from one city to another to ensure the protection and safety of the witnesses. In India, the standard practice of witness protection is typically granted only upon the witness's request, rather than being provided by the state based on the severity of the case. Furthermore, the level of protection offered is discretionary and not assured, as witnesses are generally required to justify the necessity of such protection.

Unfortunately, this issue will remain until stronger protection is enforced as witnesses would otherwise avoid any grave circumstances against themselves or their families. Understanding the plight of witnesses and the unfortunate fact that ensuring 'total safety' of a witness not to mention the need to protect witnesses from gaining media attention. These difficulties faced by witnesses have been highlighted in the 4th Report of the National Police Commission and the Malimath Committee acknowledges the need for witness protection laws. Courts, however, have developed practices of somewhat relying upon hostile witnesses as well so that the entire proceedings do not go barren. Apex court has held that evidence of a hostile witness is not totally rejected, rather can be scrutinised and the part which is consistent with the case of either side may be accepted (State of U.P. v. Ramesh Prasad Misra, 1996). Additionally, it is stated that if court finds that credit of a witness is not completely shaken, one may after considering the evidence of the witness as whole, with due caution, accept the creditworthy part in line with evidence already on record (K. Anbazhagan v. Supt. of Police, 2004).

Justice *J.M. Panchal* eloquently highlighted, "As a protector of its citizens State has to ensure that during a trial in Court the witness could safely depose truth without any fear of being haunted by those against whom he has deposed." The right to a fair and speedy trial is a salient requirement imbedded in Article 21 of our Constitution. Denial of a fair trial may have adverse effects on the victim, society and the accused. A situation where a witness feels threatened may lead to incorrect testimony and gravely affect the fundamental right to a fair trial.



Due to abovementioned reasons, trials get further prolonged by reluctant witnesses, making it imperative for legislation to introduce specific guidelines for witness examination and protection.

Guiding the Way: Law Commission Reports and the Path Toward Effective Witness Protection

Over the years there have been several attempts through Law Commission reports and reports on the Reformation of Criminal Law Justice, to recognise and develop witness protection. The first initiative was taken during the 14th Law Commission report highlighting the '*inadequate arrangements for witnesses in the Courthouse*' pointing to situations where witnesses were made to wait for long periods due to the lack of infrastructure forcing them to wait under trees or the witness shed which is somewhat a barn. Moreover, witnesses were not compensated for travel, meals, or other expenses. Although the scope of examining the witness' position was limited, the Commission recognised these problems and recommended that they be humanely resolved.

The 14th Law Commission Report acknowledges that witnesses were not treated appropriately, and the 42nd Report advocated an increase in witness protection from threats. The Report proposed to add certain sections in the IPC, which in fact was achieved by introducing S.229A which provides that any individual who threatens or tries to influence the witness while producing evidence before any public authority shall be fined. Furthermore, the 154th Law Commission Report reaffirmed the issue of witness ill-treatment highlighting it as the primary cause for witnesses' unwillingness to appear in court. Furthermore, the struggle of the witness in confronting and testifying against perpetrators who have committed serious crimes was addressed.

The 172nd Law Commission Report worked towards the concealment of a minor's witness identity by preventing them from giving oral evidence. However, the Commission stipulated that in cases involving sexual assault, no witnesses, minor or major, would be obliged to provide oral testimony, but their identity would be concealed to protect them from any threats from the accused. The 178th Report deals with hostile witnesses, noting that in circumstances involving strong and wealthy persons or the mafia, witnesses frequently turn hostile and refrain from testifying to protect themselves and their families. The Commission suggested the insertion of S. 184 BNSS, as per which, in cases involving the imprisonment of more than 10 years, the witness could record their statement in the presence of magistrates. The same was even mentioned in the Criminal Law Bill, 2003. Additionally, they suggested that the police officers should take precautionary measures before the trial commenced, in order to avoid any fabrication. However, the Commission much like the legislation failed to address the issue of physical safety of witnesses. The Justice Malimath Commission, underlined the necessity for a comprehensive witness protection plan in light of the rise in incidences of threats and attacks on witnesses and their family members during criminal trials

Lastly, the 198th Report discusses issues related to '*Witness Anonymity*' and '*Witness Protection*'. It was stated that in instances involving terrorism and sexual offences, victims and witnesses are in a vulnerable position and therefore put in risk; hence, the necessity for a witness protection system comparable to those of other Nations; such as



USA, Germany and China, was urged. They even proposed ways to protect the witness post-trial. This Law Commission study served as the cornerstone for the Witness Protection Scheme 2018.

Setting the Standard: Influential Precedents in Witness Protection

Despite the absence of a particular scheme set up for the protection of witnesses or a specific provision in any of the statutes, Courts have attempted to look after their interests and considered protecting them in a multiplicity of judgements (*Naresh Shridar Mairajkar v. State of Maharashtra*, 1966). The judgements have helped in safeguarding witnesses and highlighted the responsibility of police to take due care of them in case of threat. Failing to recognise the role of media today, there is no attempt to protect witnesses from the fourth pillar of the Indian democracy (*Bimal Kaur Khalsa v. Union of India*, 1988).

The court in *Sakshi v. Union of India*, 2004, expressed the mental trauma that a victim or witness would undergo after he is made to confront an accused. The shock or fear upon confrontation may make them reluctant or unable to give details and derail the judicial process. Hence, the court stated the need for a separate screen; which serves two purposes; first, avoiding forcing the witness to encounter the accused saves them from experiencing trauma and second, by supplementing the process of ensuring fair justice for the victim and society as a whole. The court also issued guidelines concerning the way evidence must be taken from a child witness and emphasised the protection of a victim who has been prey to sexual abuse.

The importance and need for the Witness Protection scheme are evident from the judicial precedents and mentions in Law reports. However, before the Witness Protection Scheme 2018 came into existence, the first guidelines regarding witness protection were laid down in the Neelam Katara plea. Recognising dire need, the Ministry of Home Affairs prepared the Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 which was endorsed by the apex court in the case of Mahender Chawla v. UOI, (2019). The case has been a turning point for witnesses as it strengthened their position in the judicial system by providing the essential right of being protected.

The 2018 Blueprint: India's Attempt to Safeguard Its Witnesses

The main purpose of enabling the Witness Protection Scheme was ensuring a fair trial through witness protection by giving them safety for coming forward to help authorities.

In this scheme, a witness would be provided with different measures depending on their vulnerability and the threat they face. Ordinarily, witnesses would be provided with basic services such as police assistance to protect them from any kind of threat and there are additional safeguards in situations involving heinous crimes or high-end criminals. They include a new identity and residence elsewhere. To be precise, in situations such as these, the Police Authority would be required to compile a *Threat Analysis Report*, which analyses the gravity of the crime and the threat to the person's life, protection, and several other elements such as the intent and extent of the accused issuing the threat.



Based on this report, the threat would be analysed and accordingly the witness would be provided any of the aforesaid protection measures.

The witnesses are divided into 3 categories i.e., Category A-C based on threat and accordingly, the protection measures are laid down in Part II (7) (a-o) of the Scheme. Some of the measures include holding in-camera trials, allowing a support person to remain present during the recording of statements and deposition, having separate vulnerable witness courtrooms which have special features like one-way mirrors, live video links, and modifying the audio of the witness's voice to protect their identity, - inter alia. Once the protection is offered, a competent authority will monitor the implementation of the same with the help of monthly/quarterly reports.. Hence, the system aims to enhance protection thereby encouraging them to come forward and testify without fear.

Behind the Curtains: How India's Witness Protection Scheme 2018 Works and Where It Stumbles

The Scheme attempts to draw principles from such programs in other nations and has considered wide-ranging kinds of procedures to protect the witness from. It is a great attempt at ensuring witness' trust in the system. However, introduction does not guarantee execution.

Police officers play a major role in the implementation of the scheme as the witness is expected to reach out to them for protection in situations like assisting witnesses to court, regular patrolling, and camera trials which require the police to invest a lot of their time and resources the reality does not align with the letter of law. India is one of the countries with the highest vacancies in the police department according to a report by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). Thereby making it clear that the police would be overburdened whilst undertaking these measures. Additionally, there is lack of sensitivity training for police to deal with witnesses. The Apex court acknowledged vulnerable witnesses separately and ordered establishment of Vulnerable Witness Deposition Complexes in all high courts (State of Maharashtra v. Bandu @ Daulat, 2018).

Another reason that can lead to the downfall of this scheme would be the lack of funding. States are supposed to fund this program but States are not mandated to do so, rather it is their prerogative to allocate funds as per the need. Furthermore, because the Threat Analysis Report is made by a police officer, in cases involving powerful and influential persons, an officer's report may be corrupted, resulting in a failure to accomplish the ends of justice. The Scheme also fails to embrace the needs of vulnerable interests, their mental or emotional health and issues such as cyber threats, well-being of children in these programs. It has to be kept in mind that it is still not a legislation, i.e., there are no punishment for not adhering to the Scheme.

United States of America

A revolutionary development of witness protection was the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970 in the States amended by Comprehensive Crime Control Act, 1984. This led to the creation of the federal witness protection programme also known as WITSEC. WITSEC



was formally created to protect witnesses or informants willing to testify against perpetrators of organised crimes. While, witness protection, before was instituted under KKK 1871 to protect witnesses testifying against the Ku Klux Klan along with which the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) occasionally created new identities to protect the witnesses. Today witnesses go into witness protection in various criminal matters like drug trafficking, murder and other organised crime.

The goal of WITSEC is to protect witnesses and their authorized family members whose lives are in danger because of their cooperation with the US government. The programme is managed by three main organizations; first, the United States Marshal service which is responsible for non-incarcerated programme participants, second, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) which maintains custody of incarcerated witnesses and third, the Department of Justice Office of Enforcement Operations (OEO) which authorizes and admits endangered witnesses into the programme. Based on the threats against a witness and their reliability, the State or federal law enforcement agency submits a request for their protection. A WITSEC application will then be submitted to the OEO detailing the witness' testimony along with the threats and risk. Depending on the situation, the witness can be protected by local law enforcement or be moved to a safer area. The witnesses are interviewed by investigators and psychologists in order to determine the witness' mental health at that point in time. Based on these findings, a report is generated and submitted to the EOE and upon scrutiny, a recommendation is made. The US Attorney General makes the final authority as to whether the witness is to be admitted in WITSEC or not. If approved, the Marshals visit the witness and family members to move them to WITSEC safe house.

This service is offered after the witness has complied with the eligibility criteria mentioned as per 9-21.100 of the Department of Justice Manual. The Witness Protection programme has been quite accessible to witnesses as per which they are offered complete relocation, a new identity along with new legal documentation and basic expenses for their day-to-day functioning. This kind of protection is even provided to their immediate family as per which they are not permitted to disclose their new identity even to their extended family.

Cracks in the Armour: The Shortcomings of the US Witness Protection Programme

While some witnesses have merely participated in programmes to get protection, others are driven to do so to avoid association with previous criminal elements and unlawful behaviour, which has resulted in the formation of a new, "non-criminal" lifestyle. Even though most protected witnesses are convicted criminals, authorities are concerned about the threat to third parties posed by witness protection operations, as well as the threat to communities posed by protected witnesses who may cause harm in new, relocated locations. Additionally, if there are erroneous expectations that crime would end, communities may be jeopardised because witnesses may face lengthy jail sentences, fuelling new cycles of violence. Concerns have also been raised about the trustworthiness of witnesses, who occasionally fabricate evidence or falsely charge other offenders.



Ripple Effects: How Today's Protection Schemes Shape Tomorrow's Justice

Witness protection has resulted in many beneficial improvements; yet, while analysing the impact of acceptance into the witness protection programme, one must consider the individual's family members. This is especially because, many of the witnesses subjected to the programme are parents with children who have not reached the age of majority. The impact on the youth can be analysed through the perspective of the ecological system and in this case children whose parents are admitted into the programme. Despite the recent amendment brought to permit families to join the witness protection program, some parents are unable to join due to employment commitments. Children whose parents are forced to be separated suffer a significant psychological impact due to the imbalance in their environment. Apart from their personal lives being disrupted, social factors that promote the healthy development of a child's interpersonal abilities may also suffer; children who have missed school time are victims of the system. Hence, the services need to support and ensure the preservation of the family and social environments for their betterment and social well-being.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory can be employed to analyse this research due to its emphasis on the relevance of the environmental system on a child's development. The environment, whether at the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, or chronosystem level, can be beneficial or harmful to a child's growth (McKay). It is vital to emphasise that the witness protection programme, directly and indirectly, marginalises children via isolation, social dislocation, movement limitations, and a lack of interaction with family and social networks. Children, therefore, suffer due to separation from their families and placed in foreign situations without any social networks.

At the microsystem level, children are separated from their familiar surroundings, including family and friends, and are expected to adjust to a foreign setting. The mesosystem gets problematic after students enter the programme because they are placed in a new educational setting with a different academic curriculum, new teachers, and a different teaching system.

The ecosystem has an influence when parents abandon their employment in exchange for their children's protection, and children are indirectly harmed since parents are no longer able to give in the same way they were before being enrolled in the programme. The ecological perspective was not only useful in the interpretation of the research results but also provides a framework for the development of relevant and responsive psychosocial interventions by social workers in addressing the needs and challenges experienced by children whose parents are admitted to the programme.

Five key aspects must be taken into consideration, the first is the children's incapacity to adjust to the programme; the second is the children's loneliness; the third is the behavioural manifestations; the fourth is the fact that family contact is essential to assist children to deal with separation, and lastly social work intervention is required to help children cope.

Concerns have been raised about children's behavioural troubles due to of their acceptance into the programme such as refusing to go to school, mood swings, and



instigating conflicts with a parent or sibling regularly. It was also seen that some of the children's academic performance had declined since they were accepted into the programme.

On one hand, Children, unlike adults, struggle to express their emotions and adjust to unexpected settings, resulting in emotional outbursts. Moving causes relocation stress syndrome, symptoms include feelings of insecurity, lack of trust, loneliness, anxiety, and attachment issues. Children of witnesses frequently feel ignored, having no one to connect with at home. On the other hand, parents are overburdened with activities such as adjusting to their new surroundings and preparing to testify in court, earning an income in new environments. Parents feel increased anxiety and stress, and as a consequence, they pay less attention to their children's feelings, resulting in child-parent conflict. A lack of social interaction and official family contact may lead witnesses to violate the terms of the protection agreement by starting dangerous communications with their families.

Children would benefit from social work therapies that help them deal with the challenges of separation and social dislocation, live in the absence of parents, and better adjust to the concealed environment.

Psychosocial assistance is required to assist children with social, emotional, intellectual, and adaptation challenges, as well as homesickness, and to help them develop to their full potential. Counselling, access to healthcare, developing parental skills, and the formation of social support and networks are examples of such interventions.

Next Steps: Strengthening India's Witness Protection for a Safer Tomorrow

There are numerous practical issues when it comes to providing security or relocation in developing nations, such as implementation costs and infrastructure. However, a more pressing issue that is found across nations is revolving around corruption that occurs in both, the administration and judiciary. Hence, admitting that witness protection is a State duty is the first step towards enacting a witness protection Statute. Another solution is for witness statements to be recorded by a judicial magistrate; however, this becomes practically impossible due to the number of courts and understaffed judiciary. Additionally, expert witnesses from various forensic disciplines are not protected in India presently. Witnesses who are content with their employment and family are unlikely to make major adjustments in their lives merely to testify in court, which is an evident barrier to witness protection programmes in many jurisdictions. For a variety of reasons, proper implementation of witness protection programmes will be challenging in countries such as India, where cultural and societal commitments must be met.

To make matters worse, witnesses are subjected to death threats, coercion, harassment, and other forms of abuse and as a result they tend to become hostile in such situations. To avoid this, the Indian government's intervention is critical. The administration's Witness Protection Scheme 2018, as well as the establishment of separate vulnerable witness deposition centres, are significant and effective steps. However, aside from the Delhi High Court guidelines, there is no other legal mention of vulnerable witnesses' protection. The Scheme of 2018, was the first step in the right direction to bring witness



protection under the purview of the law and place the burden of implementation on the State.

Although the scheme provides significant relief to witnesses regarding their safety during the trial and, in exceptional cases, even after the trial is completed, it does have some flaws, such as the fact that the criminal justice system is the responsibility of the state, and some states may lack adequate resources to implement this scheme effectively. An alternative solution could be assistance from the centre; however, the scheme remains silent on the centre having the authority to contribute financially to the Witness Protection Fund. Additionally, the operation of the Witness Protection Order has been limited to three months; and the district head of police has been tasked with deciding the contents and creating the Threat Analysis Report; as a result, in high-profile cases involving politicians or powerful persons, the involvement of the district head creates opportunities for corruption. The Programme is costly and administratively challenging. New difficulties for the programme include the possible disclosure of witnesses online. Modern technology has made it easier to track a person's whereabouts, and social networking sites could be a detrimental source of personal information.

As a result, unanimous and separate legal provisions for protecting the rights of vulnerable witnesses, including strict penalties for those who manipulate the witness, are urgently needed.

Depending on the type of witness and the degree of cooperation, protection may be provided before, during, and/or after the judicial proceeding. Effective witness protection legislation should ideally involve all three relevant agencies i.e. the government, the judiciary and the police who must demonstrate the political will to enact necessary legislation, investigate legal issues, and execute it respectively.

An independent witness protection cell should be established, with the responsibility for providing false identities, relocation, and follow-up. Additionally, throughout the criminal justice process, witnesses should be treated fairly, with respect, and dignity, and should be free of intimidation, harassment, or abuse. They must have access to status of the proceedings guaranteed Right to a speedy trial, and also a prompt and final resolution of the case following conviction and sentence, deadlines to promote speed in criminal proceedings has been introduced in the BNSS (Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023). The police force should be given the authority to take basic witness protection measures such as surveillance, accompanying witnesses to work and court, assisting with emergency relocation, and so on. The courts should take steps to limit public access to the witness's identity, such as having a witness testify under a pseudonym. Alternative solutions may include conducting a live online cross-examination of the witness outside of court, during the trial before the judge, or having a witness testify at a location, out of court, designated by the trial judge with the presence of the trial judge's clerk as well as the opposing party's attorney.

Videoconferencing, teleconferencing, voice and face distortion, and other similar techniques should be encouraged, as should the ability for witnesses to conceal their address or occupation. The best form of witness protection is restoring public trust in the legal system. Witnesses should be assured that those who wish to testify have the police and an impartial system on their side.



It may also be noticed that youngsters who are left at home with grandparents or extended relatives have difficulty adjusting to life without their parents. Witnesses are also frustrated by the prospect of their children growing up without parental direction, which has led to some witnesses fleeing the programme to be reunited with their children. The disadvantage of leaving the programme is that witnesses must confront the perpetrators of the crime on their own, without protection. Witnesses may also experience increased worry as they sought to make sense of their lives in new and unfamiliar places without social support.

The programme should explore encouraging witnesses to be allowed into the programme alongside their families, particularly children, to avoid feelings of isolation and to guarantee family preservation. This might be achieved by increasing awareness of the programme and how it functions in communities so that witnesses who attend the programme are aware of what to expect. Programme's social workers might deliver awareness programmes in partnership with social workers from the department of social development and the police services.

Social workers should consider devising and delivering child-friendly intervention programmes geared at meeting the needs of children accepted to the programme alongside their parents. Such programmes should inter-alia, assist children in adjusting to the programme and at school, as well as connect them to leisure activities in the neighbourhood where their family is safe. This will allow the youngsters to make new acquaintances and at the same time prevent boredom and loneliness.

Ensuring frequent family contact between witnesses and their children will lessen the possibility of witnesses departing the programme to reconcile with the family. Children who are left at home should also receive psychological therapy to help them manage and better comprehend why their parents are absent. As part of family preservation, social workers might provide several services.

Between Fear and Justice: Overcoming the Challenges of Witness Protection in India

There is currently a long way to go for the developing nations to achieve a faultless witness protection programme, however, the recent initiatives taken by India are a step in the right direction. The obvious drawbacks are the lack of funding for effective witness protection as that of the United States paired with the risk of being seen as a social pariah as a result of leaving their family and social circles to begin a new life. This fear inevitably could dishearten a potential witness from testifying. Additionally, as seen in the United States many large-scale criminals have taken refuge in the witness protection programme only to later continue a life of crime. The advantage of a mob member attaining a clean slate in exchange for useful information seems to be a gamble which may lead to an increase in crime rates due to the mobsters taking advantage of the system. This is a struggle faced in the United States and will most definitely cause damaging effects within developing nations, such as India, which have large populations and an understaffed justice system. To allocate enough financing or find alternatives, the Indian government must also prioritize the costs connected with witness protection. Low-cost techniques must be evaluated. This will provide witness protection and much-needed



value in practice. Additionally, India must encourage witnesses by adopting and maintaining witness anonymity and freeing the witness from all forms of intimidation.

Admission of parents into the programme disrupts family functioning, strains emotional relationships, and has a detrimental influence on children's lives in general. However, it is hoped that the availability of knowledge and understanding of how children experience the admission of their parents into witness protection programmes, as presented in this study, will enable social workers to devise interventions that will assist children in coping with the trauma associated with their parents' admission into the programme and, ultimately, restore, reunify, and preserve families.

This article aims to contribute to future research by enticing academicians and lawmakers to assess the current barriers to witness testimony by enhancing the witness protection programme by taking into account social and cultural factors and incorporating affordable programmes that will give potential witnesses the security and safety required to uphold the ends of justice. There is a need for a fair and impartial criminal investigation and therefore witness protection is the first step forward.

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NOTAS E REFLEXÕES

“ORGULHOSAMENTE ACOMPANHADOS”: OLHAR PARA A AMÉRICA LATINA COMO MÁRIO SOARES

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O Teatro Thalia, em Lisboa, recebeu, no dia 8 de abril de 2025, o Colóquio *Mário Soares e a América Latina: Passado, Presente, Futuro*, inserido nas comemorações do centenário deste político português. Por ter sido Presidente da República e Primeiro-Ministro de Portugal, é natural o interesse em destacar o seu pensamento no país cuja democracia ajudou a construir. Mas porquê voltar os olhos sobre a relação de Mário Soares com a região latino-americana?

Há uma questão que obriga a refletir sobre o assunto: cresce perigosamente o autoritarismo na América Latina, como cresce também no mundo. Considerando os elos históricos, culturais e políticos daquela região com a Península Ibérica, convém revisitar o papel que Mário Soares cumpriu em defesa da social-democracia latino-americana, tomando como ponto de partida os debates gerados no calor do *Colóquio*.

O despertar da relação de Mário Soares com América Latina

Na Guerra Fria, que começou após a Segunda Guerra Mundial, o confronto entre capitalismo e comunismo atingiu um alto grau de tensão. As ditaduras de direita, herdadas da primeira metade do século XX, reforçaram as suas posições no mundo



ocidental, em aparentes “contenções” anticomunistas: são os casos do Estado Novo, em Portugal, desde 1933, e do franquismo, em Espanha, desde 1939.

Na América Latina, as ditaduras também alimentavam esse imaginário para se sustentar no poder. O historiador Camero afirma que o medo ao comunismo potenciou a coligação militarista de sectores sociais conservadores com sectores das Forças Armadas, colocando entraves ao caminho da democracia até à década de 1980 (Camero, 2019, p. 39). Algumas dessas ditaduras ultrapassaram quarenta anos de vigência, outras subsistiram por muito menos tempo. Mas, perto do final da década de 1970, todas elas coincidiram na linha temporal: Nicarágua, Paraguai, Guatemala, Brasil, Haiti, Chile, El Salvador, Perú, Uruguai, Honduras, Argentina e Bolívia. Não havia só autoritarismo de direita: a Revolução cubana, alinhada com a antiga URSS, também perturbava a democratização desde 1959. E, na Nicarágua, os opositores sandinistas davam sinais de paulatina radicalização à ultraesquerda.

Na década de 1970, as democracias fortes da região seriam apenas as da Costa Rica (desde 1949), Colômbia e Venezuela (desde 1958), e México — embora a sua democracia, estabelecida em 1929, fosse questionada pela hegemonia do Partido Revolucionário Institucional (PRI).

Neste enquadramento, são três os momentos e os perfis, por vezes paralelos e complementares, desde os quais Mário Soares construiu uma relação com América Latina:

- 1) como líder socialista português e opositor ao Estado Novo;
- 2) como parte da chefia da Internacional Socialista (IS), na promoção da social-democracia;
- 3) como representante de Portugal em prol de relações de mútua conveniência.

Como líder socialista e opositor ao Estado Novo

Soares fez várias viagens à região, durante o seu exílio, nos tempos do Estado Novo. No primeiro painel do *Colóquio*, intitulado *Mário Soares e América Latina*, Isabel Soares aludiu a uma primeira viagem, em 1970, ao Brasil, Venezuela, Porto Rico, México e aos Estados Unidos da América.

Segundo o investigador Joaquim Vieira, Soares nunca esclareceu a função política daquele percurso, ainda que lhe tenha sido útil para entrar em contacto com simpatizantes dos socialistas portugueses e dos republicanos espanhóis, exilados na Venezuela, e com portugueses em Nova Iorque, agregados ao movimento Acção Socialista Portuguesa (ASP) — partido antecessor do PS, fundado no exílio, em 1964 por Soares, Francisco Ramos da Costa e Manuel Tito de Morais (Vieira, 2022, p. 277).

Mas existiu uma viagem anterior àquela. Vieira regista que, em 1964, Soares fez uma visita incógnita a Havana, em companhia de José Fernandes Fafe. O convite do governo cubano foi facilitado, em 1963, pelo encarregado de negócios em Portugal, Raúl Amado-Blanco, tendo sido garantido o anonimato e o secretismo da deslocação (Vieira, 2022, p. 181). Após esta e outras visitas a países comunistas, Soares rejeitou esse sistema e



entendeu, como nos lembrou Vítor Ramalho no *Colóquio*, que a oposição entre comunismo e socialismo converter-se-ia numa oposição entre ditadura e democracia.

Embora estas viagens não contemplassem no seu horizonte a missão de influir na América Latina, nem sequer formassem parte de um programa da ASP, tal como afirma Vieira, nelas começaram a tecer-se as redes de apoio na luta em prol da social-democracia em Portugal e na América Latina.

Como parte da chefia da Internacional Socialista (IS)

Segundo Valeska Hesse, a social-democracia apresentava-se, no quadro da Guerra Fria, como alternativa ao capitalismo americano e ao comunismo soviético (2022). O problema era que a influência da IS estava restrita à Europa. Com base no pensamento de Bernd Rother, Hesse assinala que Willy Brandt, do Partido Social Democrata da Alemanha (SPD), teve a visão de incorporar a América Latina na social-democracia e integrar os partidos afins na IS. Existia mais do que uma razão:

- similitude das estruturas partidárias;
- urgência dos conflitos na região, especialmente na América Central;
- necessidade de “independência” da região relativamente aos EUA, mas sem conflito;
- descrédito dos EUA, após a guerra do Vietname e a crise do petróleo de 1973;
- descrédito da Rússia e da China, pela sua “benevolência” com as ditaduras militares (Hesse, 2022).

Nessa altura, Mário Soares já começava, por vários motivos, a dar sinais de ser uma figura idónea para concretizar a aproximação desejada por Brandt. Já tinha uma rede de contatos desde 1970. Em 1972, a ASP entrou na IS. Soares foi convidado por Brandt a formar parte do conselho da revista latino-americana *Nueva Sociedad*, fundada em 1972. Finalmente, em 1976, o político português foi eleito para o seu primeiro mandato como Primeiro-Ministro. Segundo afirmou Rother no *Colóquio*, isto garantia-lhe um peso institucional favorável para chefiar a missão da IS, numa altura em que Espanha ainda não consolidara a sua social-democracia.

Assim, Soares foi múltiplas vezes à América Latina naqueles anos enquanto vice-presidente da IS, cargo que desempenhou desde 1976. Podemos referir dois exemplos paradigmáticos: primeiro, a sua visita à Venezuela, com ocasião da Conferência da IS em Caracas em 1976. A conferência foi presidida por Rómulo Betancourt, representante do partido venezuelano Acción Democrática (AD), no contexto do governo de Carlos Andrés Pérez. Esta conferência favoreceu a adesão de muitos partidos latino-americanos no horizonte democratizador da IS e, para Betancourt, deu visibilidade a Mário Soares, a Felipe González e a Pérez como líderes internacionais na defesa da social-democracia (Straka, setembro de 2022). O segundo exemplo é a participação de Mário Soares como representante da IS nas eleições da República Dominicana, em 1978, quando exercia também o cargo de Primeiro-Ministro de Portugal. Nessas eleições triunfou o candidato opositor Antonio Guzmán, apesar dos intentos de Balaguer por se manter no poder. A presença de Soares teve uma grande influência nos acontecimentos.



Como representante de Portugal

Quer como Primeiro-Ministro, quer como Presidente da República, Mário Soares organizou ou respondeu a convites oficiais para se reunir com os mandatários latino-americanos, e subscreveu diferentes acordos e programas, em matérias muito diversas, mas com orientação democrática. Como Presidente da República influenciou determinantemente a participação portuguesa nas cimeiras ibero-americanas, iniciadas em 1991 (Vieira, 2022; Gomes, 2014). No *Colóquio*, Nancy Gomes apresentou Soares e Felipe González como defensores da identidade linguística lusófona e hispânica, e da cultura ibero-americana como espaço comum para a cooperação (Gomes, 2014).

Portugal e as Cimeiras Ibero-Americanas

Num discurso pronunciado na Cimeira Socialista de 1976 (Soares, 1976), celebrada na Póvoa do Varzim, Mário Soares afirmou que é «por vias diferentes e face a condições nacionais muito diversas» que os objectivos comuns da liberdade, fraternidade e da paz podem ser alcançados. No entanto, reiterou a sua convicção de que Portugal é um «país no cruzamento de todos os povos do Mundo».

Portugal buscava, por esta altura, um novo modo de entender a sua identidade. Era urgente ganhar consciência dos perigos da política externa isolacionista e exclusivamente atlântica do Estado Novo, «sendo necessário também uma integração europeia» (Sebastião, 2010, p. 105). Soares rejeitou, contudo, um corte com a tradição atlântica, propondo uma terceira via, de «nação euro-atlântica», de ponte entre o Velho Continente e o Novo Mundo.

Sonho aparentemente simples, não consegue impor-se sem mais aos traumas históricos do povo e à relação atribulada com os vizinhos espanhóis. Encravado entre o mar e Espanha, Portugal divide-se no fascínio pelas virtudes de D. Quixote e na mágoa pela tirania dos Filipes (Ferreira, 2013, p.358). É por esta razão que, perante a convocatória para a Iª Cimeira Ibero-Americana, em 1990, Portugal reage timidamente. «Era evidente um certo receio quanto às pretensões da Espanha, e eram muitas as dúvidas, do ponto de vista estratégico, quanto às vantagens acrescentadas para o país» (Gomes, 2014, p. 214). Motivado também pela participação do Brasil, Portugal abraça a iniciativa e faz-se representar ao mais alto nível – o Presidente da República era, então, Mário Soares.

Unamuno explicava estas relações históricas como uma «unidade espiritual, uma alma una num território atravessado por contradições» (Ferreira, 2013, p. 358). Com as cimeiras, transforma-se a ideia de hispanidade, abrindo-se espaço a uma participação solidária, marcada mais pelos laços de amizade do que pelos benefícios da cooperação económica. Dizia Soares, em Guadalajara, que existe uma «solidariedade natural resultante das raízes comuns, da proximidade das culturas e da identidade dos laços entrecruzados pela história e a vizinhança geográfica. Portugal também é Ibero-América» (Gomes, 2014, p. 215).

Na sua intervenção no *Colóquio*, Cristina Manzano, sublinhou a importância dos três princípios criadores da Comunidade Ibero-Americana, que ainda hoje permanecem: a horizontalidade, pela simetria das relações; a inclusão de todos na mesa das negociações – sem com isso abdicar da defesa da Democracia e dos Direitos Humanos; e o consenso, que não é sinónimo de unanimidade. Face ao momento histórico de polarização que



vivemos, a materialização destes princípios, segundo Manzano, pode ser um processo complicado; mas quando se consegue, a força política que tem também é muito importante.

Aqui reside o espaço privilegiado de Portugal para exercer a sua vocação de ponte entre dois mundos. Na esteira de Mário Soares, capaz de estabelecer relações interpessoais que dão voz a todos, podem trazer-se os mecanismos de negociação da América Latina até às instituições europeias. No entanto, apesar da sua participação de alto nível nas Cimeiras Ibero-Americanas, bem como do cada vez maior contributo para o seu Secretariado, as reticências sentidas inicialmente adiaram por anos a decisão de incluir a Ibero-América nas prioridades da política externa nacional – talvez pelo receio de sobreposição em relação ao espaço político da CPLP.

Em períodos de crise económica na Europa, perante a «dependência excessiva que a economia portuguesa – incluindo as empresas – têm no mercado europeu, o mercado ibero-americano passa a ser valorizado» (Gomes, 2014, p. 222). Raquel Patrício, na sua intervenção no *Colóquio*, apontava no mesmo sentido: «a própria região da América Latina surge como uma boa alternativa se quisermos pensar em soluções extra-Europa para Portugal». Acrescentava ainda que «aquilo que é a especificidade de Portugal no seio da União Europeia (...) é a ligação privilegiada que tem, não só com a África, mas também com a América Latina por via do Brasil».

Esta não é, contudo, uma posição inovadora. Já o defendia Mário Soares, naquela sua intervenção de 1976: «este contexto (...) obriga o Povo Português a uma reflexão profunda relativamente à integração de Portugal com a Europa, preservando o seu destino histórico de país europeu com especiais qualificações para apresentar-se como “intermediário privilegiado” nas relações da Europa» com o mundo. Portugal possui, no seu entender, uma vocação “terceiro-mundista”, que não se opõe à sua participação plena na União Europeia – pelo contrário, beneficia-a (Soares, 1976).

Relações Europa – América Latina

«O viés eurocêntrico reside no modo como a compreensão do regionalismo (que, muitas vezes, tem origem numa leitura particular da integração europeia) condiciona a percepção de como este deve implementar-se noutros lugares do mundo» (Söderbaum, 2014, p.14). Ana Paula Zacarias, no *Colóquio*, apontava esta mesma visão como um dos calcanhares de Aquiles na relação Europa-América Latina e Caribe: «nós [Europa], ao olharmos para a CELAC, estamos à espera de ter do outro lado um interlocutor similar, coisa que não acontece. A CELAC não é a UE. Nem o Mercosul é a UE. São entidades com integrações diversas, (...) estruturalmente diferentes da UE».

Portugal encontra-se, aparentemente, face a um dilema. Em terra, a sua identificação civilizacional com o contexto europeu. No mar, a sua ligação histórica, cultural e afectiva com os países da América Latina. Se, aquando da sua adesão à CEE, em 1986, se posicionou como porta aberta entre dois mundos, com a queda da URSS e o posterior alargamento da UE para o leste Europeu, em 2004, assistiu a uma inversão de prioridades que poderiam ter feito desmoronar o sonho de um novo universalismo.

Mas Portugal, cuja transição democrática foi foco de tensões durante a Guerra Fria, oferece-nos «uma boa ilustração sobre os dilemas de um Estado pequeno, com



capacidade de influência limitada, e como o nível doméstico e europeu interagem no processo de tomada de decisão» (Neves, 2016, p. 266). Perante o alargamento da UE, investiu em quatro dimensões:

- 1) apoio continuado às relações com os países de Leste;
- 2) estratégia de "preservação da solidariedade", propondo uma redefinição dos requisitos para apoio económico – em que continuasse a ser incluído;
- 3) posição favorável (e ambiciosa) quanto ao alargamento e
- 4) partilha da sua experiência de negociação e adesão, contribuindo para uma diplomacia informal (Neves, 2016).

Este aparente paradoxo de intenções consiste na materialização daquilo que Mário Soares já havia identificado, em 1976, como «vozes que procuram conciliar as duas orientações, destacando a nossa pertença à Europa enquanto cultura e civilização, valorizando os imperativos de ordem geopolítica e económica (...), para partir por um caminho realista de projecção de Portugal aos países que costumamos considerar como parte do Terceiro Mundo» (Soares, 1976). Dando voz e lugar a novas formas de estar, Portugal granjeou, em 2004, simpatias e (pequenos, mas múltiplos) aliados continentais para as suas iniciativas atlânticas. Estas parcerias diversificadas viabilizam o sucesso das propostas Portuguesas (e Ibéricas) levadas a cabo durante as Presidências da UE. De facto, como reparava Cátia Miriam Costa no *Colóquio*, «quem fizer um estudo sobre as relações da União Europeia com a América Latina, percebe perfeitamente picos de atividade quando Portugal ou Espanha têm a presidência».

Esta dinâmica de integração europeia com os olhos postos além-fronteiras é complexa e requer capacidade de gerar equilíbrios. Mário Soares era um crítico da globalização sem critérios e, por essa razão, no fim da sua vida já demonstrava algum cepticismo quanto à evolução do Projecto Europeu. Andrés Malamud, na sua intervenção no *Colóquio*, foi peremptório: «o mundo de Mário Soares já não existe». Importa, então, pensar os desafios de hoje à luz das três dimensões que sempre nos propunha Mário Soares, «democracia, desenvolvimento e descolonização».

Existe ainda muito caminho a percorrer para estreitar as relações entre a Europa e a América Latina. No entanto, mantemos o optimismo de Mário Soares em 1976:

A Europa, hoje, é uma ideia em permanente evolução, dotada de uma dinâmica capaz de transcender os particularismos nacionais e de se situar na determinação e definição de aspirações comuns (...) de actuar em função de uma solidariedade profundamente enraizada nos interesses comuns.

O futuro será propício?

Pairam sobre o mundo atual os fantasmas do século passado: um intenso combate entre narrativas de direita e esquerda aquece o mundo das comunicações, e influi nos padrões eleitorais em favor de candidatos autoritários e populistas, cada vez mais próximos ao poder, quando não mesmo vencedores da corrida presidencial. A este problema, Carlos Quenan, no *Colóquio*, somou a crise climática, a revolução tecnológica, a rivalidade EUA-



China, a crise da globalização e a poli-crisis, o impacto de práticas empresariais como o *nearshore* e o dilema manufatura vs. "mentefatura".

Além do regime cubano, a Nicarágua e a Venezuela (país sul-americano que fora exemplo de sucesso democrático) adotaram modelos autoritários de extrema-esquerda. Na Argentina e em El Salvador, os governos são tendencialmente autoritários, e aproximam-se da extrema-direita. Na Europa, as desigualdades socioeconómicas são cada vez mais profundas e os movimentos autoritaristas ganham força e representação institucional, aumentando fenómenos como a violência social e institucional contra os migrantes. Em simultâneo, nos EUA, a democracia e o Estado de Direito encontram-se fragilizados. Este enquadramento demonstra que a democracia e a liberdade não podem ser dadas por garantidas, e que mantê-las requer atenção permanente, ações concretas e coerência por parte das instituições.

Francisco Aldecoa Luzárraga sugeriu, no *Colóquio*, que o segundo mandato de Trump poderia ser uma oportunidade para impulsionar a aproximação entre a Europa e a América Latina, especialmente face às tensões sobre as questões migratórias nos EUA. Mas nem todos se mostraram tão otimistas: Ramón Jáuregui afirmou que a América Latina está fraturada e que, na região, a Europa tem perdido o seu peso económico em comparação com a China.

Estes oradores concordavam, contudo, num ponto-chave: «a Europa que queremos é fraterna com a América Latina. Constrói caminhos e constrói pontes», sublinhou Jáuregui. Esta era a Europa com que sonhava Mário Soares, com quem ele tinha tanto a partilhar, mas também a aprender.

Porque a democracia não é um valor particular, mas universal, torna-se urgente encontrar, para o nosso tempo, carismas como o de Mário Soares que, modelo de moderação política, foi um combatente contra qualquer forma de ditadura (González). Só na reconciliação dos extremos se recupera o horizonte democrático e de liberdade. Para tal, continua a fazer sentido caminhar "orgulhosamente acompanhados", como dizia Soares.

No *Colóquio*, mais do que recordar um político, puseram-se em comum sonhos para o futuro, propostas de solução ou desafios partilhados para a Ibero-América. Nem sempre visões concordantes, é certo, mas olhos nos olhos, à mesma mesa – ao estilo das relações de amizade e solidariedade que tanto agradavam a Mário Soares.

«Numa iniciativa de centenário», concluiu Paulo Neves, «falámos do futuro. Mário Soares estaria orgulhoso».

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NOTAS Y REFLEXIONES

AMÉRICA LATINA: ¿CÓMO SOBREVIVE UNA REGIÓN EN ESTADO DE MULTICRISIS?

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América Latina ha sido históricamente un territorio atravesado por crisis de toda dimensión. Esta reflexión crítica con perspectiva sociológica y decolonial analiza el concepto de crisis tomando como referencia al sociólogo colombiano Orlando Fals Borda. Fals Borda planteó que las crisis en América Latina revelan contradicciones estructurales que conducen a la desorganización social e institucional: "La sociedad sufre así un proceso irreversible de desorganización interna que crea cuerpos y anticuerpos, expresado en valores, normas, grupos, instituciones y técnicas en conflicto. Según algunas interpretaciones teóricas, este conflicto debe ir refractando y agotando el orden social existente para formar eventualmente un nuevo tipo de colectividad" (Fals Borda, 1969, p. 767). Las crisis económicas, ambientales y sociales dan cuenta de ello. Otras, como las crisis políticas, merecen un análisis más detallado y localizado.

Crisis Económicas

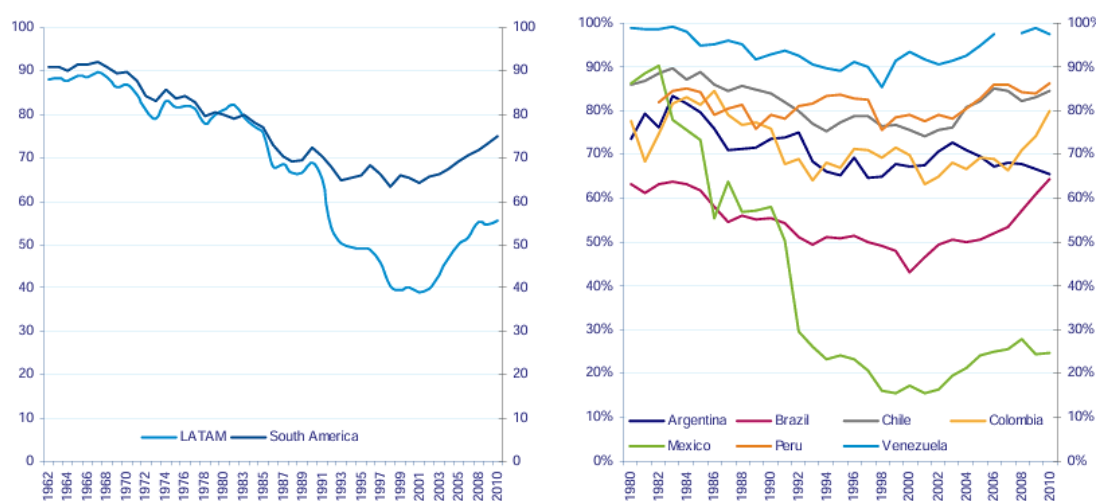
La región ha enfrentado múltiples crisis económicas a lo largo del siglo XX y XXI. Desde la Gran Depresión hasta la "década perdida" de los años 80 —provocada por el sobreendeudamiento externo y la subida de tasas de interés en EE. UU.—, estas crisis dejaron secuelas en las estructuras económicas visibles hasta hoy. La posterior adopción neoliberal, impuesta por organizaciones internacionales, implicó reformas estructurales y privatizaciones que, si bien estabilizaron algunas economías, profundizaron la dependencia al Norte global y redujeron la capacidad de respuesta estatal. En los años 90, la liberalización comercial no logró superar el crecimiento alcanzado durante el modelo de Industrialización por sustitución de importaciones (ISI). Economistas como



Ocampo (2015) advierten que los beneficios de este nuevo ciclo fueron desigualmente distribuidos y con baja inversión productiva.

Durante la crisis financiera global de 2008-2009, América Latina sorprendió al mundo al enfrentar la tormenta económica con una "resiliencia" inusitada para una región históricamente golpeada por crisis estructurales. A diferencia de episodios anteriores como el "tequilazo" en México en 1994 o el "corralito" argentino de 2001, esta vez los cimientos eran más sólidos: mejor regulación bancaria, baja relación entre deuda externa y reservas, y especialmente altos precios de materias primas. Aunque 2009 fue un año difícil —con caídas del PIB de 5,9 % en Argentina, 5 % en México y 1,7 % en Chile—, la recuperación fue rápida. En 2010, las políticas contracíclicas jugaron un papel clave y permitieron que Brasil creciera 7,5 %, Argentina más del 10 % y México revirtiera su caída con un rebote similar (Fariza & Molina, 2018). Aun así, la crisis dejó secuelas y las mayores economías enfrentaron nuevas recesiones al caer los precios de exportación. Esta tormenta, aunque breve, expuso una causal de las crisis persistentes: la estructural dependencia de exportaciones primarias.

Gráfico 1. Exportaciones de productos básicos: participación en las exportaciones totales (%)



Fuente: BBVA Research (García-Herrero & Nigrinis, 2012)

La pandemia de COVID-19, los conflictos internacionales en Rusia, Medio Oriente y la más reciente guerra comercial desatada por los Estados Unidos a la cabeza de Donald Trump, encontraron a América Latina con escaso margen fiscal: en 2019, el crecimiento fue de apenas 0,1 %. El Banco Mundial estima que la región crecerá solo 2,1 % en 2025 y 2,4 % en 2026 (World Bank, 2025), el ritmo más bajo del mundo. La inflación, el endeudamiento y la inversión insuficiente consolidan un modelo frágil y excluyente.



Crisis Ambientales

América Latina enfrenta también una crisis ambiental sin precedentes, impulsada por la expansión agropecuaria, la deforestación y los efectos del cambio climático. Entre 1990 y 2005, gran parte de la pérdida de cobertura forestal en América Latina se debió a la conversión de selvas en pastizales, responsable del 71 % de la deforestación en ese periodo. En 2024, el planeta vivió el año más caluroso jamás registrado, acompañado por la desaparición de 6,7 millones de hectáreas de selva tropical en todo el mundo, más de dos tercios de ellas en América Latina. Brasil encabezó esta devastación con 2,8 millones de hectáreas deforestadas, seguido por Bolivia con 1,8 millones. Perú perdió 190.000 hectáreas, lo que representó un alarmante aumento del 135 % respecto a 2023, mientras que Colombia superó las 100.000 hectáreas. Nicaragua, por su parte, sufrió la mayor pérdida proporcional de bosque primario, con un 4,7 % de su superficie forestal original. A escala global, los incendios forestales de 2024 emitieron 4,1 gigatoneladas de CO₂, una cifra equivalente a cuatro veces las emisiones del transporte aéreo mundial en 2023 (Global Forest Review, 2025).

Entre 2000 y 2022, América Latina y el Caribe enfrentaron una de las crisis más intensas en materia de desastres naturales a nivel global, con un total de 1.500 eventos que afectaron a más de 190 millones de personas. En este período se registraron 681 inundaciones, 400 tormentas, 92 terremotos, 77 sequías, 78 deslizamientos de tierra, 49 temperaturas extremas, 42 erupciones volcánicas, 36 incendios forestales, y varias otras emergencias como epidemias y desplazamientos masivos (OCHA, 2023b). Solo en 2023, las inundaciones en el norte de Perú, asociadas al fenómeno de El Niño, dejaron más de 839.700 personas afectadas y desencadenaron una epidemia de dengue sin precedentes. En Guatemala, los huracanes Eta e Iota de categoría 4 azotaron Centroamérica en 2020 durante el punto más crítico de la pandemia, afectando más de 645.100 personas (OCHA, 2023a). A esto se suma el riesgo creciente proyectado por el Banco Mundial, que estima que más de 17 millones de personas podrían ser desplazadas por el cambio climático en la región para 2050 (Forbes & Xilotl, 2024).

América Latina y el Caribe han sufrido una pérdida del 95% de su vida silvestre en los últimos 50 años, siendo la Amazonía el epicentro de esta devastación ecológica. Esta región, que alberga más del 10% de la biodiversidad terrestre y almacena entre 250.000 y 300.000 millones de toneladas de carbono, se encuentra en un punto de inflexión crítico (WWF, 2024). En 2024, la selva amazónica vivió su segundo año consecutivo de sequía histórica y el mayor número de incendios en dos décadas, con más de 5.000 focos en un solo día y 5,4 millones de hectáreas quemadas solo en tres estados brasileños. En Perú, 16 de las 25 regiones fueron afectadas por incendios, el 70% de ellos en la Amazonía, alcanzando 87 territorios indígenas. En Bolivia, las llamas afectaron a 4 millones de hectáreas y 58 territorios indígenas. Solo Brasil concentró el 76% de los puntos críticos de Sudamérica, y los incendios en bosques primarios crecieron un 132% en agosto respecto a 2023. Además, los incendios en tierras indígenas aumentaron un 39% y ya representan el 24% del total en la Amazonía, destruyendo más de 1,3 millones de hectáreas (Vargas & Poirier, 2024). Este colapso no solo destruye ecosistemas vitales, sino que convierte al bioma en un emisor neto de CO₂, profundizando la crisis climática global.



Crisis Sociales

La crisis social en América Latina y el Caribe se manifiesta de manera más evidente en sus niveles extremos de desigualdad, que siguen siendo los más altos del planeta. Mientras que en los países de la OCDE el ingreso del 10 % más rico apenas cuadruplica al del 10 % más pobre, en esta región la brecha se amplía a un promedio de 12 veces. En naciones como Colombia, Chile y Uruguay, el 1 % más rico concentra entre el 37 % y el 40 % de toda la riqueza nacional, en contraste con la mitad más pobre de la población, que apenas posee el 10 %. Aunque se registraron avances en la reducción de la desigualdad entre 1990 y 2014, especialmente en países como Brasil, Bolivia, Chile y Perú, los progresos se han estancado en la última década y las brechas persisten. Esta desigualdad no solo es profunda, sino también estructural: millones de familias en situación de pobreza enfrentan un patrimonio neto negativo, con deudas que superan sus activos. Además, las oportunidades económicas siguen estando determinadas por el origen social: entre el 44 % y el 63 % de la diferencia de ingresos en países como Argentina y Guatemala se explica por condiciones heredadas como el nivel educativo de los padres, la etnicidad o el lugar de nacimiento. A ello se suman las históricas desigualdades territoriales: en países como Bolivia, hasta el 58 % de la desigualdad total proviene de la disparidad entre zonas rurales y urbanas, lo que evidencia la profundidad y persistencia de una fractura social que trasciende generaciones (BID, 2024a).

Este panorama de exclusión social y económica se entrelaza con una creciente crisis de violencia. América Latina alberga solo al 8% de la población mundial, pero concentró alrededor del 50% de los homicidios en 2018 (Hernández Bringas, 2022) aunque estudios para otros años estiman este valor entre 15% y 20%. Países como Venezuela, Honduras, El Salvador y México han reportado tasas de homicidio superiores a 30 por cada 100.000 habitantes. En 2024, Ecuador alcanzó niveles alarmantes de violencia, con 38,8 asesinatos por cada 100.000 habitantes, situación que llevó al gobierno a declarar el conflicto armado interno contra bandas criminales. Haití, por su parte, ha colapsado institucionalmente ante el control de bandas armadas que dominan la capital, Puerto Príncipe, provocando desplazamientos masivos y miles de muertes.

El incremento de la violencia en América Latina está estrechamente vinculado al avance del crimen organizado, que ha evolucionado hacia redes cada vez más complejas y violentas, alimentadas por el narcotráfico y alianzas entre bandas locales y carteles de México, Brasil y Colombia. Países con antecedentes históricos de violencia, como Colombia y Brasil, figuran hoy entre los más afectados. Según el Índice Global de Crimen Organizado 2023, Colombia (7,75), México (7,57) y Paraguay (7,52) se ubicaron entre los cinco países con mayor criminalidad a nivel mundial. A nivel regional, América Central presentó el promedio más alto (6,28), seguida de América del Sur (5,94) (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023). América Latina sigue siendo el epicentro de la producción mundial de cocaína, con Colombia, Perú y Bolivia como los principales productores, y países como Venezuela, Ecuador, México, Brasil y toda América Central desempeñando un rol clave en su exportación. A esto se suma la aparición de nuevas rutas y mercados en Paraguay, Costa Rica y Argentina.

Ante el entramado de desigualdad, pobreza estructural y violencia, los países de América Latina y el Caribe enfrentan una paradoja inquietante: comparten amenazas comunes, pero carecen de respuestas colectivas. La ausencia de una institución regional ha dejado



a los Estados expuestos frente al avance del crimen organizado transnacional. Iniciativas como la Alianza para la Seguridad, la Justicia y el Desarrollo, impulsada por el BID y que congregó a 18 países en 2024, representan un paso hacia la coordinación regional, aunque siguen siendo insuficientes si no se acompañan de transformaciones estructurales en áreas como salud, educación, pensiones y empleo. Estudios del BID revelan, por ejemplo, que los subsidios a las pensiones benefician en mayor medida a los sectores más acomodados, y que una educación de calidad desigual perpetúa las brechas sociales (Stampini et al., 2023). Sin una estrategia integral que articule desarrollo social con cooperación en seguridad, la región corre el riesgo de profundizar su crisis multidimensional y mantenerse atrapada en un ciclo persistente de exclusión y violencia.

Estrategias de resistencia en tiempos de crisis

Ante el estado permanente de crisis que atraviesa América Latina, las comunidades no adoptan una postura pasiva. Al contrario, como subrayaba Fals Borda (1969), de las profundidades sociales emergen formas persistentes de resistencia y esperanza que sostienen la posibilidad de transformación. Las frustraciones estructurales no paralizan la voluntad colectiva; más bien, acumulan tensiones que, al alcanzar ciertos umbrales, impulsan procesos de acción organizada. Incluso las respuestas más limitadas pueden convertirse en puntos de partida para movilizaciones más amplias, revelando una capacidad de respuesta social que, aunque muchas veces silenciosa, sigue activa y latente.

Los modelos de desarrollo impuestos desde fuera —basados en cifras, inversión extranjera y mitos de modernización— han producido transformaciones superficiales. Lejos de impulsar un cambio estructural, han ampliado las desigualdades y generado oportunidades limitadas, sin activar los motores profundos del desarrollo social y económico. En este contexto, la supervivencia no es únicamente económica, sino también simbólica y política: las comunidades reconfiguran sus vínculos, migran, resisten, crean saberes propios y se movilizan en busca de autodeterminación. Esta fuerza revela el potencial de una sociología de la liberación que comprende la crisis como catalizador histórico hacia la construcción de un porvenir más justo. Así, las múltiples crisis que golpean a la región no solo exponen sus fracturas, sino también la potencia regeneradora de sus pueblos.

Uno de los grandes "problemas" que enfrenta la economía formal en América Latina es precisamente la economía informal. Esta se manifiesta especialmente en el mercado laboral, donde una alta proporción de trabajadores no está registrada oficialmente. También se extiende al crédito informal y a la economía de bolsillo que muchas familias utilizan para sobrevivir. Aunque existen numerosas propuestas y metodologías para formalizar el trabajo, las rentas y otros aspectos de la vida cotidiana —como la regularización de propiedades urbanas y rurales, actividades comerciales lícitas e ilícitas, o los ahorros que provienen de remesas—, la informalidad sigue siendo, en muchos casos, no solo una alternativa necesaria, sino la única opción para millones de personas que necesitan sostener sus hogares y garantizar condiciones mínimas de vida.

Hernando de Soto plantea que la economía informal no es en sí el problema, sino una respuesta popular creativa y espontánea de los sectores más pobres para satisfacer sus



necesidades básicas ante la ineficiencia y exclusión impuestas por el propio Estado. Según él, el verdadero obstáculo radica en la estructura estatal, que, en lugar de apoyar estas iniciativas, suele adoptar políticas que buscan combatir la informalidad como si fuera una amenaza. De hecho, advierte que muchas de estas medidas terminan destruyendo el capital acumulado por las personas y las condiciones que han construido para sobrevivir, profundizando así su situación de pobreza (Mercado & Rios, 2005).

Mientras aquí mantengo que la informalidad es un mecanismo de resistencia a las condiciones predatorias del sistema capitalista que fuerza y excluye una parte de la población, también considero que estas mismas condiciones de permanente exclusión y hartazgo frente a la poca esperanza vista en el futuro, son condiciones que han resultado en complejos procesos de revuelta social. Los casos más recientes en la región se conocen como el *estallido social*.

Figures 1 and 2. Protestas en Cali, Colombia (arriba) y Santiago, Chile (abajo).



Fuentes: @pachito.galbana y Carlos Figueroa.



Durante la última década, América Latina ha experimentado un creciente malestar ciudadano. Desde 2019, países como Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia y Colombia han sido escenario de protestas masivas motivadas por políticas fiscales, crisis de legitimidad y falta de oportunidades. Aunque la pandemia frenó temporalmente las movilizaciones, estas reaparecieron con fuerza en Perú y Paraguay entre finales de 2020 y principios de 2021. En Colombia, una reforma tributaria desencadenó en 2021 una de las protestas más prolongadas y violentas de su historia reciente, mientras que en Chile el descontento dio origen a un proceso constituyente. En otros países, como México y El Salvador, el malestar se canalizó por vía electoral, favoreciendo liderazgos personalistas como los de López Obrador y Bukele. En Brasil, las manifestaciones de 2013 y la destitución de Dilma Rousseff allanaron el camino para el ascenso de Jair Bolsonaro (Murillo, 2021). En todos estos casos, las protestas evidencian la tensión estructural entre democracia y desigualdad, con una ciudadanía —particularmente jóvenes— que demanda transformaciones profundas en medio de una creciente fragmentación política e incertidumbre institucional.

Cuando los jóvenes —y no solo ellos— no encuentran en las protestas u otras formas de resistencia una respuesta a las múltiples crisis que los rodean, tampoco optan por la pasividad. Vivir en medio de una modernidad líquida, que exige constantemente del individuo adaptarse y reinventarse, los empuja a buscar alternativas. En ese contexto, la migración emerge no solo como una salida, sino como un acto de resistencia frente a un orden establecido que no les ofrece futuro. Migrar se convierte, así, en una forma de romper con la inmovilidad de un sistema que ya no responde a sus expectativas y necesidades.

Entre 2015 y 2019, la población migrante en América Latina y el Caribe creció a un ritmo sin precedentes, casi duplicándose de 8,4 millones a 12,8 millones de personas (Inter-American Development Bank & Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021). Este aumento refleja el dinamismo y la complejidad de los flujos migratorios en la región, que representan cerca del 15% del total mundial de migrantes internacionales (281 millones en 2020) (Cecchini & Martínez Pizarro, 2023). A diferencia de otras regiones, América Latina ha sido escenario de un fuerte incremento de la migración intrarregional, que creció un 72% entre 2000 y 2020, el mayor aumento relativo a nivel global. Países como Colombia, Perú y Chile se convirtieron en destinos clave debido, principalmente, al éxodo masivo desde Venezuela: en 2020, los venezolanos representaban en promedio el 30% de la población migrante en 13 países de la región. Mientras tanto, Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, México y Perú concentraban más de un millón de inmigrantes cada uno, siendo Argentina el país que acogía a casi una sexta parte de la población migrante regional. A nivel interno, se destaca que la mayoría de los migrantes se encuentran en edad laboral activa (el 72% tiene entre 15 y 64 años), una proporción mayor que la de la población nativa, lo que resalta su potencial contribución económica (BID, 2024b).

Lejos de ser únicamente señales de descomposición o desorden, fenómenos comúnmente catalogados como crisis —como la migración masiva, el aumento de la violencia, los conflictos de orden público o las tensiones en el mercado laboral— pueden y deben ser comprendidos como expresiones de resistencia, reorganización y dinamismo social ante crisis estructurales más profundas y prolongadas. Estas reacciones no surgen en el vacío, sino como respuestas necesarias de comunidades que enfrentan las consecuencias de



modelos económicos, ambientales y sociales que ignoran las realidades locales y regionales. La migración, por ejemplo, no es solo un desplazamiento forzado, sino también una estrategia de supervivencia y de búsqueda activa de condiciones más dignas de vida. Del mismo modo, muchas manifestaciones de informalidad laboral, movilización popular o redes de apoyo comunitarias emergen como formas de sostener la vida frente a la falta de respuestas adecuadas del Estado o del mercado. Por tanto, estas llamadas "crisis" deben ser leídas también como expresiones legítimas de agencia colectiva y adaptabilidad, y no simplemente como amenazas al orden establecido. Reconocer este carácter transformador permite abrir el camino hacia políticas más justas, centradas en el respeto a los derechos humanos y en el fortalecimiento de capacidades locales.

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NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

ISSUES OF APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CIVIL LITIGATION

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Introduction

Nowadays, with the help of modern information technologies, some procedural actions in civil court cases can be carried out without a judge or his assistant.

There is a plaque at Dartmouth College that reads: "In this building during the summer of 1956 John McCarthy (Dartmouth College), Marvin L. Minsky (MIT), Nathaniel Rochester (IBM), and Claude Shannon (Bell Laboratories) conducted the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence. First use of the term 'Artificial Intelligence.' Founding of Artificial Intelligence as a research discipline 'to proceed on the basis of the conjecture that every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it'[1].

The application of artificial intelligence systems in the social sphere and economic sectors creates great opportunities for humanity. However, new opportunities also create some problems. Such problems are directly explained by the unique characteristics of artificial intelligence systems, including the ability of these systems to self-learn, act autonomously, intelligently, and even make independent decisions as a result of the further development of technologies, as a result of which these systems become more powerful and complex. In particular, the issue of the legal status of artificial intelligence systems is extremely controversial, and this creates a number of problems in the legal regulation of relations related to their activities.

Today, the volume of data generated by humans and machines far exceeds the ability of humans to process, interpret, and make complex decisions. Artificial intelligence is the foundation for teaching computers and the future of complex solutions.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the field of creating and implementing algorithms in a fast computing environment that mimic human cognitive processes[2].

Mainly in Western countries, artificial intelligence is being used to solve civil disputes and criminal cases.



The development of startups that predict civil disputes based on artificial intelligence by law firms and law offices operating in our country would also serve to increase lawyers' income.

An artificial intelligence that can understand and speak Uzbek has been created. Now, if you need to do something or find information, you can turn to "Mohira" instead of "Siri", "Alexa" or "Alisa"[3].

Literature review

A.D. (Dory) Reiling emphasizes that the implementation of artificial intelligence in courts has the following advantages:

1. Organising information. Recognising patterns in text documents and files can be useful, for example when sorting large amounts of cases, or in complex cases that contain a lot of information.
2. Advise. AI that is able to advise, can be useful for people and potential parties to a court case, who are looking for a solution to their problem, but do not yet know what they can do. Advisory AI can also be useful for legal professionals. AI not only looks for relevant information, but also provides an answer to a question.
3. Predictions. AI that claims to be able to predict court decisions attracts a lot of interest. The usual English/American term for this is "predictive justice". This term has given rise to discussion, because the outcome of the prediction algorithms is neither justice nor predictive. The term "forecast" is a more accurate description, reflecting current debates. The outcome looks more like a weather forecast than like an established fact. Just like the weather, court proceedings risk having an unpredictable outcome[4].

Since artificial intelligence is a technology, it is natural that it will not have close relatives and acquaintances. Most importantly, artificial intelligence will not be pressured by the above positions.

P.M. Morkhat listed the specific aspects of the use of artificial intelligence in legal proceedings:

- comparing regulatory legal acts in order to determine their hierarchy;
- performing simultaneous professional legal translations in court proceedings involving a foreign element;
- automatically classifying, forming and documenting legal acts;
- assisting the judge in determining the violated rights of the parties;
- making legal decisions using artificial intelligence when an operational expert assessment is necessary;
- comprehensively examining cases on newly discovered cases;
- selecting judges from a special list;
- checking judicial errors, etc[5. –C. 8-12].



According to K.L. Branovitsky addressing the challenges of implementing artificial intelligence technologies:

- 1) the problem of the concept of "artificial intelligence";
- 2) the problem of access to data;
- 3) the problem of expert application of artificial intelligence systems in justice;
- 4) the problem of application of artificial intelligence for analysis of judicial practice and forecasting;
- 5) the problem of application of artificial intelligence technologies by persons participating in the case.
- 6) the problem of delegating individual functions for conducting the case to the system based on artificial intelligence;
- 7) the problem of application of artificial intelligence for evaluation of evidence, establishment of factual circumstances of the case and applicable legal norms[6].

In light of the foregoing, we can examine to what extent AI can support or displace judges. Rather obviously, AI can do for judges many of the same tasks AI does for lawyers. For example, just as AI accelerates legal research for lawyers, it can accelerate legal research for judges. At present, again as is true with lawyers, it would be unwise to completely trust the results of AI legal research, but in many cases, it can whittle down the body of law that needs to be examined[7].

The websites of all courts around the world have interfaces that provide interactive services. In particular, we discussed the availability of interactive services on the official website of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan in our previous chapters. Of course, artificial intelligence can help process large amounts of data in courts.

As noted above, newer technologies can assist people to resolve disputes at an earlier time or refine the issues that need to be presented to judges. For example, technology can assist people to develop options and use AI to develop alternatives, and can be used to run evaluative, advisory and determinative processes. In this regard, some disruptive technologies are linked to Artificial Legal Intelligence ('ALI') which can be viewed as a system that has the capacity to render expert legal advice or decision-making[8].

Alternative options or advice provided by artificial intelligence forces the party to consider going to court. That is, if the party knows that the outcome of the civil case will be in its favor, it may consider filing a case within a court and paying the state fee.

By analyzing civil disputes with the help of artificial intelligence, it is possible to assess what the resolution of the dispute will be.

The "smart court" includes non-human judges, powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and allows participants to register their cases online and resolve their matters via a digital court hearing[9].

The use of AI in Chinese courts has been evident in three important functions. First, AI tools are being used to assist with judicial decision-making. China's Internet courts have been experimenting with "AI judges" to assist courts with the adjudication of basic, non-



complex cases, such as low-value contract and negligence disputes. These tools are aimed at promoting greater consistency of judgements across China, as well as mitigating potential gaps in judicial expertise. A judge may submit to an AI-enabled system the relevant information of the present case that they are hearing and receive analysis of automatically collated cases that were similarly decided for the judge's reference. In some courts, such a system can also undertake deviation analysis on draft judgments by comparing relevant evidence with evidence in previous court decisions[10. P.3.].

The smart court has embraced various newer technologies, supported by AI, the use of big data, and to a limited extent blockchain approaches[11].

Indeed, artificial intelligence, big data, and blockchain technologies can be considered the latest achievements of humanity today. The digitization of civil court proceedings involves achieving full electronic management of court activities and offering other intelligent digital options to facilitate court tasks and be more convenient for the parties.

Discussion

Digital courts can take various forms and be organized at various levels. In our country, civil courts have introduced procedures for parties to submit documents related to the case file electronically and for civil courts to communicate electronically.

One of the forms of digitalization of civil court cases is the electronic filing system, which allows the civil court to download any civil court decision online from anywhere.

Digitization not only affects the daily operations of the court, but also allows for the analysis of big data in the court and the provision of information to the public.

The use of digital tools in courts is becoming increasingly widespread around the world. So-called "cyberjustice" tools have already been implemented in several US and Asian judicial systems, including artificial intelligence, which facilitates access to justice, improves communication between courts and lawyers, and directly assists judges and court administrators.

Artificial intelligence serves to reduce the human factor by integrating algorithms and big data analysis into the judicial process. Artificial intelligence ranges from systems that can automatically show judges similar cases as reference, to systems that can process and cross-check all collected evidence, to systems that can automatically identify conflicts or relevant information for the judge to consider.

DoNotPay's world-first robot lawyer works on a defendant's smartphone and gives instructions on what to say to his client during the argument.

Artificial intelligence programs that can make decisions based on input can be applied to civil litigation.

Artificial intelligence acts according to a given algorithm. A robot judge makes a certain number of decisions faster than a human.

A robot judge can be one of the solutions in the fight against corruption. Also, civil litigation will be speeded up because the robot judge can work 24/7.

Four Examples of Artificial Intelligence in the Justice System:



Prometea

An artificial intelligence program developed and implemented in Argentina in 2017. The project is famous for the fact that its verdicts in court cases during the experimental stage never actually differed from those issued by judges.

Assistant Robots

Chinese courts often have a robot assistant that answers questions using understandable language that is not loaded with legal vocabulary. The country is also gradually introducing virtual or, as they are also called, cyber courts.

Robot Judge

In Estonia, several ministries have introduced artificial intelligence into the courts to help people file cases faster.

Pretoria

The Constitutional Court of Colombia recently announced the adoption of an artificial intelligence program called Pretoria to make the work of judges easier. The project significantly reduces paperwork[12].

The Buenos Aires District Prosecutor's Office (Argentina) has summed up the interim results of testing the Prometea software application, which can issue and formalize a court decision in a number of categories of civil and administrative cases in 10 seconds. It turned out that local judges approved 100% of the decisions made over the past year using artificial intelligence[13].

Various forms of artificial intelligence are already widely used in many judicial systems around the world, both in the form of the first bots and in the form of neural networks.

The People's Republic of China is ahead of others in the use of artificial intelligence in the courts. China's Hebei Supreme Court has developed the Intelligent Trial 1.0 system that helps courts automatically digitize files, classify documents, search for relevant laws, decisions and documents and then automatically creates documents (i.e. notifications) and coordinates tasks in the workflow[14].

In the Dutch judicial system, artificial intelligence is making its own decisions in certain types of civil cases for debt collection. Research shows that if certain conditions are met, artificial intelligence can make autonomous decisions to a limited extent. In foreign countries, robot judges are strictly automated to strictly follow the laws, they do it 100 times better and faster than any human.

Moreover, according to M.Masiddiqov, there are a number of questions related to the use of artificial intelligence in legal proceedings, the judiciary and the judicial system. Firstly, to what extent can artificial intelligence be useful for the functioning of courts and for independent judges, subject only to the law, who are authorized to consider and resolve a specific court case;



Secondly, what are the requirements for the use of artificial intelligence; how can artificial intelligence help the court make a fair decision, in what order and on the basis of what requirements; compliance with international standards for the use of artificial intelligence capabilities in the conduct of legal cases; issues such as the danger of artificial intelligence in the work of courts and judges [15].

If the law does not clearly define the algorithm for implementing the norm in a particular case and it is necessary to make a decision on an individual basis, then the human factor is necessary.

Given the large amount of memory and the speed of analysis of artificial intelligence data, robotized courts can reduce the workload of civil courts.

As a result of repeated consideration of legal disputes by robot judges, artificial intelligence stores this solution in its memory.

A robot judge does not violate the terms of the case - it allows you to analyze and make decisions as quickly as possible. A software robot can learn and make decisions hundreds of times faster than a human.

They, as judges, do not have the same intellectual, moral, emotional, physical, intellectual and other superfluous feelings as people do. This allows a robot judge to make a fair, objective and well-founded decision based on a broader analysis of all the information.

The result of the study by the signal processing unit is recorded in a graph of the calculation parameters, which is displayed on the computer along with the questions asked.

Artificial intelligence in the judicial system and law enforcement agencies should be used only if its implementation ensures transparency.

Judges based on artificial intelligence can simultaneously consider several civil cases and find relevant legal documents almost instantly. This is useful not only for judges to focus on more important decisions, but also for citizens who do not want to participate in long and complicated court proceedings.

Because the judiciary is a collegial body made up of hundreds, if not thousands, of different judges, different civil courts make different decisions. Artificial intelligence-based judges help to standardize some types of civil court cases.

It is anticipated that with the help of AI systems more frequently applied in the legal field, more people will gain access to court as the efficiency of courts is expected to improve. In addition, it will be easier and cheaper to seek and receive legal advice[16. P.283].

It is possible to create chatbots that will answer questions that arise in civil courts, especially in cases of adversarial procedure. It is possible to ensure that this chatbot answers questions related to civil court cases. For example, a question can be asked to the chatbot in the following order:

What is the amount of alimony that parents pay to their minor children?

A: If there is no notarized agreement between the parents on the provision of support for their minor children, alimony for their maintenance is collected by the court in the



amount of one quarter of the parents' monthly salary and (or) other income for one child, one third for two children, and half for three or more children.

How long must a claim for reinstatement be filed with the court?

A: A claim for reinstatement is filed within one month from the date of the employee being given a copy of the order terminating the employment contract.

A chat bot that answers such questions would also serve to raise the legal awareness of our citizens.

Perhaps in the future, chat bots can be created that answer questions on labor, family, and housing disputes.

When a claim is submitted, it can monitor the payment of the state fee and other attached documents, as well as assign cases to judges, prepare subpoenas and send them to the parties. Even the development of a final draft decision can be left to artificial intelligence, since artificial intelligence will have special algorithms that can serve as the basis for making a decision and the draft decision.

Artificial intelligence decision-making is based on special algorithms. When making a decision on debt collection:

- the debtor has violated the contract;
- the debtor can be held liable for the violation of the contract;
- the creditor has suffered or may suffer damage;
- the damage is intended to protect against the violation of contractual obligations;
- there is a causal link between the failure to fulfill or improper fulfillment of the obligation and the damage;
- the presence of fines and penalties in the contract must be taken into account.

The above conditions are programmed with the help of artificial intelligence and used when making a decision.

In addition to the possible gains in the efficiency and expediency of civil litigation, artificial intelligence is intended to help these smart courts achieve the goals of judicial reform, increasing trust, transparency, consistency, and even independence from unwanted internal and external interference.

One of the urgent problems in modern civil procedural legislation is that the current judicial system cannot cope with the volume of cases submitted for consideration, and mediation as an institution is in no way an alternative to the existing judicial system and does not compete with it[17. P.54].

Conclusion

The application of artificial intelligence by courts can be manifested in the following forms:

Firstly, artificial intelligence can be used to improve the workload of judges. In addition, the use of artificial intelligence in court administration can make better use of the large amount of valuable data that the judicial system has.



Secondly, artificial intelligence can be used to help judges identify patterns in judicial practice and verify evidence presented by the parties.

The introduction of artificial intelligence in civil litigation can ensure:

- a) improving the quality and efficiency of civil court activities. The system of issuing decisions by courts in civil cases, the use of text processing systems, the use of speech and video recognition systems for compiling audio and video records of court sessions, and the automated preparation of draft court documents;
- b) increasing the efficiency of judicial protection of the rights and legitimate interests of individuals and legal entities. Expansion of remote participation in court hearings by the use of artificial intelligence, biometric identification of citizens;
- c) increase legal awareness by introducing systems for predicting the outcome of civil court cases in order to reduce disputes.

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NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

THE ROLE 'HAWALA' IN FINANCING TERRORISM AND MONEY LAUNDERING: THE NEXUS BETWEEN INFORMAL MIGRANT REMITTANCES IN EUROPE AND FUNDING OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

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Introduction

As evident from the statements made by former President George W. Bush and former Secretary of State Colin Powell, money is regarded as vital for the planning and execution of terrorist activities, underscoring the notion that terrorism cannot persist without financial support. Comparable sentiments have been echoed by European leaders. In alignment with his American counterparts, British Chancellor of the Exchequer (later Prime Minister) Gordon Brown affirmed that 'the readily available financial resources are the driving force behind contemporary terrorism' (UK Treasury, 2001).

Admittedly, finances are a fundamental requirement for the execution of all terrorist activities, often characterized as an "energy source" or a "lifeblood" for both terrorists and their organizations. Funds are required for various purposes including the development of organizational infrastructure, recruitment, propaganda, training, planning, executing terrorist attacks (Simonovski and Ünsal, 2018), providing retirement pensions, acquiring weapons, explosives, paying bribes, obtaining communication equipment, transportation, forging documents, and more (Freeman, 2012:3). This underscores the necessity for long-term and reliable sources of funding (Simonovski and Ünsal, 2018). Without financial resources, terrorist groups cannot function effectively as organizations or carry out attacks. Nonetheless, questions persist: How do different terrorist groups acquire funds? What are the potential sources and methods of financial transfer?

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, there was heightened scrutiny and regulation of both formal banking and non-banking financial sectors. As a result, terrorists turned increasingly to alternative value transfer systems like Hawala, or physical methods such as transporting money, precious stones, or gold. Despite its widespread use, Hawala lacks robust legal oversight, allowing for anonymous cross-border money transfers that can facilitate terrorist financing (Klemar and Cindori, 2017:124).



Despite the widespread use of such money transfer systems by minority ethnic communities in numerous countries (for instance, Sri Lankan immigrants in Canada financing the Tamil Tigers through these channels), as well as within ethnic Muslim immigrant enclaves across Europe, North America, and certain regions of the oil-rich Middle East (Ballard, 2012), there has been limited academic inquiry into comprehending the underlying causes and sources devoted to researching hawala funding system (Klemar and Cindori, 2017:122).

Thus, this essay will fill the gap by seeking to answer the question of how hawala which is regarded as a traditional form of the money transfer system in some Asian, and East Asian societies might be linked with terrorist-sponsoring. First, I examine hawala and the reason for the popularity of this money transfer, and second, in the example of Somalians, I will try to shed light on how diasporas and migrant minorities may facilitate money laundering on European soil.

Literature review. Contextualising the argument

The empirical understanding of the hawala system, a traditional informal money transfer mechanism, is subject to constraints owing to its clandestine nature and the challenges associated with its study. Despite its significance in facilitating international financial flows, comprehensive empirical research on the hawala system remains scarce. However, notable efforts have been made by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2005), the World Bank (Passas and Maimbo, 2003), and the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF, 2013) to shed light on its workings and implications (UNODC, 2023). These institutions have undertaken various studies and analyses aimed at elucidating the operational dynamics, regulatory concerns, and potential risks associated with the hawala system.

Although the majority of FATF recommendations divides financial industry: placement, layering, and integration as three stages of money laundering, it does not explain the specific actions of criminals (Trechsel, 1997:14, Graber, 2009:2; Schneider and Windischbauer, 2008:394). In this context, the World Bank emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between money laundering and financing of terrorism due to the divergent paths taken by these funds. When money is utilized for terrorist activities, it typically follows a traceable route from its origin through a terrorist organization to the specific cell executing the attack (World Bank, 2009). FATF underscores the significance of monitoring the "direction and utilization of funds related to terrorism, as this data informs the necessary enhancements or implementations of controls" (FATF, 2019:39), aligning with the concept of monitoring terrorist fund movements. In this regard, the FATF advocates for a "comprehensive assessment" of the various stages constituting terrorist financing.

Nonetheless, criticisms around the researching hawala and money laundry is that the vast majority of the literature currently in publication concentrates either on efforts to estimate the volume of money laundering or on institutions and processes designed to prevent it (Takáts, 2007:4, Bagella et al., 2009:896). And these estimations lack persuasiveness, as accurately assessing the global volume of crime would require the ability to quantify worldwide criminal activities—a formidable challenge given the scarcity



of data and the limited understanding of the true scope of organized crime (Van Duyne, 1994:62, Harvey, 2004:339, Walker, 1999:36). While, there is widespread recognition that money laundering remains a significant global issue (Schneider, 2008:309). Consequently, efforts to combat money laundering have thus far fallen short (Maximilian,2022).

In "The Sources of Terrorist Financing: Theory and Typology" Michael Freeman distinguished a detailed analysis of the complex interplay between terrorist financing sources and the strategic considerations of terrorist organizations. Yet, from the first page Freeman provides specific examples of terrorist groups, such as the Shining Path, FARC, ELN, ETA, Pakistani Taliban, and others, and their methods of fundraising. Furthermore, illegal and legal activities as sources of funding for terrorist groups according to Freeman highlights how these activities can provide reliable income, enhance legitimacy or undermine state legitimacy, offer geographical flexibility, and sometimes lead to loss of control or unwanted attention from authorities. Additionally, Freeman identifies the role of popular support, including charitable donations and contributions from diaspora communities, in financing terrorist organizations. He explains how popular support signals legitimacy, provides a relatively easy source of income, but also poses risks such as loss of control or dependence on economic conditions.

Whereas Nikos Passas and Samuel Munzele Maimbo focuses on the relationship between Islamic institutions and terrorism financing in Europe. Which underscores the multifaceted nature of terrorist funding, highlighting both legitimate and illegitimate channels used by extremist groups. Which elucidates how Islamist terrorist organizations exploit Islamic institutions, such as mosques and cultural centers, as conduits for fundraising and recruitment. Passas and Maimbo finding out the Islamic banking system and its susceptibility to abuse for terrorism financing. Authors explain the structure of Islamic banks, including the pivotal role of Sharia Committees, and highlights the potential diversion of 'Zakat' funds to terrorist groups. The collaboration between Islamic banks and international networks of correspondent and offshore banks further complicates efforts to trace terrorist financing. Finally they underscore the challenges posed by the lack of common legislation in Europe and the political sensitivity surrounding investigations into Islamic banks.

Arguably, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, there has been a growing acknowledgment, if not consensus, that understanding terrorist financing remains insufficient. Despite significant efforts in what is often referred to as the "financial war against terrorism", many of the assumptions underlying regulatory frameworks are yet to be adequately tested and proven plausible (Witting, 2011). The book authored by Timothy Witting offers a comprehensive examination of the existence of a profound disparity between the expansive regulatory measures implemented to combat terrorist financing and the actual comprehension of the financial and economic dynamics employed by terrorist actors. This discrepancy is highlighted by various experts within the government and the financial sector, who admit to a lack of clarity in identifying the indicators of terrorist financing. These challenges underscore the necessity for a coherent and systematic approach to understanding terrorist financing, one that transcends the conventional focus on uncovering the sources and mechanisms of funding. Moreover Witting challenges orthodoxies surrounding terrorist finance, advocating for a more



contextualized understanding that emphasizes the socio-political dimensions of terrorist actors' interactions within local and global political economies and social movements. By reframing terrorist financing as part of broader socio-political dynamics rather than an isolated financial phenomenon, Witting proposes a more nuanced and analytically rigorous framework for researching and responding to terrorist finance.

The same is true for the financing of terrorism. However, it should be noted that majority of literature explains that terrorist financing exists, it does not describe exactly how such criminals operate (Bagella et al., 2009; Graber, 2009; Harvey, 2004; Schneider and Windischbauer, 2008; Takáts, 2007; Trechsel, 1997; Van Duyn, 1994; Walker, 1999). Thus the aim of this research is to further elucidate, step by step, how intelligent criminals use hawala banking to finance terrorist organizations and to use these findings to develop new prevention mechanisms. This research aims to close the gap described above. In particular, it will examine how criminals can use the hawala in Europe to launder money or finance terrorism. This will be achieved by analyzing which concrete steps they would have to take and which resources they would need to be successful.

The specification of Hawala

Arguably, before contemplating about hawala system and its role in financing terrorism it worth to define what Hawala means. In doing so, we will refer here to John Cassara and Saeed Al-Hamiz's definition, which define Hawala (Arabic: حوالة – transfer) also known as "Hundi" (collect) is an informal financial money transfer system (Al-Hamiz, 2005) "without money movement" (Cassara, 2006), that exists and operates outside the "traditional" banking system and financial channels. Hawala does not pay taxes and is outside of economic regulation. The main component of the hawala system is the network of hawala brokers (Bowers, 2009:379). They are responsible for facilitating transfers between countries. Notably, the funds do not physically cross international borders; rather, the sender provides the funds to a hawaladar-service providers in one country and receives a confidential code from to another hawaladar to receive the equivalent amount in local currency. Although, hawala is far from being a recent development. In fact, this informal method of transferring value has roots in antiquity. Its modern iterations are also recognized under different names such as Fei ch'ien in China, Phoe Kuan in Thailand, and the Black Market Peso Exchange in South America (Klemar and Cindori, 2017:121).

Admittedly, the expression may be relatively novel in Western vocabulary, but it enjoys widespread usage in various forms across Africa, Asia and throughout the Middle East. Thus this paper, acting as a mediator, aims to acquaint (or reacquaint) not only with the term "hawala" but also with the distinctive security hurdles posed by this concept—an informal and opaque means of transferring value (Bowers, 2009:379).

The sustained appeal and growing demand for Hawala as an alternative financial mechanism can be attributed to several key characteristics: Firstly, its inherent secrecy plays a pivotal role in its enduring allure. This multifaceted appeal directly addresses the apprehensions of money launderers, providing a shield against disclosure and legal ramifications, while also alleviating concerns among terrorist financiers regarding potential disruptions to their activities (Turner, 2011). Secondly, the widespread



dissemination of Hawala across more than 20 Asian and Pacific nations underscores its global presence and accessibility (Klemar and Cindori, 2017:122-123). In Afghanistan, the number of hawaladars is thought to be between 500 and 2,000 (Bolta, 2010) while fund movement direction covers Kabul, Peshawar, Dubai, and London. The total volume of transfers via Hawala is estimated to reach several billion dollars annually. Figures from 2011 (Ratha, 2012) indicate that funds transferred through alternative value transfer systems amounted to \$483 billion, with \$351 billion of this sum allocated to developing countries. Moreover, according to Richardson (2011), approximately 80% of start-up capital for small-scale entrepreneurs was facilitated through Hawala channels. Thirdly, Hawala transactions primarily benefit immigrant workers residing in developed countries. This is because many of them initially place their trust in representatives of the Muslim communities in hosting countries, who, in addition to running small businesses in EU countries, facilitate these illicit transactions. Finally, a significant portion of migrants may be residing in the country illegally or with expired visas. In such circumstances, hawala often becomes the sole method of transferring money without the necessity of confirming their identity.

Hawala and its nexus to terrorism

Terrorism, having become institutionalized and integrated into the realm of the shadow market, has established its own distinct financial and economic enclave. It possesses the capacity for substantial autonomous operations not only within its own national boundaries but also across international borders. The conduct of illicit activities necessitates the presence of financial institutions and substantial amount of finances capable of committing 'expensive' attacks' (Nagy and Somogyi 2023:22). In this instance, hawala networks prove to be highly advantageous for terrorist activities (Gordon, 2009:4). This system guarantees an inexpensive, discreet, and effective method for facilitating frequent money transfers across the globe, making it an attractive option for terrorists (G. Feiler 2007:35).

Prior to the September 11, 2001 attack, Hawala transactions were not prohibited in the United States as long as they adhered to US laws and were reported to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (Klemar and Cindori, 2017:123). The push for regulating these systems arose from global apprehension about their potential for facilitating terrorism financing. Western entities such as the UN, FATF, and IMF held deep suspicions toward certain informal value transfer systems (IVTS). These suspicions were further fueled by US narratives regarding the risks associated with IVTS and accusations of their involvement in the events of 9/11. Consequently, the 9/11 Commission Report documented the transfer of Al Qaeda funds through hawala networks in Pakistan and the Middle East before the September 11 attacks (Cooper and Walker, 2006:1125). As Keller (2005) investigated, the financing utilized by al-Qaeda in 1998 for orchestrating terrorist attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, revealing hawala's role in facilitating such activities. Given the high risks associated with physically transporting large sums of cash, many terrorist financiers prefer the discreet hawala system, which enables the transfer of billions of euros daily without raising suspicion (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2002).



An illustration of Hawala's utilization in support of terrorist activities is exemplified in the transcripts from the trial of Muhammed al-Owahali, an al-Qaeda member serving a life sentence for his involvement in the 1998 U.S. embassy bombing in Nairobi, reveal that funding for the attack was channeled through a hawala office located in the infamous Easleigh district of the city, known for its largely Somali population. Similarly, according to the charges against Faisal Shahzad, the Pakistani American who attempted to detonate a bomb-laden SUV in New York's Times Square in May 2010, hawala transfers were utilized to finance the plot (J. Cassara and Ch. Poncy, 2015:68). Shahzad allegedly received around \$12,000 from his handlers in Pakistan, specifically from the Tehrik-e-Taliban, to execute the attack (CBS News, 2010).

Another the most notable instance involves the exposure of a vast covert hawala network in Spain, comprising 300 hawaladars operating clandestine offices across Spanish cities, notably within 250 butcher shops, grocery stores etc., This network handled the finances of over 150,000 Muslims, many of whom were suspected to be receiving social welfare benefits from the Spanish state, without any legal oversight. Furthermore, the network facilitated the payment of salaries to jihadists in Syria, providing approximately \$800 for single individuals and \$1,200 for married individuals (Klemar and Cindori, 2017:126). These operations were conducted from concealed and anonymous Hawala stations, categorized as modern Hawala due to the provision of value transfer services from butcher shops, grocery stores, etc. (Ranstorp, 2016).

Multiple studies have shed light on this issue (Nagy and Somogyi 2023:23). Rowald (2014)_et al. highlight that al-Qaeda operates an extensive financial network comprising companies and bank accounts, while also relying on hawala for fund transfers. Arianti (2020) documents cases where the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in Myanmar distributed money through hawala. Similarly, the Katibat Imam Al-Bukhari group reportedly obtained funds from its affiliates through hawala channels (Soliev, 2019:17). The Khalistan Liberation Force funded its activities through criminal means in India, receiving financial support from the Sikh diaspora in Canada and the United Kingdom via hawala (Fair, 2004). Furthermore, hawala is also widely used by the Islamic State to avoid being tracked down for official banking transactions (Almohamad, 2021).

In summary, these studies underscore the utilization of hawala by terrorist organizations, elucidate its role in financing terrorism, and highlight the challenges encountered by law enforcement agencies.

Funding terrorism: the case of Somalian Al-Shaab Terrorist Organisation

Once Osama bin Laden stated that Jihadists aware of the vulnerabilities 'cracks' in the Western financial system. And unofficial payments, far from being mere fissures, represent vast chasms akin to the Grand Canyon. It is evident that beyond their legitimate purpose of transferring wages, they are also exploited by criminal and terrorist groups (Cassara, 2017:4). Islamic charitable organizations are not exception to this list and are heavily involved in funding terrorism.

According to Daniel Glaser (2011), the US Assistant Secretary of State for Terrorism Financing, charities—which are widely publicized and encouraged among immigrants—



are being used by terrorists as a means of "raising, moving, and utilizing funds." The charities are better suited to offer logistical cover for the transfer of funds and have evolved into a front for radicalization and brainwashing. Admittedly, there are diverse avenues through which terrorist funds flow. As outlined in this paper, tracing terrorist financing poses challenges, because the role of diaspora and proliferation of Islamic charities in various countries, some of which harbor a strong radical element. These funds are often channeled through the international hawala network (V.Chadha, 2014:40).

One should be noted that Somalia stands as one of the world's economies highly reliant on remittances (Cockyne and Shetret, 2012:2). Within Somalia, xawilaad (hawala) serves as the predominant means for transferring money into, out of, but also recognized as the most cost-effective, straightforward, and secure method for these transactions (Witting, 2011:121). With the absence of traditional banking institutions, the hawala system serves as the sole financial transfer mechanism in Somalia, facilitating family support, investments, and business transactions. Studies conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have revealed that 26 percent of Somalia's entire population relies entirely on transfers, while up to 66 percent depend on it for at least half of their basic needs (Houssein 2005:89).

However, hawala in Somalia serves not only as an informal money transfer system but also as a means of fostering cross-clan relationships, often involving specific clan members. Bigger xawilad businesses, like Dahabshiil, Amal, and the now-defunct al-Barakaat have strategically expanded their services across clan lines, operating within the framework of Sharia (Islamic law) and xeer (Somali customary law). This cross-clan, pan-Somali approach, rooted in religion and culture, closely mirrors a core ideological belief of al-Shabaab, emphasizing the significance of Islam (Witting 2011:122).

Al-Shabaab, also referred to as the Somali Youth Mujahedeen Movement, is a Sunni Islamist extremist group with the goal of expelling foreign, particularly Ethiopian, forces from Somalia and implementing Islamic law in the nation. Linked with al-Qa'ida and recognized as a terrorist organization by multiple countries, emerged as a potent and radical faction within the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) movement, which gained substantial support among Somalis in southern and south-central Somalia in early 2006 (WashingtonDC, 2007). The financing of this group partly relies on monetary donations from Somali diaspora communities situated in Europe, North America, Kenya, and the Middle East. In Scandinavia, for instance, individuals connected to Al-Shabaaab reportedly seek contributions from member of Somali communities in Odense, Copenhagen, and Malmö, many of whom hail from the southern Somali regions where al-Shabaab holds influence (Witting 2011:123). Investigators from the European Union claim that this kind of fundraising usually centers on "older, manipulative Islamic extremists" who can persuade people who might be sympathetic to the cause—including attendees of family gatherings, mosques, public gatherings, and charity events—to donate to al-Shabaab. These individuals reportedly do this by presenting stories that affirm that money given to al-Shabaab not only satisfies the Islamic obligation to give zakat (mandatory donation), but also that the funds will be used to fight against Ethiopia, the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and Western states, including the United States (Washington DC, 2010).



In this way, through the UK-based Somali community, Al-Shabaab has managed to secure substantial funding, estimated to be in tens of thousands of pounds, given their population size of around 250,000 (Shay, 2021). While some British Somalis voluntarily contribute to the terrorist organization, a portion of the money sent back to relatives in Somalia is diverted by extremists. Additionally, Muslims often donate to Islamic charities, typically through cash transactions via hawala (Nagy and Somogyi 2023:24). There's a strong likelihood that some of these donations to Islamic charities have inadvertently financed terrorism, unbeknownst to the devout immigrant workers (Patel, 2017).

Conclusion

The analysis of hawala, an informal yet pervasive money transfer system, reveals its role as a conduit for terrorist financing. Despite being traditionally associated with legitimate remittances and cross-border transactions, hawala has increasingly been exploited by terrorist organizations due to its secrecy and accessibility. Moreover, the examination of specific case studies, such as the Somali diaspora's contribution to funding Al-Shabaab, underscores the global reach and impact of terrorist financing networks. By elucidating these connections, this work contributes to a deeper understanding of how terrorist organizations exploit informal financial systems and diaspora communities to sustain their operations. This study not only identifies gaps in existing research but also proposes avenues for future investigation. By emphasizing the need for nuanced, context-specific approaches to understanding terrorist financing, it advocates for a shift away from conventional frameworks towards more holistic and interdisciplinary methodologies. Due to word limit of this essay, it has some limitations and requires further research on this issue. In essence, this work serves as a critical contribution to the field of counterterrorism by illuminating the evolving dynamics of terrorist financing mechanisms.

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RECENSÃO CRÍTICA

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Reflexões sobre reflexões: uma análise do debate do género, identidades e diversidade

Para falar sobre a obra *Reflexões sobre a Liberdade – Identidades e famílias* (2024) é necessário mencionar a obra *Identidade e Família: Entre a consistência da tradição e as exigências da modernidade* (2024). Após a sua célebre apresentação na Livraria Buchholz pelo antigo primeiro-ministro Pedro Passos Coelho, o *Identidade e Família* (2024) ganhou relevância nacional. De facto, o teor dos textos que compõem esta obra, associados às questões do combate de uma “ideologia de género”, a “cultura de morte” e a defesa da “família tradicional”, reacenderam o debate mediático sobre questões de género, identidade e diversidade. Simultaneamente, com a tentativa de retrocesso em direitos sociais na agenda de novas formações populistas de direita radical, este debate torna-se cada vez mais relevante não só para a Ciência Política como para a sociedade civil. Quanto à obra em análise, *Reflexões sobre a Liberdade* (2024), as três coordenadoras – Joana Mortágua, Maria Castello Branco e Susana Peralta – sublinham, logo na sua introdução, que não deverá ser vista como uma “resposta” ou um “ataque” ao *Identidade e Família* (2024). Joana Mortágua, deputada eleita pelo Bloco de Esquerda, Maria Castello Branco, integrante do podcast “Lei da Paridade” e candidata pelas eleições legislativas e europeias em 2019 pela Iniciativa Liberal, Susana Peralta, Professora na NOVA SBE e colunista pelo Público, apresentam-se como três mulheres com idades, percursos e opiniões diferentes, unidas na defesa da diversidade, liberdade e democracia. De facto, o objetivo maior desta obra é, como notado pelas coordenadoras: “Antes nos inscrevemos numa saudável dialética de acolhimento da diversidade de projetos de vida numa democracia liberal e da centralidade de tal desígnio na construção de uma melhor democracia.” (p. 11)

Esta obra é composta por vinte artigos por vinte autores diferentes, em que se trata uma ou mais das seguintes questões: 1) grupos discriminados (mulheres, pessoas racializadas, identidade de género, orientação sexual); 2) escolhas políticas relacionadas



a valores profundos (como o aborto, eutanásia ou a parentalidade); 3) um testemunho pessoal sobre o tema.

A secção inicial é relativa a grupos e identidades discriminados, juntando diversos artigos sobre as várias formas de discriminação e dos diversos grupos (incluindo-se mulheres, pessoas racializadas, a identidade de género, a orientação sexual). A multiplicidade de identidades no seio da sociedade, e o constante ataque à sua existência, expressam-se de formas diferentes, mas unem-se num mesmo ponto: na posição de desvantagem perante o tipificado como “normal” ou “natural”, em contraste com o marginal, o minoritário, o diferente.

No que diz respeito à questão de identidade de pessoas racializadas, Van Dunem refere como a sua identidade enquanto criança estava apenas agregada ao género e idade, até que: “(...) chegou um momento em que tive de franquear a barreira da porta, de ouvir os gritos do mundo e, no meio deles, surgiu, pesada e densa, a palavra: ‘preto’.” (p. 93) De facto, as identidades são também tema nos textos de Henrique França – mencionando o largo espectro de identidades entre homens, mulheres, cis e trans, para nos falar de liberdade (p. 107) – e de Hilda de Paulo, sobre a visão de cirurgiões estéticos, que assinaram prefácios, em obras de pessoas trans, “Esses textos são carregados de um viés patologizante sobre a transgeneridade, ainda a tratar o género de uma forma bem essencialista, (...) caso determinada pessoa se entenda como mulher, não possuindo essa conformação, poderá somente obtê-la por meio de intervenções cirúrgicas.” (p. 111)

Outro aspeto, largamente relacionado com a questão da identidade, é sublinhado no vasto conjunto de textos sobre políticas sociais e desigualdades. No conjunto de artigos sobre esta temática, existe um foco específico na questão da mulher. Deste modo, estes textos abordam as diferentes facetas da discriminação e desigualdade da mulher. Incluem-se os contributos de: Carla Castro, com a liberdade individual e as existentes desigualdades de género “O Estado social foi concebido em torno do ‘homem ganha-pão’ e da ‘mulher dona de casa’.” (p. 39), Catarina Furtado, sobre a realidade da mulher em Portugal e em outras geografias, concluindo que, “as raparigas e mulheres são quem mais sofre no mundo inteiro.” (p. 41-42), Catarina Marques Rodrigues, que propõe olhar para um problema contemporâneo – a crise de habitação – numa perspetiva de género e da (falta) de independência das mulheres (p. 53), de Fernanda Cândia e Maria Fernanda Cândia, no silenciamento histórico das mulheres em “Podemos aliás ainda hoje ler que ‘nunca se queixavam’.” (p. 91), João Maria Jonet e a polarização política e no mercado laboral relativamente às mulheres, Maria Castello Branco a ideia da mulher como o outro e como parte “A mulher existe porque tem uma vulva; o homem, por outro lado, é representado como um indivíduo na sua totalidade, com um corpo, olhos e, no caso do rei, uma coroa.” (p. 157) e Leonor Beleza, no progresso dos direitos até hoje, e a importante caminhada futura por mais direitos “Por muito que nos possamos queixar das partes ainda vazias do copo, não há comparação entre a relevância pública dos nossos direitos hoje e na altura em que nasci.” (p. 174)

Poder-se-á também identificar uma segunda secção, onde se incluem os artigos que exploram temáticas relativas a escolhas políticas assentes em valores pessoais profundos. O aborto, a eutanásia, mas também a educação e a família são alguns dos



aspectos aqui explorados. Assim, estes temas partilham o seu forte valor normativo, crítico tanto no debate político e como no seio da sociedade civil.

Para Susana Peralta, o aborto é o assunto chave, num artigo com testemunho pessoal, sublinha “As consequências – das do aborto clandestino às da gravidez não desejada – são sempre mais prováveis nas mulheres de menores rendimentos, (...) Assim era em Portugal antes de 2007: quem podia ia a Espanha tratar do assunto.” (p. 184) Já para Teresa Violante, o foco é na questão da objeção de consciência, em que se “(...) coloca os profissionais na posição de juízes morais do comportamento das pessoas grávidas.” (p. 209) Paralelamente, a eutanásia é o outro grande tema relacionado com as escolhas políticas valorativas. No artigo de André Coelho Lima, com três tipos de argumento (jurídico, político e filosófico) o autor apresenta-se como um defensor da não ingerência na vida de outrem, afirmando a sua incredulidade sobre defender-se a defesa da vida do próprio que, detentor desse direito, quer terminá-la. (p. 20) Outro ângulo de análise surge no artigo de Isabel Moreira, defendendo tratar-se de uma matéria da competência da Assembleia da República, menciona também algumas incongruências no debate, em que: “Também houve tentativas de referendar o final da vida de pessoas. Os que recusaram inicialmente o referendo com base na sua fé, dizendo que a vida não se referenda, depressa mudaram de opinião, já que a lei fora aprovada.” (p. 121)

Por fim, no conjunto de contributos que se centram no conceito de família, encontramos Daniel Oliveira, que assinala a variedade de configurações familiares, pelo que “Não quero convencer ninguém das virtudes do meu modelo de família, até porque não o tenho.” (p. 67). Fabíola Cardoso refere também que “Quebrar o conservadorismo com que crescemos, que nos foi transmitido em cada colher de sopa, em cada ida à casa da tia, é um processo emancipatório duro. Especialmente para as mulheres, eternamente entre a puta e a santa.” (p. 70), fazendo referência à família, à mulher e à criança que cresce nessa família. Particularmente sobre a diversidade de famílias, esta questão advém também destas novas formações familiares, uma evolução do conceito de família nas sociedades contemporâneas. A introdução do divórcio, a legalização do aborto, o casamento e adoção por pessoas do mesmo sexo, por um lado, mas também a introdução das mulheres na força laboral, alteraram estruturalmente o conceito de família – não existindo, no entanto, uma irreversibilidade dos direitos sociais conquistados. Os autores mencionam algumas destas questões, sendo que para Pedro Strecht, “A diversidade da organização das famílias é atualmente indiscutível. (...) É a evolução da realidade psicossocial que o demonstra de forma clara, levando a que seja impossível não só compreendê-la como, obviamente, aceitá-la.” (p. 175) Em relação à parentalidade, a paridade é o tema principal no artigo de Leonor Caldeira, em que o padrão português se define como “(...) pai e mãe trabalham a tempo inteiro, mas é à mãe que cabe a maior parte das tarefas domésticas e, em cima disso, é ainda ela a pessoa que domina as questões da saúde familiar: (...)” (p. 149) Sobre as crianças e a educação, Joana Mortágua fala da disciplina de Educação para a Cidadania e o Desenvolvimento, sublinhando a sua posição sobre a identidade, individualidade, liberdade e autonomia das crianças, que deverão no contexto escolar desenvolver-se como cidadãos completos, saudáveis e livres. (p. 131) Por último, Teresa Leal Coelho fala sobre a democracia, a família e a liberdade individual e conclui: “Uma sociedade democrática, integrada num Estado de direito democrático, reconhece a dignidade humana como atributo de todos os



seres humanos, respeita a diferença, acolhe os valores da autonomia, da liberdade e da identidade de cada um.” (p. 197)

Em suma, considerando que se trata de um compêndio de diversos artigos sem uma ordem específica ou obrigatória à leitura, esta obra pretende juntar diversos contributos dos diferentes pontos do espectro político. Questões sobre grupos historicamente discriminados, mais ou menos esquecidos pela história (pessoas racializadas, as diferentes identidades de género e orientações sexuais, as mulheres), assim como escolhas políticas valorativas (o aborto, a eutanásia, a família, a parentalidade, a educação, a liberdade) são vistas através de diversos prismas, pelos diferentes autores, com pontos de vista e de partida distintos. É necessário sublinhar que, apesar de os textos serem contidos em si mesmos, existe um elo de ligação: esta mesma ideia de que não existe uma identidade única e uma só configuração possível para a família. Não sendo uma obra que ataca o *Identidade e Família* (2024), nasce para a desconstruir e às ideias nela preconizadas. O *Reflexões sobre a Liberdade – Identidades e famílias* (2024) é uma obra que demonstra que independentemente da posição ideológica de cada um, é possível reunir um grupo heterogéneo de autores que lutam pela defesa da igualdade na diversidade. Publicada no ano em que se celebram os 50 anos da democracia portuguesa, esta obra espelha uma verdadeira diversidade entre pares assim como a capacidade de contribuir para o diálogo democrático.

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