# EURO-ATLANTIC STUDIES

# EURO-ATLANTIC

# STUDIES

New Series

3/2020

CONTENTS

# Hungarian Geopolitics during the interwar period

**Andi Mihail Băncilă**[*]

**Key-words**: Hungary, Transylvania, revisionism, geopolitics, dictation

## Abstract

*The end of the First World War produced a major reconfiguration of the political map of Europe. The three anachronistic empires that continued to exist in the Eastern part of the continent (Ottoman, Tsarist, and Austro-Hungarian) quickly disintegrated and gave way to a system of politically unstable nation-states. The Trianon Treaty signed in 1920 annulled the Hungarian multiethnic state formed by a context of circumstances in 1867 and sowed the seeds of the conflicts that followed. The Hungarians, the main losers of the peace treaty, developed a real cult for the Hungarian "millennial" state and tried to identify solutions for its recreation. Geopolitics, a rising science at that time, became the main instrument of Hungarian revisionism and created the necessary conditions for the renegotiation of borders at the beginning of the Second World War.*

---

[*] PhD in History, Associate Professor, „Ferdinand I" Military Technical Academy.

### Introduction

Geopolitics was the ideal tool for promoting irredentist theses based on which Fascist Hungary asked Hitler's Germany and Fascist Italy for support to change the *status quo* established by the Treaty of Versailles in 1920. Many of the Hungarian geopolitical studies written in the interwar period aimed to highlight the historical right of the Hungarian state to request the annexation of some of the territories under the sovereignty of neighboring states. Starting from the premise that "purpose excuses the means" this *desideratum* was based on speculations, data, and information unverified from a scientific point of view.

### Ideological preparation of the campaign to revise the borders of Interwar Hungary

One of the most contested studies that served the Hungarian authorities as a theoretical basis and argument for the preparation of the injustice dictated in Vienna on August 30, 1940,[1] was written by Count Pal Teleki[2] in German "Siebenbürgens Lage in Ungarn und Europa" and later translated into Romanian

---

[1] *** United Nations, *Reports of international arbitral awards, Award relating to the Territory ceded by Romania to Hungary, 30 August 1940*, VOLUME XXVIII, p. 409, https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_XXVIII/407-412.pdf.

[2] Count Pal Teleky, a geographer by profession and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, came from an old noble family that had held large territories in Transylvania in the run-up to World War I. At the time of writing, he was acting Prime Minister of Hungary and was campaigning externally for Hungary to regain lost territory under the Treaty of Versailles. See Turda Marius, Weindling Paul, *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe 1900-1940*, Central European University Press, 2007, p. 380.

under the title "The situation of Transylvania in Hungary and Europa."[3] The Hungarian professor tried to promote the idea that Transylvania can be divided into two distinct regions that can easily be placed in two nation-states.[4] The two halves of a unitary historical province in its entire existence were considered to have their own identity based on major differences classified not only ethnically but also historically, geographically, and economically.

The northern part that was forcibly integrated into the Hungarian state was considered a quintessential Hungarian area while the southern half of the province was a nationally undefined area inhabited by nationally distinct religious and religious communities. The Hungarian author refers to the ethnic diversity of the province's population but acknowledges that in the hilly and sub-mountainous area, geographical space that characterizes the region inside the Carpathian arc, the population of Romanian origin is the majority.[5]

The Hungarian author considered that the ethnic structure of the province existing at that time 52% of the Romanian population was the result of an "accident of history" following the Ottoman conquest when the Hungarian population fell sharply. He mentioned that many of the Hungarian inhabitants of the province died in battles with the Turks, and their place was quickly taken by Romanians who migrated to this area.[6] At the time of the Vienna dictatorship, the Hungarian side presented its estimates of the ethnic composition of Northern Transylvania, denying the results of the official census conducted by the Romanian authorities.

---

[3] Nicolae Edroiu, *Teza ungară a celor două jumătăți ale Transilvaniei. Studiu critic*, Cluj-Napoca, Imprimeria Ardealul, 2001, p. 6.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 12.

[6] Anton Golopenția, *Preocupări politice maghiare* in Emil I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, Vasile S. Cucu (eds), "Geopolitica", Iași, Glasul Bucovinei Publishing House, 1994, p. 262.

The Hungarian delegation argued for the right to annex this territory, invoking a Hungarian ethnic majority of 53.6%, and mentioning that the Romanian population represented only 39.9% of the total number of inhabitants of this region.[7]

The idea promoted by Pal Teleki is completely false because the Ottoman expeditions in the northern part of Transylvania were of low intensity and took place starting from the south, the most affected areas being the rich Saxon craft centers in the southern part of the province (Sibiu, Brașov, Făgăraș, etc.) as well as the Romanian villages in their immediate vicinity. The official documents of the principality of Transylvania do not record any such military expedition during the entire period between the end of the reign of Iancu de Hunedoara and the conquest of the province by the Habsburg Empire.[8] The official documents of the principality register rather the emigration of an important part of the Romanian population from the area to the free zones from the south of the province and even to the neighboring principality of Moldova. The first step of the Hungarianization of the Romanian population was their conversion to the Catholic religion. As a result of the persecutions to which many Romanian peasants were subjected, they took refuge in Moldova, the flight of serfs (most of them Romanians) from the estates of Hungarian counts had become a common practice at the time.[9] This population moved across the Carpathians explains the large number of Catholic

---

[7] Janos Kristof Muradin, *Minority Politics of Hungary and Romania between 1940 and 1944. The System of Reciprocity and Its Consequences* in "European and Regional Studies", Vol. 16, No. 1/2015, p. 59, https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/auseur/16/1/article-p59.xml.

[8] Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[9] *Ibidem,* p. 45.

believers who lived in the border counties of Moldova and whom Hungarian geopoliticians classified as Csango.[10]

In the mentioned volume, Count Teleki presents another ridiculous theory regarding the assimilation of a part of the Hungarian population by the Romanians "newly arrived in the area". The very large share of the province's population was explained both by the natural increase in population growth much higher among Romanians than Hungarians and because "the light language assimilated many Hungarians."[11]

The author intentionally omits to mention the antiquity of the Romanian settlements in the area, many of them attested by the Hungarian historiography chronicle "Gesta Hungarorum" also known as the chronicle Anonymus written around 1200 at the court of King Bela I.[12] The document written in Latin mentions the presence of the Romanian population in that area before the Hungarian conquest and mentions pre-existing politico-state formations (duchies of Glad, Gelu, Salanus, Morout, names with Latin resonance), as well as the massive presence in their armies of numerous "blachi", a  name given at the time to the

---

[10] The name Csangos comes from the Hungarian word "csángó" which means alienated or gone. The name originally described all ethnic groups displaced from their place of origin without reference to their ethnic origin. Currently, three important Csango communities are identified on the Romanian territory. The most important from a numerical point of view are the Catholics from Bacău and Neamț counties, most of whom identify themselves as Romanians. Along with them, two small communities can be identified on the territory of Brașov counties (Hungarian-speaking, but with evangelical religion, most probably from Hungarianized Saxons) and one in Ghimeș from the border of Bacău, and Harghita counties. See Csango minority culture in Romania, Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, from the Council of Europe, https://archive.is/20120605044639/assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc01/EDOC9078.ht

[11] Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit*., p. 16.

[12] Paul Lazăr Tonciulescu, *Cronica notarului Anonymus. Faptele ungurilor*, Bucharest, Miracol Publishing House, 1996, p. 3.

population of Romanian origin.[13] The poverty of written evidence regarding the existence of a permanent population of Romanian origin before the Hungarian conquest favored the formulation of many speculative ideas, which call into question the ethnic origin of many of the leaders of these benefit formations, but Romanian continuity in this region can be easily traced. The basis of numerous archaeological evidence that invalidates from the beginning any trace of speculation.

Another important omission is the chronicles that mention the Romanian origin of the first rulers of Moldova, Dragoș and Bogdan, who laid the foundations of the Romanian State East of the Carpathians along with a large community of Romanians from Maramureș. The emigration of an important part of the population of Maramureș to Moldova confirms the fact that in that area the Romanian presence was very old and its high density allowed the colonization of the neighboring lands.[14] These important details in clarifying this dispute are also recorded by the Hungarian chroniclers of the time in numerous works (*Chronicle of the Hungarians* written by Ioan de Târnave, official to King Louis I of Hungary). The information was later taken over in the writings of Moldovan chroniclers who explicitly mentioned the Romanian origin of Dragoș and Bogdan from Maramureș:

> "Bogdan, the voivode of the Romanians (Olahorum) from Maramureș,
> bringing the Romanians of that district, secretly passed into the Land of

---

[13] Alexandru Madgearu, *The Romanians in the Anonymous Gesta Hungarorum, Truth and fiction*, Cluj-Napoca, Institutul Cultural Român, 2005, p. 30.

[14] Dimitrie Onciul, *Dragoș și Bogdan, fondatorii principatului moldovenesc* in "Convorbiri literare", XVIII, no. 7-8, 1884-1885, Iași, p. 254.

Moldavia (.. .), increasing the number of Romanians in this country, it widened in the kingdom (*in regnum est dilatata*).[15]

Another important detail to which the Hungarian author does not give enough importance is the coverage area of the space inhabited by Romanians. Their presence in all areas of the province, their very good adaptation to physical and geographical conditions (characterized by their occupational multitude) show that: "of all ethnic groups they are the least indicated to be considered an immigrant population."[16]

The withdrawal of an important part of the Romanian community from Transylvania from the depression area to the mountains, which was intensely speculated by the Hungarian revisionists, was due to the shortcomings caused by the migrant populations that "ruined their state and civilized life."[17] However, due to the transhumance practiced by Romanian shepherds, the Romanian language spoken in all corners of Transylvania developed as a unit. Moreover, the Vatican's financial records from 1332-1337 mention as taxpayers the inhabitants of only 950 localities in Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș, the remaining approximately 1100 localities existing in the Hungarian royalty registers being registered with a population of faith Orthodox, meaning Romanian.[18]

---

[15] Pavel Parasca, *În problema izvoarelor tradiției medievale a întemeierii Moldovei* in "Revistă de istorie și politică" p. 64,
https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/In%20problema%20izvoarelor%20traditiei%20medievale%20a%20intemeierii%20Moldovei.pdf

[16] Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[17] Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol, *Unitatea sufletului românesc*, in Emil I. Emandi, Gh. Buzatu, Vasile .S. Cucu (eds)," Geopolitica", Iași, Glasul Bucovinei Publishing House, 1994, p. 143.

[18] \*\*\**Documente privind istoria românilor. Veacul XIV - C Transilvania, Vol III (1331-1340),* Bucharest, Academy Publishing House, 1954, pp. 41-253, apud. Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

The very large share of the Hungarian population in cities was largely due to the phenomenon of ethnic assimilation. In many urban communities, the demographic increase was well below the level of neighboring villages, naturally creating a movement to supplement this deficit with the population from these areas.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Hungarianization of Romanians who emigrated to cities was almost total. The small number of those who settled allowed the rapid dilution of their identity. An interesting movement occurred at the beginning of the Modern Age when the feudal privileges granted to the three recognized nations (Hungarians, Saxons, and Szeklers) were annulled,[19]and the Romanian nation had the chance to change the numerical ratio in the cities of Transylvania.

Taking into account that the number of Romanians in the rural area was very high, a possible move to the cities would have managed in a very short period to cancel the advantage held by the Hungarians. In response to this new situation, the Hungarian authorities initiated a systematic process of assimilation of all non-Hungarians, including Saxons and Szeklers. The movement intensified after the proclamation of the dual Austro-Hungarian state in 1867. The "need for the intensification of Hungarianization" was repeatedly emphasized by Hungarian politicians and culture, who argued that in the absence of this process, the very notion of a dualist state was annulled. The publicist and politician Gustav Beksits, who also held the position of director of the minority department, mentioned that:

---

[19] Ioan Aurel Pop, *Reformă și națiuni în Principatul Transilvaniei* in "Studia Historica et Theologica" *Omagiu Prof. Emilian Popescu*, Bucharest, 2003, p. 464, http://dspace-v.bcucluj.ro/bitstream/123456789/48226/1/Pop%2BIoan%2BAurel-Reforma%2Bsi%2Bnatiuni-2003.pdf

„The Hungarians must prevent the national development of the Slavs and the Romans, because otherwise dualism, whose fundamental idea is the Hungarian national state, is no longer necessary."[20]

To this end, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Prime Minister of Hungary, Khuen-Héderváry Károly, by order no. 4,795 / 902 of 22 August 1903 ordered an extensive linguistic study based on which a coherent policy of consolidating the Hungarian ethnic bloc should have been implemented.

According to Vargha Gyula, director of the Central Statistical Office, the author of the study in mixed areas or areas where Hungarians had no ethnic representation, colonizations with a Hungarian population should have been carried out to intensify the Hungarianization process.[21] Through the legislation designed by the Hungarian state, the population speaking the official language enjoyed many rights, many of them being deeply discriminatory against other nationalities. By ministerial ordinance no. 4000/1917 Romanians were denied the right to purchase agricultural land,[22] which in the medium term would have encouraged many of them to emigrate or become Hungarian. Officially, the policy of Hungarianization and discrimination of the Romanian nation in Transylvania was stopped after the achievement of the Great Union in 1918.

---

[20] Aurel C. Popovici, *Stat și națiune. Statele Unite ale Austriei Mari,* Bucharest, Albatros Publishing House, 1997, p. 117.

[21] Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, *Politică și demografie în mișcarea de emancipare națională a românilor din Transilvania în epoca modernă* in "Călător prin istorie: omagiu profesorului Liviu Maior la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani, Center for Transylvanian Studies, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 384, http://dspace-v.bcucluj.ro/bitstream/123456789/47862/3/Bolovan%2BIoan-Politica%2Bsi%2Bdemografie-2010.pdf.

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 390.

Through the agricultural reform of 1921-1923, [23] Romanian peasants, as well as those of other nationalities, were given ownership of agricultural land, nationalized from the Hungarian counts, who, like the Romanian boyars from the former kingdom, received important monetary compensations. However, Hungarian revisionist circles continued to promote many theories in the West, based on studies conducted during the dualism period, some of which later became legal arguments for the two Vienna dictates. The thesis of the two halves of Transylvania became after the annexation of the northern part to Hungary an important propaganda document that continued to be developed in complementary studies during 1941-1944 published by the Transylvanian Scientific Institute, based in Cluj.[24]

**Revisionist Hungary and its actions during the Second World War**

Representatives of the Hungarian government negotiated with the German and Italian fascists the possibility of regaining part of the territories they had been "forced" to cede to neighboring states following the Treaty of Trianon. The negotiations took place long before the beginning of the Second World War, each of the requests made by the Hungarians being strongly supported by a multitude of arguments. The framework for these negotiations had been created following the Munich Protocol of September 30, 1938, when Germany had obtained from Britain and France for itself and its allies a series of concessions of a territorial nature. The first state "sacrificed on the altar of European peace" ("peace for our

---

[23] \*\*\* Law of July 30, 1921, for the Agrarian Reform in Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş, http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?idt=65850

[24] Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[25] Charmley John, *Chamberlain and the lost peace*, Chicago, Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 1989, p. 105.

time") had been Czechoslovakia, whose security had been guaranteed by the great European powers. The United Kingdom, through the voice of Prime Minister Chamberlain, had expressed its utter disinterest in the annexation of Ruthenia by Hungary and even agreed that it could integrate as much of Slovakia as possible.[25]

The Munich agreement created the framework for the conduct of the two dictatorships in Vienna, whose main beneficiary became Hungary. In the first round of these treaties, also called the "First Vienna Dictate" signed on November 2, 1938, Czechoslovakia was forced to accept the dismemberment of its territory.[26]Except for the Sudetenland, which had been forced to cede to Germany, the Central European state had been divided into two separate entities. Subcarpathian Ukraine (Ruthenia). Its allied Poland had also annexed the Teschen region, thus violating the treaty of alliance signed between them. The Warsaw government gave its consent to the annexation of Ruthenia by Hungary, considering that in this way it would gain an ally in the undeclared war with its population of Ukrainian origin.[27]

Hungary sought recognition of its new borders not only from Germany but also from neighboring states from which it took over certain territories. The recognition of independent Slovakia meant that the new government accepted the territorial losses. Upper Hungary or the Danube Slovakia, inhabited mainly by people of Hungarian origin, was the price that this new state had to pay in exchange for recognizing its independence from the Czech Republic. To ensure the

---

[25] Smetana Vit, *In the Shadow of Munich. British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from 1938 to 1942*, Prague, Karolinum Press, 2008, p. 113.

[26] Denny E. Eastman, *German policy and first Vienna Awar*d, The University of Arizona, University Libraries, 1964, p. 9, in
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.975.1725&rep=rep1&type=pdf

[27] *Ibidem*, p. 56.

amicable settlement of this agreement, German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop called on Hungary to drop its claim to annex the five major Slovak cities in the south of the country, including the capital of the Slovak state: Bratislava, Eitra, Kosice, Uzhorod, and Mukacevo.[28] Regarding the loss of Ruthenia (Subcarpathian Ukraine) also ceded in favor of Hungary, there were no major objections because this territory, inhabited mainly by Ukrainians, was already a millstone attached to the foot of this fragile state.

### The sacrifice of Greater Romania. The Second Vienna Dictate

The Hungarians kept on putting pressure on the neighbors through various channels to continue annexing their territories. Romania and Serbia became the next two victims of Hungarian irredentism. Although they had skilled negotiators and demands, the Hungarians managed to annex only a part of the requested territories at the beginning of the Second World War. Romania was forced by the Vienna Dictate of August 30, 1940,[29] to cede one-third of the territories it had reclaimed in 1918 (Hungary had requested two-thirds), and Serbia only half of Vojvodina (Backa and Srem provinces).[30]

These territorial abductions were justified by Hungarian geo-politicians through a series of studies that had to justify their historical right to rule those provinces. Although most documents presented partial data, and ethnic maps were drawn up by Hungarians to highlight the numerical superiority of the

---

[28] *Ibidem*, p. 45.

[29] Béni L. Balogh, *The Second Vienna award and the Hungarian- Romanian relations 1940-1944*, Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 231.

[30] Marius Turda, *In pursuit of Greater Hungary: Eugenic Ideas of Social and Biological Improvement, 1940–1941* in "The Journal of Modern History", Vol. 85, No. 3 (September 2013), p. 563, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/670822

Hungarian community in the territories they requested were drawn up by superimposing close colors (red and pink)[31] to separate the two communities the reality on the field was completely different.

Except for the Szeklerland, where the share of the Hungarianized population exceeded 90% of the total population, in the other regions of Northern Transylvania the Hungarians constituted ethnic minority groups. An in-depth analysis of this situation can be made very easily by studying the official statistics of the Romanian state (the data contained in these documents were not disputed by the representatives of the Hungarians in Romania) published before the surrender of this region. The largest city with a majority population of Hungarian origin in the requested area, Târgul Mureș, was not nearly as Hungarian as the Budapest authorities presented it. On July 31, 1940, the Hungarians represented just over 50%, more precisely 22,596 (58.12%), the Romanians 9,887 (25.43%), and other cumulative minorities (Germans, Jews, Roma) numbered 6,394 inhabitants (16.44%).[32] At the county level, things were even worse, the Hungarians constituted only 38.2% while the Romanian population represented 50.9%.[33] The same situation was registered at the level of the entire region that was to become part of Hungary. According to the same document from a total population of 2,970,246 inhabitants, Romanians numbered 1,606,481 people, 54.08%, while Hungarians, combined with Szeklers, represented only 34.45%, more precisely 1,023,431 inhabitants.[34]

---

[31] *** *Spațiul istoric și etnic românesc*, Vol. III, Bucharest, Editura Militară, 1992, p. 21.

[32] *** *Anuarul statistic al României 1939-1940,* 1940, p. 113.

[33] Sabin Manuilă, *Aspects démographiques de la Transylvanie*, Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1938, pp. 70 - 73.

[34] *Ibidem.*

The injustice of this dictation was recognized even by the moral author of the treaty, the Chancellor of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, who declared: "solving the problem is particularly complicated because a Hungarian territorial claim is opposed by a Romanian ethnographic claim."[35] Romanian Foreign Minister, Mihail Manoilescu, the signatory of the Vienna dictatorship, who fainted when he saw the map of the territories to be ceded, stated in his memoirs that: "the wisdom of the Vienna arbitrators was so great so that in the region ceded to Hungary, the Hungarians were less numerous than the Romanians."[36]

The lack of logic of how the border was drawn through the middle of the historic province, cutting communications, gas supply networks, electricity, or even depriving urban communities of resources provided by villages in the immediate economic space was noticed even by the Hungarian authorities. The Budapest government continued to demand from Germany and Italy a much larger territory that would have regulated the economic functioning of this area. Everyone agreed on the idea that this compromise solution would not satisfy either party,[37] and solving the issue was to become a reality only at the end of the war. Until then, Germany had to win the unconditional support of both states, which would find themselves in constant competition to win Hitler's sympathy.

In order to cancel any future territorial claims of the Romanian state on the territory incorporated by the Vienna Dictate, the Budapest authorities analyzed the variant of a population exchange The governor of the annexed territory, Count Bethlen Istvan, considered it necessary to "repatriate the Romanians who fled from

---

[35] Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

[36] Mihail Manoilescu, *Dictatul de la Viena. Memorii iulie-august 1940*, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 1991, pp. 246-247.

[37] Béni L. Balogh, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

Moldova to Transylvania" and replace them with the Csangos living in Moldova and Bukovina, whom he considered denationalized Hungarians.[38] The effort of the Hungarian authorities to ethnically purify the region of Transylvania that they had received under the administration during the war was particularly intense.

To diminish the resistance to the assimilation of the masses of peasants, the new Hungarian authorities put pressure on the Romanian intellectuals, forcing them to abandon their houses and take refuge in the part of the province that remained part of the Romanian state. Aware of the short time they have available to change the ethnic composition of the territory received,[39] the Horthysts used a multitude of elements to determine the Romanians to abandon their national identity: a forced hungarianization of names, the rapid change of the localities' names and the toponymy of the area, the abusive introduction of Hungarian language education for all forms of education, incorporation and sending to the front of many Romanian ethnics. As a result of these actions, over 500,000 Romanian ethnics left the occupied territory and took refuge in Southern Transylvania.[40]

Along with Romanians, victims of the repression of the Hungarian Horthy's army were also citizens of the Jewish faith who were deported to forced labor camps and later exterminated. Out of a total population of 138,885 Jews (at the time of the transfer of their territory their number was approximately 164,052) recorded by the Romanian census of 1930 for the counties ceded to Hungary at the end of

---

[38] Nicolae Edroiu, *op. cit., p.* 115.

[39] The Hungarian authorities were preparing the ground for the next peace conference when they wanted to justify their right to annex this part of Transylvania.

[40] http://www.buletindecarei.ro/2014/09/romani-refugiati-expulzati-sau-ramasi-in-ardealul-de-nord-dupa-diktatul-de-la-viena.html

the war less than 25% of the initial population was still alive. In order to assess the haste with which the new authorities proceeded to implement racial and anti-Semitic policies, one can analyze the Hungarian census of 1941 which identified only 45,593 Jews.[41]

The act of August 23, 1944, repositioned the Romanian state in the camp of the Allied Powers, the Romanian army making a significant contribution to the defeat of fascism in Europe. Aware of the fragility of the two dictates in Vienna, the Hungarian authorities considered that they could keep these territories only by fighting for another time with Nazi Germany and at the right time to negotiate a separate peace with the Soviets. As at the end of the First World War, Hungarian politicians understood very well what the immediate goal was (keeping the territory of the state within the existing limits) and tacitly accepted a new political reconfiguration. The first steps taken to leave the German camp were taken by the leader, Miklos Horthy, who hypocritically declared on October 15, 1944, that Hungary had been forced to go to war against the Allies and that annexations of neighboring states had followed - agreements with them or as a result of their disintegration (the case of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia).

Following his arrest by German troops, Hungary tacitly adopted an anti-fascist stance and allowed Hungarian left-wing radicals to reconstitute the Communist Party. As early as December 23, 1944, in the eastern territories of the country liberated by the Soviet and Romanian armies, a government was formed consisting of representatives of communist, social democratic, smallholders,

---

[41] Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *October Fifteenth. A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, vol. 1, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1957, p. 423.

peasants, and 3 generals of the new Hungarian army,[42] with the declared role of obtaining the support of the Soviets for the preservation of the territorial boundaries obtained during 1940. Despite all their efforts at the end of the war, Hungary returned to the post-war borders, leaving out of the national territory a significant number of ethnic Hungarians, who later became the necessary argument for irredentism for the new Hungarian governments regardless of their political color.

### Conclusions

Many ideologies have collapsed as a result of the passing of time and the changes that have taken place, but the idea of a Hungarian ethnic nation has not only not disappeared but has also been consolidated through modern means of promotion and has gained a global dimension. Regardless of the political regime that has governed the country, the perseverance with which the whole society continues to fight to maintain this idea is admirable. Even if during the communist period the geopolitics was marginalized, the statesmen allowed and even encouraged the realization of some studies that at the opportune moment would allow "the rebirth of the Hungarian nation". Less praiseworthy is revisionist rhetoric, which should no longer find its place in a united 21st century Europe that operates on completely different principles.

---

[42]Andreea     Lupșor,     *Comunismul     ungar     și     revoluția     negociată*     in     "Historia",
https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/comunismul-ungar-si-revolutia-negociata

# The Persian Gulf Crisis 2019-2020 and the U.S.-Iran interactions

## Alexandra Cojocaru[*]

## Abstract

*The Persian Gulf crisis 2019-2020 is one of the challenges the international community is currently facing. After the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, the crisis has taken on new dimensions, calling into question the effectiveness of the U.S. strategy and its legitimacy in the Middle East. In order to provide a better view of the relationship between the U.S. and Iran, we identified the main underlying causes that contributed to paramount animosities and the reputation for resolve, classifying them into several categories: geostrategic, economic, symbolic, etc. To decipher the actions taken by combatants in 2019 and 2020, we analyzed the strategies adopted, the miscalculations, the strategic costs involved, and how they impacted the future interaction in the Middle East.*

---

[*] Alexandra Cojocaru is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Diplomatic Techniques at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest. She is a member of Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Youth Group. Her main academic interests are U.S. history in the 20th century, World War Two Geopolitics, Germany during World War Two, Nuclear Strategies during the Cold War, Conflict Resolution, Crisis Management, Political Psychology, Minorities.

*Having access to numerous American primary sources (press, American officials' speeches, official releases), we used theoretical aspects of political psychology in order to highlight the U.S. strategic incoherence. In the case of Iran, we used secondary sources to demonstrate the unjustified Iranian assertiveness during the crisis. This paper aims to question the rationality behind the decisions taken by the leaders of the two states and to determine to which extent these decisions were the product of a solid and rational decision-making process or the product of cognitive rigidity. This paper also emphasizes that the inference that the other's image is the product of aggressiveness, was the main reason why coercive strategies did not have the desired effect on the initiator.*

**The dynamics of US-Iran relations (1979-2016)**

After the Islamic Revolution, the interactions between Iran and the U.S. were generally characterized by tense moments, the negative attitude persisting even after almost 40 years since the Iranian regime change. The animosity between these two states was exacerbated by the competition for power in the Middle East, the main strategic stake being the Persian Gulf. Moreover, in the 21st century, the development of Iran's clandestine nuclear program has complicated the international climate. The current crisis in the Persian Gulf presents a number of underlying causes, which we have identified in the paragraphs below, providing a brief overview of the dynamics of the U.S.-Iranian relations. As a result, the hostility was driven by several factors, including Iran's internal events in the 1970s, geostrategic competition for the Persian Gulf, the emergence of a possible Iranian nuclear power, and Iran's sponsorship of the U.S. labeled 'terrorist organizations'.

First, a reference point in understanding the U.S.-Iran conflicting interactions is the overthrow of Reza Pahlavi (a key ally of the United States) from

the leadership of the Iranian state, the change that has led to significant dissents. Thus, in 1979, power was taken over by the Council of the Islamic Revolution, which successfully exploited popular aversion towards its former ally. The hostage crisis has irreparably damaged the U.S.-Iran diplomatic relations, marking the end of the official dialogue and the beginning of economic sanctions.[1] The rupture in the communication flow generated a favorable context for increased tensions and misinterpretation of the other party's intentions.

During different American administrations, the dynamics of the American-Iranian relationship had had negative valences. After the Islamic revolution, the tense moments between the U.S. and Iran alternated with secret negotiations, the U.S. had pursued the release of the American hostages by Hezbollah (Lebanon), a pro-Iranian group. Although steps were taken to reconcile, relations could not be significantly improved. An important element in the deterioration of U.S.-Iranian relations has been the financial support that Iran has directed to some groups in the Middle East, classified as "terrorist organizations" by the State Department.[2]

In addition to long-standing rivalries and the increasingly difficult relation between Iran and the United States, competition in the Middle East has complicated the power equation. The dominance of the Persian Gulf continues to be the central element of the geostrategic competition between the two sides.

---

[1] Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: Internal Politics and U.S. Policy and Options* in "Congressional Research Service", 2020, p. 21. Ever since 1980, the interests of the two states have been represented by a third one. An Iranian Interests Section has been set up at the Pakistani Embassy in the U.S.; regarding U.S. interests, Switzerland is the protecting power.

[2] According to the State Department, Iran gives support to the non-state actors in several countries, including Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Kata'ib Hezbollah in Iraq, al-Ashtar Brigades in Bahrain, Houthi in Yemen and Shiite militias in Iraq, through his unit in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran (IRGC) - Al-Quds Force in U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2018*, https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2018/.

Analyzing the region's strategic value for Iran's policy, we can distinguish several aspects. From a geostrategic point of view, the Persian Gulf is a natural border between Iran's Shiite majority and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, the latter being predominantly Sunni.[3] Regarding Iran's economy, it is essential to mention Iran's dependency on oil exports, being the 7th largest exporter in the world, according to World meter.[4] The Persian Gulf also has a symbolic value for Iran, evoking the Persian identity and historical importance that Persia once had in the region. This self-image also generated the desire to assert itself as the main actor in establishing the regional balance.

The possibility of Iranian hegemony in the Persian Gulf area has created the need for Arab states in the region to gain the support of external power. Given the presence of American troops in the area, the United States were the only viable international option. The common vision of the Iranian threat has aggrandized the strategic dialogue between the GCC and the United States and also has defined the U.S. goals.[5] There is a significant interest in the U.S. evolving role, asserting itself as an 'indispensable nation' involved in protecting Arab allies.[6] In order to strengthen this position, the U.S. economic goal is to maintain the free flow of oil and natural gas in the region and prevent a possible blockade of the Strait of

---

[3] The Gulf Cooperation Council was set up in the context of a revolutionary Iranian state expressing a desire for regional assertion, as well as amid the outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq.
Sina Azodi, *Iran, the US, and the Persian Gulf* in "The Diplomat", November 05, 2016, https://thediplomat.com/2016/11/iran-the-us-and-the-persian-gulf/.

[4] *** Worldometer, *Oil Production by Country*, https://www.worldometers.info/oil/oil-production-by-country/.

[5] Kenneth Katzman, *op.cit*., pp. 31-33.

[6] Chas W. Freeman, *Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and Great Power Competition* in "Middle East Policy Counci", Oct 17, 2019, https://mepc.org/speeches/arabia-persian-gulf-and-great-power-competition.

Hormuz by Iran. Most of the U.S. actions in the Persian Gulf revolved around the idea of containing Iran.

The danger of Iran's nuclear program is another key concern in understanding the U.S.-Iran interaction. With the unveiling of Iran's clandestine nuclear program, it was outlined the threat of possession of atomic devices. Thereby, the Iranian program has become a major concern for the U.S. regional approach; a nuclear device owned by Iran would ultimately lead to a regional nuclear race and would reinforce the image of Iran's "security-intangible state" (reducing its vulnerability to attempts at invasion, domination or regime change)[7]

The negotiations on limiting Iran's nuclear activities became effective when the two sides' leadership took a flexible and moderate stance as a direct dialogue between Barack Obama and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. The significant multilateral effort, which began in 2003, found its final form in the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (JCPOA). The 2015 nuclear agreement was an essential first step on the road to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The agreement has provided a reduction in Iran's uranium enrichment capacity and, consequently, an extension of up to 10 years, during which time Iran could develop a nuclear device. Iran has also accepted international monitoring of its activities in exchange for lifting economic sanctions imposed in the 1980s.[8]

**The U.S. withdrawal from JCPOA and the 'maximum pressure' campaign.**

---

[7] Kenneth Katzman, *Iran's Foreign and Defense Policies* in "Congressional Research Service", 2020, pp. 8-9, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R44017.pdf.

[8] Paul K. Kerr, Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Nuclear Agreement and U.S. Exit* in "Congressional Research Service", 2018, pp. 9-18, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43333/94.

Ever since the election campaign, Donald Trump has taken a critical stance on the provisions of the JCPOA. Thus, in May 2018, we are witnessing the increase of tensions between Iran and the U.S., generated by the American withdrawal from the JCPOA. Among the cited reasons, Trump mentioned the "malign behavior" of Iran and the nuclear deal's inability to assure the nuclear ban, the restrictions imposed by the agreement diminishing after 10 years.[9]

After ceasing participation in the JCPOA, the United States initiated a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran's economy, aiming to renegotiate the nuclear deal and prevent the emergence of Iranian regional influence. According to the analysts, the U.S. strategy is unclear and ambiguous, having across-the-board objectives, other than those publicly supported goals such as the collapse of the current regime or even regime change.[10] The former National Security Advisor, John Bolton, reiterated the idea of extensive goals toward Iran in his memoirs: "A lot remained to be done to bring Iran to its knees or to overthrow the regime, Trump's stated policy to the contrary notwithstanding (…) the regime change was far and away the most likely way to permanently alter Iranian behavior. Even if that was not the Trump Administration's declared policy, it certainly could happen as the effects of sanctions took hold."[11]

---

[9] Richard Goldberg, *Trump Has an Iran Strategy. This Is It* in "The New York Times", 24 Jan. 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/24/opinion/trump-iran.html.

[10] Brian Katulis, Peter Juul, *Putting Diplomacy First* in "Center for American Progress", March 2020,https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2020/03/12/481512/putting-diplomacy-first/

[11] John Bolton, *The Room Where It Happened. A White House Memoir*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2020, pp. 74-75.

On May 21st, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo outlined 12 demands made by the Trump administration in order to resume the negotiations.[12] These conditions were unacceptable for Iran, as they would have meant abandoning its strategic interests in the Middle East. The fact that Iran did not give up on economic pressure and did not accept the U.S. requirements is the American administration's miscalculation. Instead, the Iranian approach focused on the idea of resistance to American initiatives.

**The Iranian dual policy.**

Between May 2018 and May 2019, Iran adopted a policy of 'strategic patience' in response to 'maximum economic pressure'. In order to minimize the effect of economic sanctions, Iran publicly supported further compliance with the JCPOA provisions and continued negotiations with the United Kingdom, China, Russia, France, and Germany. However, the suffocation of the Iranian economy has led to a severe economic crisis. The sanctions have had a strong impact on the lives of Iranians, which is why from there on we can observe increasing pressure and popular widespread dissatisfaction with the standard of living.[13]

According to Gallup polls, imposing sanctions by the U.S. has accelerated other underlying economic problems. The data provided for 2018 indicated a record level of Iranian citizens (34%), who did not meet a satisfactory level in terms of quality of life.

---

[12] Mike Pompeo speech, *What are the 12 demands given to Iran?* in "AL JAZEERA", 21 May 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/mike-pompeo-speech-12-demands-iran-180521151737787.html.

[13] \*\*\**Six charts that show how hard US sanctions have hit Iran* in "BBC", December 9, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48119109.

One in Three Iranians "Suffering" in 2018
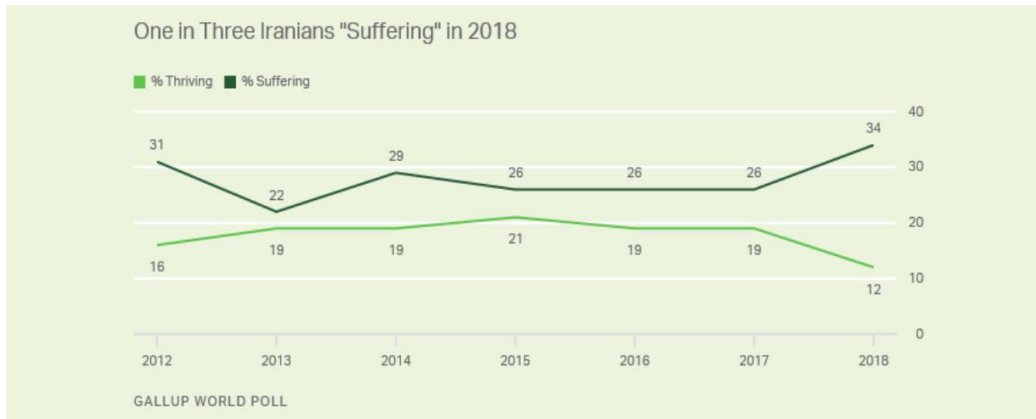
Source: GALLUP

The ambiguity of Iran's strategy has been suggested by the duality of its actions. Publicly, Iran's strategic line has taken the form of a dialogue with other JCPOA signatories. At the same time, however, it has used the Iranian forces led by General Qasem Soleimani to counter the American policy.

**The escalation of political and military tensions**

The increasing bilateral tensions has led to severe measures, and the parties relied on uncompromising attitudes to discourage their opponent. However, neither party produced significant changes in the other's behavior, but only a proportionate response. In April 2019, Washington classified the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.[14] Iran has

---

[14] ***US labels Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard Corps a terror group* in "AL JAZEERA", April 8, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/designates-iran-elite-irgc-terrorist-organisation-trump-190408141756166.html.

had a mirrored response, designating the U.S. a "state sponsor of terrorism" and the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf area have been called terrorist groups.[15]

As part of its response to U.S. economic pressure policy, Iran announced in May 2019 that it would drop some JCPOA provisions and would increase its enriched uranium stock. In addition to concerns about the resumption of Iran's nuclear program, attacks by Iranian-backed military factions were considerably multiplying against U.S forces in the region.[16]

The American reaction has brought new measures against Iran. In the second half of 2019, the U.S. took action to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero,[17] according to Donald Trump the main goal being to strategically weaken Iran and force it to negotiate a broader settlement of disputes between the two parties. From a military point of view, the United States responded to the attacks of Iran's regional allies by sending additional troops and aircraft carriers to the Middle East, asserting its defensive intentions.[18] Although there is an oscillation in Donald Trump's speeches between resolve and conciliation, the increased military presence did not defuse the situation, instead of increasing the perception of threat and the imminent danger that Iran has had over time.

---

[15] *** *Iran's parliament approves bill labelling US army as 'terrorist'* in "AL JAZEERA", April 24, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/iran-parliament-approves-bill-labeling-army-terrorist-190423111221587.html.

[16] Kenneth Katzman, Kathleen J. McInnis, Clayton Thomas, *U.S.-Iran Conflict and Implications for U.S. Policy* in "Congressional Research Service", 2020, pp. 3-4, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R45795.pdf.

[17] Tom DiChristopher, *Trump aims to drive Iran's oil exports to zero by ending sanctions waivers* in "CNBC", April 22, 2019, https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/22/trump-expected-to-end-iran-oil-waivers-try-to-drive-exports-to-zero.html.

[18] *** *Iran tensions: 1,500 US troops head to Middle East as Trump seals $7bn Saudi arms sale* in "The Guardian", May 24, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/24/us-military-new-troop-middle-east-iran-trump.

Tensions have escalated in the Middle East, civilian ships in the Gulf of Oman have been damaged, Houthi rebels have launched multiple attacks on Saudi oil pipelines, and a rocket has been launched near the US Embassy in Baghdad. These actions by pro-Iranian factions were the first step in changing Iran's policy - we see a shift from a 'strategic patience' to a policy of "counter-pressure" towards the U.S. and the Arabian Gulf states.[19]

The summer of 2019 was characterized by an increase in violence. Iran has backed incidents on and around oil tanks in the Gulf, it shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone and launched an attack on oil facilities in Saudi Arabia.[20] The Trump administration's responses to Iranian military operations have taken the form of cyber-attacks and the imposition of additional economic sanctions.[21] The U.S. coercive measures have not discouraged Iran; it has not given up support for terrorist groups in the Middle East, nor has it resumed nuclear activities.

The military tensions, as well as the lack of results from May to September 2019, have caused concern both among the U.S. regional allies and the international community. In June 2019, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe offered to build a conducive climate for negotiations. His initiative was unsuccessful, as, at the time, the U.S. and Iran relied on coercive tactics, making irrevocable commitments and pushing the opponent's resistance.

---

[19] Sebastien Roblin, *Iran Has Its Own 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign against Trump* in "The National Interest", July 20, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/iran-has-its-own-maximum-pressure-campaign-against-trump-67787.

[20] Daniel Benjamin, Steven Simon, *While You Weren't Paying Attention, Iran Was Ratcheting Up Tensions in the Persian Gulf* in "POLITICO", Nov 14, 2019, https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2019/11/14/iran-ratcheting-tension-persian-gulf-070770.

[21] Brian Katulis, Peter Juul, *op.cit.*

The U.S. attempt to destabilize the Middle East region in order to bring Iran to the negotiating table did not speed up the transition to dialogue but increased the distrust of U.S. regional allies in its defense capability. In the U.S. strategy, a key point was the proximity of its allies to Iran, allies who could have exerted a significant influence on Iranian actions. However, the position of the U.S. allies has undergone significant changes; the effectiveness of American action was questioned and secret dialogues were initiated with Iran. The United Arab Emirates has been in talks with Iran and tried to get involved in de-escalating regional tensions. In addition to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, a vital regional ally of the United States, which has publicly supported the American strategic trajectory, has initiated an indirect diplomatic dialogue through the Iraqi and Pakistani diplomatic channels.[22]

The end of 2019 brings serious miscalculations of the parties, the transition from crisis to conflict providing clear clues about the wrong assessment of availability. Iran's economic suffocation and the imposition of new restrictions in the previous period did not achieve their goal of discouraging the opponent and forcing him to participate in negotiations under the terms imposed by the Trump administration. Analyzing the situation from Iran's perspective, the leadership erroneously assessed the importance of military challenges in the summer of 2019, believing that the U.S. will not get more involved in the Middle East.

The scale of the conflict reached new proportions in December 2019. The military actions targeted the Persian Gulf area until the end of the year, after that

---

[22] Mark Mazzetti, Ronen Bergman, Farnaz Fassihi, *How Months of Miscalculation Led the U.S. and Iran to the Brink of War* in "The New York Times", Feb. 13, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/13/us/politics/iran-trump-administration.html.

the incidents took place on the territory of Iraq. There were launched attacks on Iraqi facilities where U.S. forces were present and a rocket was launched in northern Iraq, several members of the U.S. military being injured. The American response has taken the form of airstrikes against the locations of Kata'ib Hezbollah, an organization the Trump administration has identified as guilty of previous violence. The incident was located in Iraq, damaging the cooperative relations between the Iraqi government (favorable to the U.S. presence in the region) and the Trump administration. 2019 ended with supporters of Kata'ib Hezbollah and other Iraqi-backed Iraqi militias surrounding the US Embassy in Baghdad, demanding the expulsion of US forces from Iraq.[23]

The critical point of the crisis was reached on January 2, 2020, when General Qasem Soleimani was killed in a U.S.-initiated attack on Baghdad airport. The leader of the Al-Quds Force, a unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran (IRGC), was an influential figure in Iran and at the regional level he was a leading figure in Iran's foreign policy, more specifically in the Middle East.[24]

The killing of Soleimani was called a 'decisive defensive action',[25] and the U.S. officials insisted that no retaliation was expected from Iran, a view based on the dissent among Iranian leaders. Although there were clear divisions between moderates and radicals, the death of General Soleimani stopped internal competition and popular frustration for the time being and dissatisfaction was redirected to the external enemy. We can say that this American action had no

---

[23] Kenneth Katzman, Kathleen J. McInnis, Clayton Thomas, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-10.

[24] Karen Zraick, *What to Know About the Death of Iranian General Soleimani* in "The New York Times", Jan. 3, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/world/middleeast/suleimani-dead.html.

[25] ***Statement by the Department of Defense, *U.S. Dept. of Defense*, Jan. 2, 2020, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2049534/statement-by-the-department-of-defense/.

strategic reasons but generated strategic costs for the Trump administration's policy. The underlying problems of the crisis and regional instability have not been resolved, the Iraqi Parliament has voted to withdraw the U.S. troops from Iraq, the U.S. losing the support of Iraqi leaders. The January incident also sparked public commitments from Iran about future retaliation against U.S. forces in the region, which resulted in the launch of ballistic missiles at Iraqi bases where American personnel were hosted.[26]

The control's loss of the events in January 2020 was a direct consequence of the coercive strategies adopted. The downing of the Ukrainian plane by Iran has increased the chances of escalation. Between February and July 2020, the sources of the conflict have not been resolved, but the current situation has not reached a new level of escalation. In March 2020, the U.S. announced its military reduction in Iraq in order to reduce its footprint in the country.[27] A further U.S. presence reduction took place in May when the administration removed some military personnel and equipment from Saudi Arabia.[28] During these months, there were some incidents in the Persian Gulf, identified as "miscalculations", which suggests Iran's general instability.[29] Moreover, there were taken some symbolic decisions in

---

[26]***Iran attack: US troops targeted with ballistic missiles* in "BBC", Jan. 8, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51028954.

[27] Nafiseh Kohnavard. *Iraq military bases: US pulling out of three key sites* in "BBC", March, 16, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51914600.

[28] ***U.S. to remove Patriot missile batteries from Saudi Arabia* in "Geopolitics News", May, 7, 2020,https://geopolitics.news/middle-east/u-s-to-remove-patriot-missile-batteries-from-saudi-arabia/.

[29] ***Iran navy 'friendly fire' incident kills 19 sailors in Gulf of Oman* in "BBC", May, 11, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-52612511.

order to highlight the impossible-to-conciliate relationship between the two states, so Iran issued an arrest warrant for Donald Trump and other U.S. officials.[30]

After the rampant tensions in January 2020, the number of regional incidents and violence has decreased, a situation mostly determined by the uncontrollable spread of the new coronavirus at a global level. This health crisis has downgraded the Persian Gulf crisis for the time being and directed the actors to focus on their internal capacity to manage the current situation, taking into consideration that both states have been majorly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Miscalculations and strategic errors during the Persian Gulf Crisis**

The escalation of the Gulf crisis was largely caused by miscalculations, misperceptions about the adversary's behavior, and the cognitive rigidity of the leaders involved. Through the policy of brinkmanship, the parties tried to exploit each other's fear of war and make their enemy give up their commitments. Also relevant for our analysis is the understanding of the cognitive process of the protagonists, namely Donald Trump and Ali Khamenei.

The erroneous actions' evaluation of the opponent was the main reason why the coercive strategies did not have the initiator's desired effect. The main objectives of the 'maximum pressure' policy declared by the U.S. were to oblige Iran to accept the revision of the nuclear agreement, without imposing preconditions and also to comply with the terms listed in the 12 demands,

---

[30] Megan Specia. *Iran Issues Arrest Warrants for Trump and 35 Others in Suleimani Killing* in "The New York Times", June, 29, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/29/world/middleeast/iran-trump-arrest-warrant-interpol.html.

published in 2018. The killing of Qasem Soleimani sought to discourage the Iranian side in future military action. Moreover, during 2019, the Trump administration sought to build regional alliances to counter Iran in the Middle East.

Taking into consideration the objectives the U.S. has publicly stated, we can determine what the strategic costs of current policy have been.[31] First, the policy of maximum pressure did not lead to the dismantling of Iran's nuclear program but led to its acceleration and Iran's withdrawal from the JCPOA.[32]

In what concerns Washington's influence in the area the main consequence was the U.S. isolation, its regional allies preferring to strengthen a direct dialogue with Iran. Through the Al-Quds Force, Iran has continued to support military factions in the Middle East, classified by the United States as terrorist groups, and continues to be an actual and real danger to America's most important ally, Israel.

The confrontational situation in December 2019 generated instability in Iraq. The attack on Baghdad airport and the assassination of General Soleimani called into question the U.S. legitimacy in the region and have generalized anti-American sentiment. As a consequence of the crisis, Iranian radicals won the majority in the parliamentary elections, the idea of reconciliation being perceived in an anachronic manner.[33]

In the case of the United States, the strategic inconsistency displayed by the Trump administration stands out. The 'maximum pressure' campaign did not have the expected results, but the U.S. continues to follow this trajectory.

---

[31] Brian Katulis, Peter Juul. *op.cit.*

[32] David E. Sanger, William J. Broad, *Iran Challenges Trump, Announcing End of Nuclear Restrictions* in "The New York Times", Jan. 14, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-agreement.html.

[33] Golnar Motevalli, *Hardliners' Victory in Iranian Elections Turns Back the Clock on Relations With the West* in "TIME", February 24, 2020, https://time.com/5789565/iran-elections-hardliners/.

Iran's military actions in the summer of 2019 took the shape of a campaign of "counter-pressure", which should have reduced the presence of American forces in the Middle East. Iranian leaders believed that the multiplication of incidents and the threat of a possible resumption of the nuclear program would lead to a reduction in U.S. economic sanctions and a significant loss of support from European states for American actions. Iran's strategy proved to be erroneous, it did not achieve its goals, but it caused many strategic costs: serious economic problems, loss of legitimacy, and growing popular dissatisfaction with the regime. As a forecast, we can say that the resumption of the nuclear program will not improve Iran's position at the international level, but it will place it in an even more isolated area from the international community, losing the support of actors who have shown less intransigent attitudes (e.g. Russia and China).[34]

The confrontational situation was strongly influenced by the attitudes, errors of perception, and lack of flexibility of decision-makers. The literature that addresses cognitive distortion and its implications in crisis management offers us numerous explanations for the misperceptions of the decision-making apparatus that lead, most of the time, to defective, rigid, and irrational results.

According to Robert Jervis, in order for decisions to be taken in conditions of optimal rationality, political factors must maintain a balance between continuity, persistence, and the ability to accept new information, to be flexible. Having a balance between "being open to new information and retaining beliefs

---

[34] Michel Duclos, Andrey Kortunov. *A Crisis Management Mechanism in the Middle East Is Needed More Than Ever* in "Institut Montaigne", February 10, 2020, https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/crisis-management-mechanism-middle-east-needed-more-ever.

that have demonstrated their utility" means being consistent.[35] Jervis distinguishes two types of consistency - rational and irrational, in order to understand how these approaches can be applied to the decision-making process.

For instance, in the case of the Gulf crisis, we can see that Trump's and Khamenei's decisions are far from optimal, rather, they seem to be the result of cognitive closure. In both cases, decision-makers seem to accept only opinions favorable to their policy, having a low receptivity to different opinions. This lack of receptivity, which causes decision-makers to ignore critical information or deny it, is called by Jervis 'irrational consistency'.[36]

The aggressive policy of economic suffocation, promoted by Donald Trump, was not unanimously accepted by members of his administration; Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has had a different vision. Trump did not agree to have his policy over Iran challenged, which is why he replaced him with Mike Pompeo. Trump shows a tendency to support his subordinates to act in convergence with the policies he chooses, but the decision-making apparatus may not work optimally, as it encourages overconfidence in wrong policies.[37]

Donald Trump's public statements during the crisis have oscillated between categorical imperatives and openness to negotiations with the Iranian side. Several times, the administration has stated that it did not want to turn the crisis into a war with Iran, but the U.S. actions need a reality check.[38]

---

[35] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 117.

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 128.

[37] Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War. The Nature of International Crisis*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, pp. 114-115.

[38] Mark Landler, Maggie Haberman, Eric Schmitt, *Trump Tells Pentagon Chief He Does Not Want War with Iran* in "The New York Times", May 16, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/16/world/middleeast/iran-war-donald-trump.html.

The policy adopted by the administration and the speeches Donald Trump has delivered during the Gulf crisis are characterized by the lack of explicitness and expressiveness. On the other hand, we notice a fixed, rigid, monochrome vision in the case of Ali Khamenei.[39] As the main Iranian decision-maker, his perceptions have decisively influenced Iran's foreign policy. Khamenei's speeches show us reduced tolerance to compromises with the U.S., insisting on the idea of resistance to 'global arrogance'.[40] Khamenei's decisions seem motivated, to some extent, by the U.S. image as a hostile state, with Iranian leaders interpreting U.S. actions in terms of their own values or goals.[41] At the same time, Khamenei's statements indicate that he is convinced that the main objective of the USA is to overthrow the regime in Iran. Consequently, this insecurity and mistrust generate aggressive behavior, which goes beyond defensive motivations.

**Conclusions:**

To sum up, the animosity between the U.S. and Iran has developed over almost 40 years. The relations' corrosion was fundamentally marked by competition between the two states, a competition projected on several levels: the geostrategic and economic influence over the Persian Gulf; the symbolic status as a main power in the Middle East; nuclear competition; and the development of an alliance system to undermine the other's regional position. In addition to long-

---

[39] Karim Sadjadpour, *The Iranian Hedgehog vs. the American Fox* in "The Atlantic", June 21, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/06/us-iran-conflict-driven-trump-and-khamenei/592297/.

[40] Idem, *Reading Khamenei:The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader*, Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009, pp. 14-16.

[41] Richard Led Lebow, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

standing hostilities and underlying causes, the recent Persian Gulf crisis has had several immediate causes, such as the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, violent clashes in the Middle East in the last few years, uncompromising leaders' attitudes, and the parties' unwillingness to accept mediation.

The responsibility for the way the crisis evolved belongs to the leaders of the two states, which exacerbated the confrontational situation through the lack of flexibility and receptivity. Favoring policies that conform to their pre-existing beliefs has contributed to the adoption of inconsistent policies on both sides, which have produced significant strategic costs for the US (the acceleration of Iran's nuclear program; Iran's withdrawal from the JCPOA; regional isolation; instability in Iraq; the questioning of the U.S. legitimacy in the region;  the widespread of an anti-American sentiment) and also for Iran (serious economic problems, the loss of legitimacy and growing dissatisfaction with the regime, the loss of one of the most important Iranian figures; the international isolation of Iran).

So far, the Persian Gulf crisis has not reached the parties' goals. Tensions in the region did not escalate after the death of General Soleimani, but this is not due to a real effort to manage the crisis but to the outbreak of a global health crisis. The crisis is going through a stage of "stagnation", a stage that could become an opportunity for de-escalation. The Trump administration has publicly announced that there will be no penalties for providing aid to Iran, including the distribution of medical equipment, but economic sanctions (on oil exports, financial transactions, the energy sector, etc.) still amplify tensions.[42]

---

[42]***Coronavirus: Iran and the US trade blame over sanctions* in "BBC", April 17, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-52218656.

From our point of view, The U.S. decisions in these months will fundamentally impact the trajectory of the crisis. A hypothesis can be that the prospect of cooperation will be significantly diminished if the Trump administration does not adopt less restrictive measures during the pandemic. The evolution of the crisis remains uncertain, at least until the time both states will have the coronavirus outbreak under control.

# The Romanian-Yugoslav Relations between the Balkan Cooperation and the Informational War.

**Andrei Alexandru Micu**[*]

**Key-words**: the Balkan Concert, Mutual Economic Assistance, Trade and Payments Agreement, Peace and Cooperation Programme, State Security Department.

## Abstract

*The Romanian-Yugoslav relations represent a study case as a result of the alternation between cooperation and mutual mistrust, the first coordinate being dictated by the historically close relations, while the second one came as a consequence of the doctrine of besieged city promoted by the communist regime. Despite the informational war that two regimes were fighting alike internally and internationally, the cooperation represents the dominant component, with a strong activity behind the public's eye, meaning the common initiatives in intelligence, security, and defense as well as strategic planning. Both*

---

[*] Andrei-Alexandru Micu has a background in International Development and Cooperation, with a Master's Degree in International Relations and European Studies, is currently a Project Management Consultant within Frontier Management Consulting.

*representing the discordant actors of the Soviet sphere of influence, their cooperation has been long-termed dictated by the common threat of being politically aligned and later integrated into a unitary Balkan hybrid political project under Soviet rule.*

The isolation of the regime from Belgrade came as a result of the ideological split between Joseph Visarionovici Stalin and Josip Broz Tito, based on the fact that Belgrade's socialist-building paradigm deviated from the general lines promoted by Moscow, imprinted in Bucharest some certain circumspection over the cooperation with the western neighbor during the first decade of communism.

Having Romania as one of the most cooperative vassals of the Soviet Union until the early 1960s, the dichotomy between the Romanian and the Yugoslav communism was perhaps obvious as an internationally recognized border, separating the energies of Yugoslav reformism from the conservatism of the Romanian dogma. As a result, considering the stage of dogmatic communism within the socialist camp, the interactions between a satellite and a non-aligned country were closely monitored by the USSR, fearing the contagion with *Titoism* that was largely claimed to act damagingly against communist construction.

The orientation change within the Romanian foreign policy occurred only six years after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania starting with May 1958, being marked by the *Declaration of the Romanian Workers' Party* of April 1964, by which the regime led Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej marked a perceptible detachment from Kremlin`s directives. One year before, in November 1963, the Romanian and Yugoslav representatives signed the *Agreement for the Joint Construction of the Hydro-power and Navigation System from the Iron Gates*, the *Joint*

*Communiqué* of September 1964[1] announcing the debut of the works, which were supposed to be finalized on 17 May 1972.[2] Two years later, the *Letter of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party* of February 25th, 1966, addressed to the Union of Yugoslav Communists targeted the "strengthening of the friendship between Romania and Yugoslavia".[3]

The Yugoslav foreign policy consisted of maintaining its traditional lines, with Tito's rule over the non-alignment movement being confirmed with the organization of the non-committed countries conferences. The first high-level meeting took place at Belgrade in September 1961, when the *Statement of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries* [4] was signed, followed by the second conference – held at Cairo during October 1964 – the *International Peace and Cooperation Program,*[5] being adopted by the end of the reunion. On this occasion, it was debated the idea that socialism could be seen as a historical process, not as a dogma, given the ever deeper rupture between the conservatism still present in Moscow's discourse and the self-control, namely the *controlled liberalization measures,*[6] promoted by the leadership from Belgrade.

The generational exchange that happened in Bucharest after Dej's death with the election of Nicolae Ceaușescu as General-Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, marked the strengthening of the relation between Romania and

---

[1] Nicolae Ciachir, Panait Gălățeanu, *Republica Socialistă Federativă Iugoslavia*, Bucharest, Romanian, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 1969, p. 289.

[2] ****National Archives of Romania, The Fund of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party – The Foreign Affairs Section, file 4/1972, p. 73; it will continue to be quoted as NAR.

[3] ***NAR, file 10i, p. 3.

[4] Nicolae Ciachir, Panait Gălățeanu, *op. cit.,* p. 262.

[5] *Ibidem.*

[6] Ion Bucur, *The Book of Repression*, Bucharest, IRRD Publishing House, 2016, p. 37.

Yugoslavia, mentioning in this way the tendency of the new Romanian leader of detaching in an exponentially greater extent compared to that of his predecessor. At the same time, Belgrade's support for Bucharest had become more and more consistent, especially after Ceausescu's distancing from the *Warsaw Treaty* and from the *Council for Mutual Economic Assistance*, mentioning in this respect a "synchronized action with the West for weakening the cohesion of the socialist bloc".[7] The first measure, in this case, was the signing of *The Long-Term Trade Agreement between Romania and Yugoslavia 1966-1970* in 1966,[8] that succeeded *The General Trade and Payments Agreement* ratified in 1956.

The signals transmitted by Romania's counterpart to the Yugoslav side showed reciprocity in the situation of "active measures of political and economic isolation of the nationalist-deviant rebel from Bucharest".[9] In the context of a hostile climate created by the Kremlin and the USSR satellites, the need for a special understanding with Tito had become one of the most viable scenarios since "the international dimension and leadership in the movement of unaligned countries were recognized and respected in the whole world, making a good recommendation for the new leader from Bucharest".[10] The inherent effect was to include Romania alongside with Albania, Yugoslavia, and China in the category of *deviated states* since the late 1960s, especially as Romania did not support the Soviet Union with any military facilities during KGB's far-reaching operations.

---

[7] Constantin Hlihor, *România și șocurile geopolitice ale Războiului Rece*, Bucharest, IRRD Publishing House, 2016, p. 172.

[8] Nicolae Ciachir, Panait Gălățeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

[9] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *Istorie, geopolitică și spionaj în Balcanii de Vest: originile, evoluția și activitatea structurilor secrete de informații în spațiul etnico-geografic al slavilor meridionali: Iugoslavia versus România în războiul din umbră*, Baia Mare, Poema Publishing House, 2009, p. 262.

[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 263-246.

Unlike Romania, Yugoslavia had shown more openness to the military dialogue with Moscow, mentioning in this regard the *Convention for the Deployment of the MIG Fleet Missions Operating in the Mediterranean*. The arguments behind this counterbalance position adopted by Belgrade were confirmed by the report that the Romanian State Security Council presented to Ceausescu in July 1968, whose primary sources indicated the preparation of military interventions led by the *Warsaw Treaty* in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The text of the information sent to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party was based on "data and information on the preparation of the Warsaw Treaty intervention in Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Austria".[11]

The sources also discussed a joint intervention compounded out of the Soviet, Bulgarian, Estonian, Polish, and Hungarian troops in order to restore the *socialist order*, based on a decision of the Political Committee of the *Warsaw Treaty*`s Political Committee and following Brezhnev's invitation. The Soviet leader – stated the report – convened Yuri Andropov, the President of the State Security Council, Andrei Greciko, and the Head of the USSR Major General and the Chief Commander of the Warsaw Treaty. Besides "defending the popular-socialist conquests threatened by the reformist adventurism of some leaders that undermine the cohesion and security of the socialist countries", the report included geopolitical calculations such as "repairing the strategic error produced by military withdrawal in Austria".[12]

The operational component of the invasion plan targeted the annihilation of the reformist movements and including three stages, as follows: the invasion of

---

[11] *Ibidem*, pp. 366-376.
[12] *Ibidem*, p. 367.

Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Romania in September, and Yugoslavia two to three weeks after taking control of Romania, with the indication that there were concrete data about the potential intervention in Austria. An operative telegram sent by Securitate officers based in Sevastopol reported an *ad-hoc* committee convened to analyze the developments from Czechoslovakia, but especially the adherence of the Ceaușescu-Tito binomial to Alexander Dubček's position as well as for a counter-reactions a position against them, as follows: "preventive, either prepared for military threats of Romania and Yugoslavia, ready to be applied even from the moment when the forces of the Treaty enter Czechoslovakia".[13]

An *operative telegram* dated March 27th, 1968, and sent from Rome, presented the Italian Communist Party's concerns about the developments within the Soviet *umbrella*, the Italians believing that the positions of independence embraced by the vassal states are perceived by Kremlin as anti-Soviet positions, thus preparing immediate countermeasures. Ion Gheorghe Maurer later stated that the limitation of the *Warsaw Treaty*`s intervention to Czechoslovakia was only due to pressure France and the United States of America exercised over the regime from Moscow.

The reactions formulated by the leadership from Bucharest to the imminent threat targeting three out of the national borders consisted of a bilateral approach by sending a special courier to Belgrade via the channel of communication agreed between the Romanian and Yugoslav State Security Departments. Tito was thus informed about Brezhnev's intentions materialized during the reunion from Crimea in July 1968, the thesis of the Romanian side being that the sovereignty and

---

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 372.

independence of Romania and Yugoslavia were jeopardized by the imminence of the Soviet intervention. The Yugoslav Interior Minister Stijacić urged Ceausescu to moderate his position so that to avoid provoking the Soviets even by responding to the challenges of the Soviet Union.

The main distinction points at the level of the Romanian-Yugoslav perceptions regarding the threat of external intervention were highlighted as the debates between Bucharest and Belgrade increased, each of the two sides having a different kind of interactions with Moscow, demonstrated also by the fact that Yugoslavia was the last target of the plan, while Romania was the second one, immediately after Czechoslovakia. The fact that the biggest threat gravitated around Romania was confirmed by the aforementioned statement of the Yugoslav Minister of Interior that even Tito shared the idea that Romania was the main objective in the area and not Yugoslavia.

The magnitude of such a regional intervention organized by the *Warsaw Treaty* would rather have been the logic of the *doctrine of limited sovereignty*.[14] Inherently, there would have been a threat to peace and security, a matter that would come under the first article of the *Washington Treaty*,[15] legitimizing NATO intervention in the context of discussing the use of force in the organization's responsibility area. The stated hypothesis may be contradicted by the fact that there was no counter-intervention for the liberation of Czechoslovakia, probably

---

[14] R. Judson Mitchell, *The Brezhnev Doctrine and Communist Ideology*, in "The Review of Politics", volume 34, University of Notre Dame, Paris, 1972, pp. 190-209: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500021045.

[15] ***The North Atlantic Treaty*, Washington D.C., April 4th, 1949: https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20120822_nato_treaty_en_light_2009.pdf.

motivated by the desire not to start an open confrontation between the two military blocs.

However, the diplomatic involvement led to de-stressing the relations, as the Yugoslav Government and the Yugoslav Communist Union pointed out in a *Joint Communiqué* from May, 16th, 1969: "The Government of the Yugoslav Socialist Federal Republic and the Presidium of the Union of the Communists from Yugoslavia have found with satisfaction that the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and the Government of the USSR also expressed in their message the wish that joint efforts in reducing or removing the current hardships of our relations".[16] The threat of military intervention led, beyond the bilateral mobilization of the state structures, to an unprecedented rapprochement of relations between Romania and Yugoslavia, as demonstrated by Tito's 12 visits to Romania and complemented by Ceaușescu's visits to Yugoslavia.

The motivation behind Belgrade's unprecedented benevolence in relation to the new regime from Bucharest also had a *shadow* and a strictly geostrategic component, mentioning, in this case, the project of creating a Balkan federation reuniting out of the national territories of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania as well as Greece. The inclusion of Greece was far from an "initiative that deeply disturbed Kremlin".[17] In this context, the debate on the *Titoist* ambitions of creating a federation that would have encompassed the region as a whole came to the point where the blockade of the project was motivated by Moscow's direct action to counter it, hence internally undermining the future

---

[16] ***NAR, file 10i, p. 58.
[17] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

federation by exploiting the historical animosities within the potential component republics.

In contrast, one could notice Ceaușescu's vision from the 1970s that called for the creation of a "clear and precise system of commitments by all states, coupled with concrete measures that would give all countries full guarantees that they are dismantling any harm to their sovereignty and independence".[18] Practically, the leader from Bucharest perceived the *inter-Balkan concert* as completing the *Helsinki Final Act* from 1975, in the absence of provisions on security and cooperation over the area from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and under the desire not to customize or regionalize the stated principles. Therefore, if the objectives assumed by the political process elaborated in the Finnish capital-city had general objectives, the Romanian representatives would reiterate Ceausescu's vision, with a view to a subsidiary approach of the cooperation mechanisms proposed in 1975.

The recently gained *status quo* of many of the states throughout the region, corroborated with Soviet interference within the domestic affairs of the so-called *popular* or *socialist republics*, led to low availability of the Southern and East European states towards the project of institutionalizing the Balkans. Therefore, since the eminently lax project proposed by Bucharest was viewed with reserves by the actors in the region, the idea of a state bordered by the Adriatic, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea was a project as utopian as *Yugoslavism* proved by the end of the Cold War.

---

[18] Valentin Lipatti, *Balcanii de ieri și azi*, Bucharest, The Political Publishing House, 1988, p. 93.

The project for Balkan regional consultation was set out by Ceausescu during a speech at the UN General Assembly: "We believe that the realization of regional agreements has particular importance for international expansion. That is why Romania acts consistently for the development of broad relations of good neighborliness, understanding, and multilateral cooperation with all the Balkan countries, without distinction of social organization, in order to transform this area of the world into an area of cooperation and peace, lacking nuclear weapons".[19]

On the occasion of the regional meetings, attended by Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Turkey participated, there was a contradiction not only at the level of willingness but also regarding the commitment of the Balkan states. A good example of this is the meeting from the Athens (January 26th – February 5th, 1976), the first post-war meeting of the Balkan actors that rejected the idea of implementing the CSCE-based principles within the region, based on the assumption to which "multilateral cooperation should not, however, affect the possibilities of bilateral cooperation".[20] The degree of openness of Southeastern and East European actors was also demonstrated by the slowness with which *Aide-mémoire* after the meeting from Athens reached the decision-makers.

The impact of the *Balkans Concert* concept was reduced, with this sector meetings limited in prerogatives and influence, as follows: Ankara (September 26th – 29th, 1979), Sofia (March 15th – 19th, 1981), Bucharest (June 7th – 12th, 1982), Belgrade (June 19th – 23rd, 1984), Bucharest (December 23rd – 26th, 1986). The fact that the meetings were exclusively technical led to the adoption of final documents with

---

[19] *Apud* Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*, 5th volume, Bucharest, Political Publishing House, 1971, p. 160.

[20] Valentin Lipatti, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

no political or legal binding as a result of the fact that researchers-based meetings could on no account lead to legally-binding acts. On the other hand, this state of affairs had demonstrated the lack of any commitment of the Balkan countries to the *multilateral development* that the so-called *Communist* or *Labor Parties* promoted as the core of their domestic and foreign policies.

The exception to the rule was the meeting held in Belgrade on November 12nd – 14th, 1988, and reunited the level of Foreign Affairs Ministers, this time with the participation of Albania, but when the demands for reform were evident in all the states concerned, perhaps with the exception of the Tirana regime. It is worth mentioning that, including in Romania, the energies of change have been activated. Somebody should bear in mind the revolt from Brașov, when Ceaușescu, "the absolute king of an extreme illustriousness",[21] was challenged for the first time during the night of November 15th, 1987.

Given the vehement rejection of the multilateral cooperation plans, the cooperation had been diminished to the bilateral level. As a result, the Romanian-Yugoslav mutual visits were to be concluded each time with a formula for the support of the *de facto* independent sovereign states, noticing the model of the *Joint Communiqué* adopted after Ceausescu's visit to Brioni (July 15th – 17th, 1973): "We have appreciated that positive developments in Europe can have sustainable results only to the extent that they ensure equal participation rights and full respect for the interests of all European countries, the definitive elimination of the use of force and the threat of force, overcoming the division into blocks, and their

---

[21] Claudiu Iordache, *Anul 1989*, Bucharest, IRINI Publishing House, 2015, p. 84.

achievement to the same extent in all areas of the continent, including the Mediterranean".[22]

Five years later, on the occasion of Ceaușescu's visit to Belgrade (November 16th – 17th, 1978), the Romanian and Yugoslav delegations adopted another *Joint Communiqué* drafted in a more vehement and punctual manner regarding the regional and European climate:

> "Examining the situation in Europe in the light of the meetings from Belgrade and the desire expressed by the countries participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to continue the process of *détente*, the two Presidents stressed the need to act intensively for a consistent and complete transposition stated in the *Helsinki Final Act*. They believe that economic, technical-scientific, and cultural relations, both bilateral and multilateral, need to be intensified among all the signatory states. The two Presidents underline once again the importance of adopting the military disarmament measures as an integral component of the process initiated by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and without the European cooperation, reunification, and security cannot be envisaged".[23]

A less known dimension of the relations between the two states is the active collaboration in the field of intelligence gathering, which has evolved to the mutual support of the oppressive apparatuses of the two states' political police. It was the

---

[22]  ***NAR, file 7/1973, p. 32.
[23] ***NAR, file 8/1973, p. 69.

moment when the appearance of leaders that enforced the reforming movement turned a pronounced oppressive face, the Romanian-Yugoslav cooperation at law enforcement structures reaching to the point of g*enuine demographic permutations over the state border*.[24] The co-operation of the coercion structures from Bucharest and Belgrade had been advanced, since the 1970s, mentioning the cooperation of the political police organizations, with Romania and Yugoslavia even conducting joint operations.

It firstly happened on August 3rd, 1975, when the first operation of annihilating some Yugoslav political opponents from Bucharest was carried out, based on a collaboration between the State Security Department of Yugoslavia and the State Security Council of Romania, upon Tito`s personal request addressed to Ceaușescu. The conduct of the operation was confirmed by Ion Mihai Pacepa, as he stated the existence of "the victims as a result of the imprisonment, which determined the death of two persons were later handed over to the SDB in coffins."[25]

The object of the operation concluded in August 1975 was the annihilation of Alexandar Opojevic, a former Partisan Commander and a Commander of Zemun Polje Airport, who refuged in Bucharest during 1948, from the beginning he became the head of the exiled anti-Titoist movement from Romania as well as Vladco Dapcević, a former close collaborator of Tito`s exiled to Brussels and arriving on a leave-in Bucharest at the beginning of August 1975. The disappearance of the two took place during the night of August 9th, 1975 when after dinner at the Opojević family house from Grigore Moxa Street, Dapcević was

---

[24] Ion Bucur, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[25] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

heading to Dorobanți Hotel together with Opojević, alongside with Djoka Stojanović, Dapcević's bodyguard.

The eyewitnesses described the events that happened on August 9th as follows: "A person who had to meet Dapcevic reported to Maria Opojević that he had been told at the reception that the Belgian guests had left the hotel at midnight. Two other people, the Merkuşev brothers, who were supposed to lead Dapcević and Stojanovic to the airport received the same answer".[26] A year later the Yugoslav press was to disseminate the news that Dapcević was arrested on Yugoslav territory, under the action of carrying out *anti-state activity*, then prosecuting a lawsuit whose indictment he rejected. The trial was followed by a hearing by Opojević and Stojanović, who testified that they had been kidnapped in Romania, which led to the suspension of the hearing and a 20-year prison sentence in the case of Opojević.

Tito's death in 1980 and the inherent exchange of generations in Belgrade had a long-term and medium-term impact consisting of the cooling of relations between the two states, Yugoslav espionage on the Romanian territory becoming again a phenomenon of considerable amplitude, mostly revitalizing the practices applied before the tightening of the relations after Ceaușescu`s ascension to power. If, in the early years of the communist regime, the targets of Belgrade's covered agents mainly consisted of Romania's relations with the Soviet Union and the United States of America, followed in the order of importance by Romania's attitude towards the non-alignment of Yugoslavia, after 1980 the only point of convergence the traditional objects of Yugoslav information gathering in Romania remaining the military capabilities and the facilities to multiply the weapons.

---

[26] *Ibidem*, p. 121.

After Tito died, the Yugoslav intelligence experienced a "numerical-qualitative development of the informational potential, from now reoriented toward new thematic topics of information, as well as the reactivation of those abandoned or preserved".[27] The agents operating in Romania since 1948, who, after obtaining the status of political immigrants, were reactivated managing to infiltrate within the Romanian social, political, cultural, and educational structures.

One should bear in mind the activity of Vuk Drašković, the Romanian authorities issuing information over the suspicions of belonging to the *Serbian Renewal Movement*,[28] with the purpose of creating *Greater Serbia* thus targeting Romania`s Banat. The same intelligence sources reported on a so-called special *commando* suspected as being coordinated by Drašković and meant to create the premises for the separation of Banat from Romania and for annexing the territory to Yugoslavia. This alleged subversive state activity, now performed by one of Romania's closest allies until Tito's death, in the face of an imminent danger of the Soviet invasion in 1968, overlapped a cultural revolution following Ceaușescu's visit to Pyongyang in 1978 that could only be achieved by adopting the North Korean isolationism and the mechanisms of shortage reproduction.[29]

The draconian measures implemented during Ceaușescu`s rule were reported by the Embassy of Yugoslavia in Bucharest, as follows: "The situation is desperate. The starvation condition is worse than during the war when there was something to eat at least in the countryside. At present, the villages are as hungry

---

[27] *Ibidem*, p. 270.

[28] *Ibidem*, p. 271.

[29] Leon Aron, *Road to the Temple: Truth, Memory, Ideas and Idealism in the making of the Russian Revolution, 1987-1991*, New York & London, Yale University Press, 2012, p. 142.

as the towns are. How does a worker can be fed with 300 grams of bread, no cooking oil, some sugar, no meat, no potatoes, no heat, no electricity? How to work? Those who have children are desperate, especially because for bringing the only liter of milk they are allowed to purchase, they have to wait for hours".[30]

One should take into consideration that the aforementioned statement corresponded to a diplomatic representation whose country had more than 50% of the trade relations developed with the West,[31] but especially whose fundamental law elaborated in 1963 stipulated the liberalization as a leitmotiv both of the domestic and of the foreign policy. It should not pass unnoticed that what the Yugoslavs reported did not fit into the present propaganda customs, manifested including in Bucharest, but traditionally in the Yugoslav foreign policy meant a policy of balancing between the two blocks with benevolent neutrality towards the Westerners.

In antithesis, we find Ceaușescu's speech, which went increasingly into the idea of a state in the position of a *besieged fortress*, largely empathetic with the isolationism promoted by its homologous from Tirana, namely Enver Hodja and followed Ramiz Alia since 1980. Like the Albanian leaders, the leader from Bucharest perceived any reform dialogue as being deviance, so he preferred to isolate the regime so that the *forces of the movement* would have not penetrated an increasingly closed society trapped inside a fortress ossified by the gerontocracy that refused to accept the imminence of change. The era when Ceaușescu was perceived as a rebel in the Communist camp was already set aside, the Soviet Union led by Gorbachev fighting for change and replacing the old generation that

---

[30] Constantin Hlihor, *op. cit.*, 172.

[31] Nicolae Ciachir, Panait Gălățeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

Nicolae Ceaușescu belonged to, along with some conservative leaders within the *Iron Curtain*.

The Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party demonstrated an unconsciousness even when the rationalization measures led to a general pauperization despite the *smoke curtain* formed around the idea of Ceaușescu as a world leader. The external involvement expressed in the declarations evoking the goal of a chemical-free zone in the Balkans, as part of the development of regional security and cooperation,[32] was a strictly propagandistic component of a solitary regime in terms of the increasingly radical nature of the socio-economic policies elaborated by Ceaușescu's *camarilla*.

The statement of former Presidential Adviser Silviu Curticeanu remains fully edifying: "By the end of the 1980s, centralization became draconian, triggered a constant and unequal battle of ministers for each ron, gram of raw material or kilowatt of electricity. The monthly plans and the technical-military supply programs, earnestly drawn up by specialists in all fields of activity, became simple paper petitions, because, armed with a black pen and more and more unconsciousness, Ceaușescu changed the figures as he desired or following his inspiration and becoming an aggressive presence, increasingly difficult to circumvent".[33]

Alongside with the decline in terms of living conditions, the communist authorities in Romania tightened the existing regime of traveling abroad, which led to an increase in illegal border crossings to Yugoslavia after 1977, exploited by

---

[32] Valentin Lipatti, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

[33] Ioan Scurtu, *Revolutia română din decembrie 1989 în context internațional*, Bucharest, IRRD Publishing House, 2006, pp. 174-175.

Belgrade counterparts by "the research and the informational exploitation of the Romanian turncoats",[34] in conjunction with facilitating the passage of the Romanian fugitives to Austria.  Securitate-based sources also recalled the extradition of the fugitives unable to provide valuable information for the Yugoslav authorities, thus preserving a *façade* compliance with the bilateral agreements signed between Bucharest and Belgrade. The circumscription of the Romanian authorities toward the intentions of the Yugoslav side was demonstrated by the diminishing cooperation at the level of the Ministries of the Interior, respectively of the Romanian-Yugoslav security bodies.

The investigation of the Romanian refugees was carried out at the Padinska-Skela camp, the points of interest on the agenda being the popular state of mind, the extent to which the population was willing to revolt against the regime, as well as the Romanian military capabilities, biographical data of the military decision-makers or the strategic objectives. Contrary to the second and third points, which were, in fact, traditional Yugoslav espionage targets, we add interest in testing the availability of the Serb-Croat community to support certain actions of Belgrade on Romania's territory, thereby noticing the geostrategic instrumentation of the Yugoslav diaspora in Romania. The same sources at the level of the Romanian former intelligence structures mentioned the cooperation between the Occidental and Yugoslav services, given that "some Western services had taken over the manipulation of the dissidents created by the KGB to make trouble for Nicolae Ceaușescu".[35]

---

[34] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

[35] *Ibidem*.

The information-gathering activity continued with "Tanjug's propaganda for undermining and removing Ceaușescu",[36] which had contributed to the tightening of already-difficult Romanian-Yugoslav relations. At the same time, there should be taken into account the expansion of the Yugoslav intelligence structures since the spring of 1989, with "the Yugoslav espionage services being massively and consistently involved in the preparation and conduct of planned events for the removal of Nicolae Ceaușescu".[37]

At the same time, the position of the Croatian branch of the federal administration, which, according to sources based in the intelligence community, was unanimous in favor of external intervention for the overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu.[38] The veracity of these sources is questioned precisely by the developments within December 1989, namely the collapse of the communist regime after the Romanian Revolution. The question marks in this direction also appear on the floor of Moscow`s opposition for an intervention against Ceaușescu`s rule, determined also by Yugoslav internal affairs: the fact that the Yugoslav state was on the brink of implosion did not give the necessary argument for the feasibility of Belgrade`s intervention in Romania since domestically the federal republic was weakened by regional separatism.

Although the information-gathering activity of the Yugoslav authorities remained a current fact, especially during the evolution from December 1989, their role in the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime can only be minimal, as Belgrade could not engage in an operation of such a magnitude. And this because the overthrow

---

[36] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit*, p. 274.

[37] *Ibidem*, pp. 273-274.

[38] *Ibidem*, p. 276.

of a regime is a complicated logistic operation simply because it requires high-level contacts both in the target state and in the future coalition of the will, which were not only non-existent but also undesirable as it had to affirm the head of the Soviet diplomacy. On the other hand, the disputed statehood of the Yugoslav state represented the main concern, namely, the real capacity of the regime from Belgrade to determine the political developments in the immediate vicinity, in the context of the collapse of the federal republic that was only a matter of time.

On September 19th, 1989 the Political Executive Council's verbatim report demonstrated that the problem of an intervention with Yugoslav participation was not even at the level of negotiation since the "Yugoslavs did not have a firm stance".[39] In this sense, a state whose internal coherence almost non-existent that would lead to a separation of the union republics during the forthcoming civil wars could not undertake such a far-reaching operation, which is also problematic from the point of view of resources and political will.

The state of affairs had since been confirmed, including the work of the Yugoslav General-Consulate from Timișoara – which is true that it has carried out an information and propaganda activity – but acted autonomously from the headquarters. Despite this, Mirko Atanacković, the Yugoslav General-Consul from Timișoara, would declare that "he acted directly for the preparation of the Romanian Revolution"[40] – in the context in that the real involvement on the part of the Consulate was to the take a list of claims submitted by the protesters of Timișoara, for the only reason that there was no diplomatic or consular

---

[39] Ion Calafeteanu, *Când Europa arde...*, Bucharest, IRRD Publishing House, 2015, p. 29.
[40] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

representation in the town over the Bega than the Yugoslav republic – has little credibility.

The issue of the coordination between the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry and the Yugoslav Consulate from Timișoara was mentioned in a statement by Filip Teodorescu, according to whose relating "A special agitation of officials from the Yugoslav Consultation was reported. They have made at least two trips to Yugoslavia to bring information, video, and audiotapes during the events. In fact, the Yugoslav Consulate was one of the main sources of misinformation and intoxication of the world's public opinion about events in Timișoara. Much later, a Serbian friend suggested that the information did not reach Belgrade, because the General-Consul from Timișoara was not a Serb, but a Croat".[41]

Some sources belonging to the Romanian former intelligence community revealed alleged links between Croatian security officers of Yugoslav security services and homologous within the information structures belonging to other countries, links unhindered by the Federal Foreign Affairs Secretariat. At the same time, it was reconfirmed the refusal of the Yugoslav officers to follow the recommendations coming from the power plant, mentioning "the independent actions outside official duties, on nationalist grounds, in cooperation with the Hungarian agents from Romania under diplomatic cover and to whom they had provided data and information on events developments in Timişoara".[42]

Whatever the basis of Romania's communist information community had been, the hypotheses formulated by the Securitate come to show exactly the opposite of Belgrade's intervention against the regime from Bucharest, since

---

[41] *Ibidem*, pp. 277-278.
[42] *Ibidem*.

Yugoslavia was not by far a coagulated state, but rather a state *colossus* with clay feet. By partially accepting the argumentation developed by the communist intelligence services, we can conclude that a state incapable of coordinating its agents does not have the necessary tools to act to change the regime in another state. The fact that, in the same year, the secessionist problems were going to get worse in southern Serbia, it precisely confirmed the malfunctions of the power structures, which made it impossible to validate the thesis that a fragmented state could look interfere with the internal order of another since its own order was largely contested.

At the same time, there are suspicions about the way the Yugoslav media replicated the Romanian Revolution,[43] mainly due to the exaggeration found in the reports regarding the number of victims from Timişoara and Bucharest, the figures even going to the number of 60,000 dead.[44] The accusations against Tanjug went in the direction of *incriminating* it for disinformation, as the Yugoslav press agency was the first to release rumors about the events happening in Romania during December 1989. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the accounts were hot, which, of course, implies an exponentially increased appetite for the sensational area, as the sources of information were not the most credible or objective.

As a synthesis for the Romanian-Yugoslav relations, the oscillation between the Balkan cooperation projects, often reduced to exclusively technocrat cooperation, and the recurrent data collection and projects at the level of the

---

[43] Ion Bucur, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[44] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

information community can be brought to attention, the existence of collaborations at the level of law enforcement structures and at the level of the secret services. The interactions between Bucharest and Belgrade can also be viewed from a phased perspective, reaching the climax in 1965, when Ceausescu took over the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party, and until Tito's death in 1980.

Those 15 years of Romanian-Yugoslav relations have been marked by numerous bilateral visits at the highest level, but the direct interactions between the two actors were ingrained with a certain degree of reserve for assuming positive security engagement, especially after 1971, when Ceaușescu's visit to China and North Korea gave him the vision of the application of Asian communist practices in Romania.

At the same time, Tito's disappearance led to a gradual deterioration of the relations between Bucharest and Belgrade, especially in 1989, when the contestation of the communist regimes from Romania and Yugoslavia collapsed. If in Romanian we only dealt with a regime's contestation, in the Yugoslav case the disputes went toward a separatist direction. It can be concluded that the congruent direction of the Romanian-Yugoslav reformism has led to the formation of a relationship based on the congruent paradigms on socialism, while the clash between the *gerontocratic conservatism* of the last years of the Ceaușescu`s brought to the attention of the informational community.

# From the Italian *Mare Nostrum* Operation to the Frontex *Triton* Operation (November 2014-February 2018). Italy and Search and Rescue Operations. (SAR)

**Mihaela Mustatea**[*]

**Key-words:** Triton operation, Frontex, Italy, Search and Rescue Operation, European Union, irregular migration, Libya, Central Mediterranean route, Mare Nostrum;

**Abstract**

*In October 2013, the Italian Coast Guard began an innovative Search and Rescue mission, known as the Mare Nostrum operation, intending to rescue migrants in distress at sea and bring to justice human traffickers and migrant smugglers. In November 2014, after only a year of activity in which all the costs were financed by Italy, Mare Nostrum was officially ended and replaced by the Frontex-led Operation Triton. This paper examines the EU's decision to implement the European Triton operation, the main objectives of this new European mission, and for a better understanding, points out the differences between these two naval operations led by Italy in the Mediterranean Sea. Launched in the Central Mediterranean, the main focus of the Triton operation was the border management control and to a lesser extent the humanitarian scope. Being a response to continuous Italy's calls for aid and the expanded Mediterranean migration crisis, Triton functioned in the same line as two other similar European operations: in Spain, the Hera operation, or in Greece, the Poseidon operation (since 2006). Each operation had a member state, as the sole host state which commanded the entire operation. In February 2018, the Warsaw-based Frontex launched a new operation in the Central Mediterranean, the Themis Operation, to assist*

---

[*] PhD. in History, Research Assistant and Associate Professor, University of Bucharest.

*Italy in the Schengen border control activity, replacing the Triton operation and removing the much-criticized obligation to bring rescued migrants only to Italy.*

Over a decade, Italy is confronting a great phenomenon of sea migration, with thousands of people who departed from the coasts of North Africa, trying to reach Europe, using the so-called Central Mediterranean route. Many migrants transited Libya on their journey towards Europe, after the fall of the Kaddafi regime, contributing to the development of smuggling and human trafficking networks. The migrant flows increased significantly starting with 2011 in conjunction with the political changes called the "Arab Spring" in North African countries (especially in Tunisia and Libya) and with the intensification of the conflict in Syria (see Figure 1).

The Libyan coast represents the main departure point for migrants traveling to Europe by boat and so far, the Mediterranean Sea crossing recorded the largest number of deaths and missing cases of people who migrated worldwide. In particular, the Central Mediterranean Sea registered the highest number of these tragedies. Furthermore, 2016 was the year in which the number of deaths on the Central Mediterranean route peaked, with more than 4 thousand deaths (see Figure 2). Since 2014, Zuwarah, Sabratha, Tripoli, Garabulli, and Al Khums have represented the main departure hubs from Libya to Italy.[1]

---

[1] For more information, see ***Altai Consulting, *Leaving Libya. Rapid Assessment of Municipalities of Departures of Migrants in Libya,* June 2017 in http://www.altaiconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017_Altai-Consulting_Leaving-Libya-Rapid-Assessment-of-Municipalities-of-Departure-of-Migrants-in-Libya.pdf
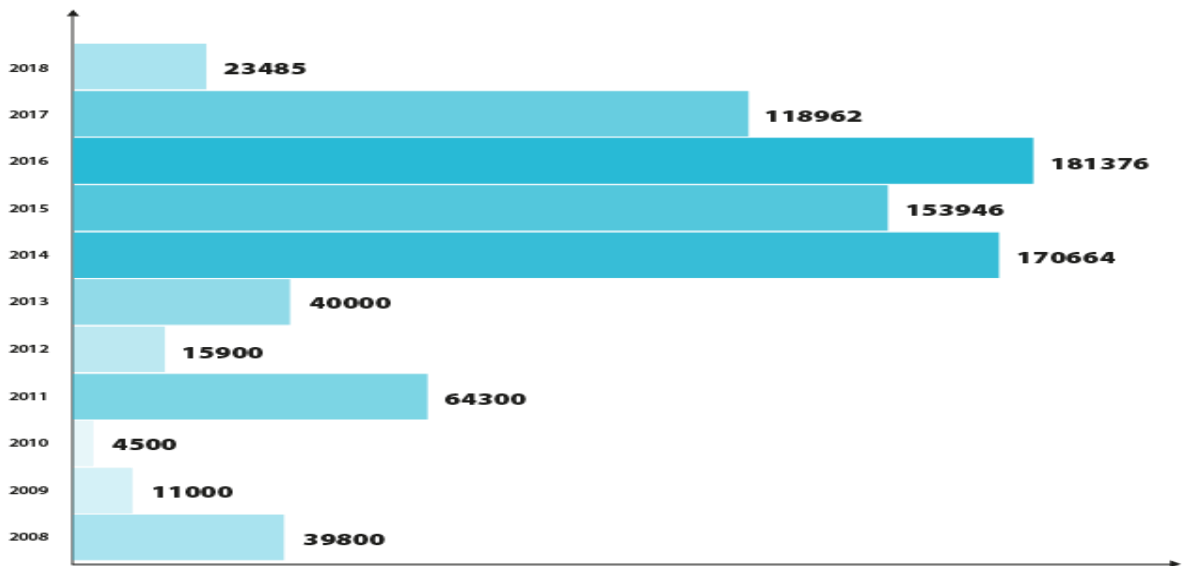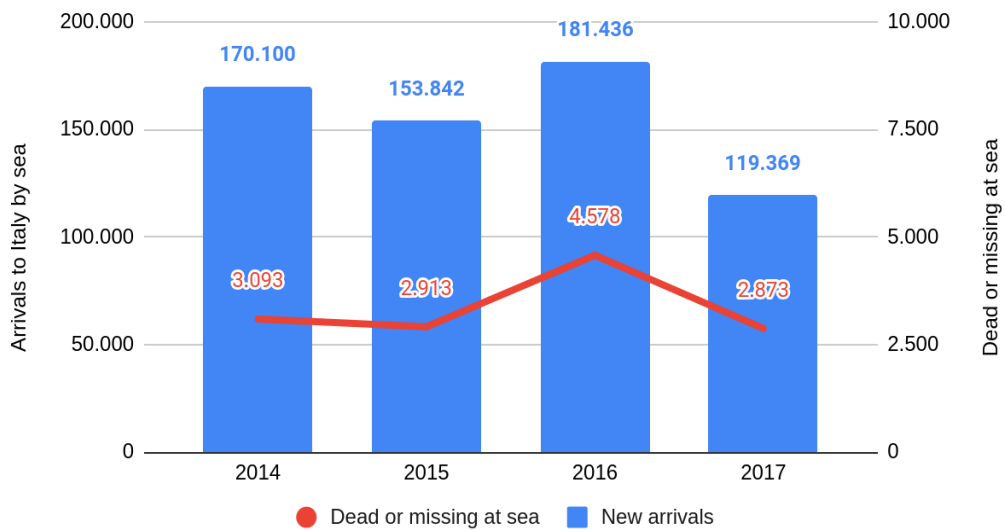
Figure 1. Illegal border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route, including Apulia and Calabria, in numbers. Source: **Frontex**



Source: **UNHCR**

Nowadays, irregular migration represents the main issue that concerns wealthy nations and poor countries alike. By the end of 2019, the number of people forcibly displaced has grown to 79.5 million, the highest number on record, according to the UNHCR annual Global trends report.[2]

Demographic pressures, political persecution, and wars, human rights abuses, economic poverty, and food insecurity continue to push people into undertaking risky journeys in search of protection and economic opportunities from their countries to neighboring countries, and further onward to countries outside their region. In the case of the Central Mediterranean route,[3] refugees and migrants moved in large numbers from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa, then crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy.

On 18 October 2013, Italian authorities launched the **Mare Nostrum Search and Rescue operation** to respond to the humanitarian emergency in the Sicilian Channel. This decision has been taken by the Italian authorities, following the two tragic shipwrecks on 3rd October 2013, in the waters off Lampedusa island, when 366 migrant people died, following the second tragedy occurring only eight days later between Malta and Lampedusa, bringing the death toll to more than 600 people.[4]

The Mare Nostrum Operation enhanced the rescue capacities in the Central Mediterranean and made the Italian policy of patrolling international waters not only more effective but also much more visible.[5] This large-scale search and rescue operation[6] also represented a starting point of a new strategy based on a different

---

[2] *** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global trends. Forced displacement in 2019*, p. 2, https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf.

[3] The Central Mediterranean Route refers to migration movements from North Africa to Italy and, to a lesser extent, to Malta.

[4] Jasmine Coppens, *The Lampedusa disaster: how to prevent further loss of life at sea?* in "TransNav", vol. 7, no. 4, December 2014, p. 589.

[5] Martina Tazzioli, *Border displacements. Challenging the politics of rescue between Mare Nostrum and Triton* in "Migration studies", vol. 4, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1-19.

[6] Alessio Patalano, *Nightmare Nostrum? Not Quite: Lessons from the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean Migrant Crisis* in "The RUSI Journal", vol. 160(3), pp. 14-19;

approach of the European immigration policy in the light of humanitarian intervention and protection of migrants.[7]

Launching a humanitarian and military operation, Italy wanted to send a strong signal to Europe and all the European institutions, asking for an expansion and improvement of the Frontex's activity, but above all, more share solidarity of the member states to resolve the migration crisis and, particularly, to set common objectives more directed towards the protection of human lives than the military protection of the European borders.[8]

It was the beginning of a new perspective in the Search and Rescue Operations, Mare Nostrum receiving important public support, especially by the non - governmental organizations and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). But the financial effort was massive. Italy had some help from smaller Mediterranean states like Malta [9] or its neighbor state, Slovenia,[10] but the entire program was very expensive, more than 9 million euros per month, even though the cost of the operation was initially estimated at 1.5 million euros per month, covered by the ordinary budget of the Italian Ministry of Defense.[11]

The EU has financially supported the operation with only €1.8 million from the emergency actions under the External Borders Fund during November 2013

---

[7] For more details about the concept of **humanitarian border,** see Paolo Cuttitta, *Delocalization, Humanitarianism and Human Rights: The Mediterranean Humanitarian Border between Exclusion and Inclusion* in "Antipode", 2017, pp. 783-803; also Violeta Moreno Lax, *The EU Humanitarian Border and the Securitization of Human Rights: The 'Rescue-Through-Interdiction/Rescue-Without-Protection' Paradigm* in "Journal of Common Market Studies", vol. 56, no. 1, 2019, pp. 119-140.

[8] Steve Scherer, *DOSSIER - Mare Nostrum, l'Italia chiede all'Europa di fare di più* in https://www.reuters.com/article/oittp-marenostrum-dossier-idITKBN0E11G720140521.

[9] Slovenia provided a boat for Mare Nostrum operation, Triglav, and 40 officers for a few weeks in December 2013 and January 2014, and has been the only contributor Member State to Italian operation. Malta has participated in operations in its marine area, in coordination with Mare Nostrum in Caitlin Katsiaficas, *Search and Rescue Operations* in *the Mediterranean. The role of Frontex Plus,* in "EU Migration Policy Working Paper", no. 13, 2014, p. 7, https://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/ebooks/files/385918577.pdf;

[10] www.marina.difesa.it/documentazione/comunicati/Pagine/2014_018.aspx

[11]***Camera dei Deputati, *Documenti 224,* 7 maggio 2014 http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/assemblea/html/sed0224/tmp0000.htm

and has assisted Italy through the two simultaneous Frontex operations in progress, Hermes and Aeneas, also under Italian command.[12]

Some European politicians claimed that the Search and Rescue Operations, like Mare Nostrum, have represented an unintended "pull factor", encouraging dangerous sea crossings. A considerable number of the asylum seekers using the central Mediterranean route were economic migrants, who did not qualify for international protection to enter the EU illegally. In the UK, the Foreign Office minister, Baroness Anelay, took this stance in October 2014, explaining that the UK would not support any future search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, referring to the "Operation Triton", planned to be launched by the European Frontex border agency on 1st November 2014.[13]

Similar voices were heard across Europe, accusing and fearing that Mare Nostrum represented, actually, the reason why more and more migrants tried to reach the European Union, leading to more "tragic and unnecessary deaths". Even Frontex agency has veiledly accused the Mare Nostrum Italian operation of attracting more migrants by patrolling very close to the Libyan coasts.[14]

Operationally, Mare Nostrum consisted of permanent patrols in the SAR zones of Libya, Malta, and Italy, representing a vast area of almost 70,000 square kilometers.[15] Compared to other operations, Mare Nostrum paid more attention to

---

[12] *** European Commission, *Frontex Joint Operation 'Triton' – Concerted efforts to manage migration in the Central Mediterranean,* Memo, Brussels, 7 October 2014, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/de/MEMO_14_566.

[13] *** *UK opposes future migrant rescues in Mediterranean* in "BBC", 28 October 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-29799473.

[14] ***Frontex, *Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community Joint Report,* p. 13.
https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2014/dec/eu-africa-frontex-intell-report-2014.pdf.

[15] Adopted at the Conference in Hamburg from 1979, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue was aimed to develop an international SAR plan, so that, no matter where an accident occurs, the rescue of persons in distress at sea will be co-ordinated by a SAR organization and, when necessary, by co-operation between neighboring SAR organizations. Moreover, the 1979 Convention dictated that rescued migrants must be taken to a "place of safety" where migrants' fundamental rights are preserved in https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-on-Maritime-Search-and-Rescue-(SAR).aspx; Claudio Deiana, Vikram Maheshri, Giovanni Mastrobuoni, *Migrants at Sea:*

the search and rescue activities rather than to protect territorial waters and the European borders. The Italian naval operation included personnel as well as sea and air assets of the Navy, Air Force, Carabinieri, Financial Police, Harbour Masters Corps / Coast Guard, personnel of the Italian Red Cross military corps and the Ministry of the Interior / State Police, embarked on Italian Navy vessels, with the contribution of all the governmental agencies involved in controlling migration flows by sea.[16]

In 2014 more than 165,000 migrants arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean route, compared with the 60,000 who arrived in 2013. Thus, the number of irregular migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea has significantly increased, and the common perception was that the migrants considered the sea journey less risky than before since they were assured by the Libyan migrant smuggling networks that the objective was no longer to reach European mainland but only international waters where they would have been rescued by the Italian authorities or civil vessels.[17]

Academic literature has criticized this argument, showing that there is no correlation between the presence of the naval assets of Mare Nostrum in the Mediterranean Sea and the magnitude of the migratory flows. Many reasons explain the rising influx of migrants through the Central Mediterranean route, first of all, the instability in Libya, with a low level of surveillance along its coast, but also wider factors like violent conflicts and precarious economic situation in Sub-Saharan Africa.[18]

Moreover, the agreement between Italy and Tunisia, whereby up to 100 migrants could have been repatriated per week, and the effective readmission

---

*Unintended Consequences of Search and Rescue Operations* in https://dagliano.unimi.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Mastrobuoni_migrants_at_sea.pdf, p. 8.

[16]***Ministero della Difesa, Marina Militare, *Mare Nostrum Operation,* https://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx.

[17] ***UNHCR, *So close yet so far from safety,* https://www.unhcr.org/54ad53b69.pdf.

[18] Eugenio Cusumano, *Migrant rescued as organized hypocrisy: EU maritime missions offshore Libya between humanitarianism and border control,* in "Cooperation and Conflict", 2019, vol.54 (I), p. 8.

agreement in place between Italy and Egypt, where Egyptian nationals could have been repatriated within 48 hours have influenced migratory patterns, which means that a larger number of migrants have chosen Libya as departing point to Europe.[19]

However, recent studies and scholarly papers have shown that the SAR operations could have had adverse and "unintended consequences": first, the presence of the naval vessels close to the Libyan coast rather encouraged more migrants to attempt to cross the sea, which exposed more people to the risk of death; second, the presence of the naval assets of the Italian Navy not far from the Libyan Coast "encouraged"/determined human traffickers to use inflatable, unsafe rubber boats, reducing the costs because the sea crossing became shorter, (only enough to reach Mare Nostrum coverage area), and the migrants would have been rescued faster by the patrolling vessels.[20]

On average, the price for the maritime crossing from Libya was around USD 1 300, but it rose to about USD 3 000 for departures from Egypt. Given the current average price for the sea crossing from Libya to Italy (around USD 1 300), some estimates suggest that smugglers generated up to USD 150,000 of pure profit per boat after all costs were deducted (fuel, boat, satellite phone, water, and food). In 2014, the smuggling business in Libya produced close to USD 100 million.[21]

Indeed, in comparison with 2013 (64,647), in 2014 (28,953), the number of persons intercepted by JO Hermes was reduced significantly, mainly due to the massive action of the Mare Nostrum operation that intervened more to the south, intercepting persons in the Libyan waters, before reaching the Frontex JO areas.[22]

---

[19] For more information, see Françoise De Bel-Air, *Migration Profile: Tunisia* in "European University Institute", Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, December 2016, https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/45144/MPC_PB_2016_08.pdf

[20] Claudio Deina, Vikram Maheshri, Giovanni Mastrobuoni, *op.cit*, p. 36; Philippe Fargues, Sara Bonfanti, *When the best option is a leaky boat: why migrants risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean and what Europe is doing about it,* in Migration Policy Centre, EUI, October 2014, p. 3.

[21] ***Frontex, *Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community Joint Report,* Warsaw, October 2014, pp.14-17, ttps://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2014/dec/eu-africa-frontex-intell-report-2014.pdf

[22] Sergio Carrera, Leonard den Hertog, *Whose Mare? Rule of law challenges in the field of European*

From 1 January until 15 August 2014, the number of migrants crossing the Central Mediterranean Sea towards Italy reached 98,875 persons (555% more than in 2013), a large part of them being rescued by the Mare Nostrum vessels.[23]

The political response to the migratory flows was immediate: in Italy, the right-wing populist parties profited from the crisis, Lega Nord party urging the interruption of the Mare Nostrum operation, which cost 300,000 euros per day, spent by the Italians to "help the smugglers and to encourage the invasion". According to Maurizio Gasparri (Fratelli d'Italia, a relatively new far-right party, founded in 2012), it would have been necessary to evaluate the fact that Mare Nostrum could have represented a violation of the internal and international rules:

"We are not helping asylum seekers - there will be a minority of them, but we are collaborating with the illegal trafficking, which could affect not only people but also the drugs." [24]

The Chief of Staff of the Italian Navy Giuseppe de Giorgi recalled that since 2004 the Italian Navy was involved in the control of migratory flows within the "Constant vigilance" operation. De Giorgi defined a "nonsense" this accusation against Mare Nostrum whereby the operation would have attracted refugees, who instead fled from war (Syria), poverty and famine. Comparing the arrivals of November 2013, under Mare Nostrum, and November 2014, without Mare

---

*border surveillance in the Mediterranean* in "CEPS Paper in Liberty and Security in Europe" No. 79 / January 2015, p. 7.

[23] ***Frontex, *Concept of reinforced joint operation tackling the migratory flows towards Italy: JO EPNFTriton to better control irregular migration and contribute to SAR in the Mediterranean Sea,* 28.08.2014,
https://deathbyrescue.org/assets/annexes/2.Frontex_Concept_JO_EPN-Triton_28.08.2014.pdf.

[24] *** *Emergenza sbarchi. Immigrazione, scoppia la polemica nel centro-destra sull'operazione Mare Nostrum,* 21 April 2014, in https://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Gasparri-ironizza-Mare-Nostrum-No-Taxi-Loro-b15685a5-bcf5-4e01-87c7-4ff6a0cba542.html.

Nostrum, it turned out that with the end of the mission, rather than collapsing, the migrant arrivals increased by + 485% compared to the previous year.[25]

In December 2013, 2,701 migrants and asylum seekers were registered in Italy, in comparison to 6,732 in December 2014. IOM Chief of Mission in Italy Federico Soda reiterated that the figures suggested above all, that the flows were linked to the deteriorating multiple and complex humanitarian crises near Europe's external borders, including the war in Syria and the political instability in Libya.[26]

On the other hand, in December 2013 the Italian Mare Nostrum was just at the beginning, and its migrant rescue activity wasn't very well known. The number of migrants using the Mediterranean Sea route has continued to increase each year after Mare Nostrum ceased operation, and one of the factors would be this new European rescue approach in the border management activity.

Meanwhile, the Italian authorities constantly complained that they were abandoned by the rest of Europe and left alone to deal with this common problem. The Italian government has repeatedly called for assistance, including asking the EU to aid in or to take over the operation.[27] Italy has also threatened to end this operation if it did not receive more assistance. The cost of maintaining the Mare Nostrum operation became too heavy for the Italian government to carry alone and finally, during the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Italian authorities decided to cease Mare Nostrum on October 31st, 2014,

---

[25] *** Senato della Repubblica, Legislatura 17ª, *Commissione straordinaria per la tutela e la promozione dei diritti umani*, Martedì, 9 dicembre 2014, 64ª Seduta, http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=SommComm&leg=17&id=816042&part=doc_dc; Stefano Pasta, *Il capo di Stato Maggiore della Marina in Senato: "Mare Nostrum attirava i profughi? E' una sciocchezza"* in "La Repubblica", 16 December 2014, https://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2014/12/16/news/mare_nostrum_il_capo_della_marina_in_senato_una_sciocchezza_che_mare_nostrum_attirava_i_profughi-103071960/

[26] ***IOM, UN Migration, *Migrant Arrivals by Sea in Italy Top 170,000 in 2014*, https://www.iom.int/news/migrant-arrivals-sea-italy-top-170000-2014

[27] ***Barcone naufraga al largo della Libia, recuperati 17 cadaveri. Alfano: l'Europa non ci aiuta* in "Il Sole24ore", 12 May 2014, https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2014-05-12/barcone-migranti-affonda-sud-lampedusa-diversi-morti-140514_PRN.shtml;

returning to regular sea operations. However, the Italian Navy guaranteed a reduced presence in the Central Mediterranean for a two-month transition period until Frontex's Joint Operation Triton would have become fully operational.[28]

IOM estimated that in 2014 over 3,200 migrants died at sea trying to reach Italy, an unprecedented loss of life on this deadly migration route. Thousands of lives also were saved: 85,000 by the Italian Navy's Mare Nostrum operation and more than 35,000 by the Italian Coast Guard, as well as over 40,000 by a total of 237 commercial ships contracted by the Italian authorities to provide support in emergencies. Syria was the top sending country with 42,323 migrants arriving in Italy in 2014, followed by Eritrea (34,329). Other important sending countries were Mali (9,938), Nigeria (9,000), Gambia (8,707), Palestine (6,082), and Somalia (5,756). The number of Syrians arriving in December totaled 3,202, a slight increase from the 2,950 arriving in November. In 2014, most migrants arrived from the coasts of Libya where the situation of a *de facto* failed state had created favorable conditions to flourish the migrant smuggling networks.[29]

In place of the Mare Nostrum operation, EU officials decided to establish a new naval operation: on 27 August 2014, following a meeting with Italian Minister Angelino Alfano, Cecilia Malström, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs in the Barroso Commission, announced the new Frontex Plus Operation (later renamed the Triton Operation), planned to be launch on 1st November of that year. The Triton operation also replaced the other two Frontex Joint operations, with Italy as a host state, emerged after the outbreak of the Arab Spring and after a formal request by Italy: **Aeneas** in the Ionian Sea, created to combat irregular immigration from Turkey and Egypt via Greece to the Italian coasts of Calabria and Puglia, and **Hermes** aimed to control irregular immigration and other cross-

---

[28] *** Ministero dell'Interno, *Si conclude "Mare Nostrum", al via 'Triton'* 31 October 2014, https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/conclude-mare-nostrum-triton; *Italy: end of ongoing sea rescue mission 'puts thousands at risk'* in "The Guardian", https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/31/italy-sea-mission-thousands-risk.
[29] *** IOM, UN Migration, *Migrant Arrivals by Sea in Italy Top 170,000 in 2014,* https://www.iom.int/news/migrant-arrivals-sea-italy-top-170000-2014

border crimes from Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria to Lampedusa, Sicily, and Sardinia.[30]

Like the two earlier operations conducted by Italy, JO Triton aimed at improving border surveillance and border control through joint patrols with the assets provided by the Member States. Its operational area covered the territorial waters of Italy and Malta, as well as parts of the search and rescue (SAR) zones of both states.[31]

But, rather than be a replacement for the Italian mission, which carried out a proactive search and rescue activity across 70,000 square kilometers of sea, very close to the Libyan coasts, Triton focused on the border surveillance and initially operated only within 30 miles of the Italian coast (56 km). Due to the few achievements that Triton made in its first year of activity (the number of victims at sea even increased), the European Commission decided to widen the scope of the operation by expanding its area of intervention to 50 nautical miles and adding further funds, personnel, vessels, and aircraft. After two more high profile shipwrecks in a single week, in April 2015 the SAR area of Triton was expanded up to 138 miles south of Sicily and tripled its operational budget, passing to the second phase of the operation.[32] Initially, JO Triton functioned with a monthly operational cost of €2.9, less than a third of its predecessor, and an additional increase of 26,25 million euros was provided for 2015. [33]

On 22 June 2015, Triton was complemented with the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), a military operation EU Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR Med) "Sophia", focusing attention from the migrants themselves to

---

[30] The Italian Government requested assistance in strengthening the surveillance of the EU's external borders in the form of a Joint Operation in 2011 and 2012, http://www.aedh.eu/en/the-new-european-operation-frontex-plustriton-an-operation-with-differing-objectives-and-more-limited-means-than-the-mare-nostrum-operation/

[31] ***Frontex Annual Activity Report 2014*, p. 14, in
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/84687/FRONTEX%20AAR%202014_13.05.2015.pdf

[32] ***Frontex General Report 2015* in https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/474bb018-b537-11e6-9e3c-01aa75ed71a1.
https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/23/special-euco-statement/

[33] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/31/italy-sea-mission-thousands-risk.

the smugglers/traffickers, countering illegal migrations by disrupting smuggling networks, and preventing people from leaving Libya. [34]

However, the Triton operation did not receive the mandate and assets required to substitute the Italian Navy operation, Mare Nostrum. The Frontex spokeswoman Isabella Cooper declared that Triton was a border control operation, very different from Mare Nostrum, not having the search and rescue component as its primary goals.[35]

Nevertheless, at that time Frontex estimated that the European Agency would not have sufficient resources to conduct a large-scale operation, like Mare Nostrum. Cecilia Malmström said that the new operation would rely on the contributions from the EU member states and would not be a "duplicate" of the Italian search and rescue model:

> "Mare Nostrum has been a very ambitious operation and we don't know if we can find the means to do exactly what Italy has done."[36]

[34] Following the extraordinary European Council of 23 April 2015, EU Foreign and Defence Ministers agreed to create a naval force, EUNAVFOR Med, and to launch a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation in the Mediterranean on 18 May 2015. The Italian-commanded force was based in Rome and operated in the southern and central Mediterranean, in cooperation with the Libyan authorities. The operation was to undertake systematic efforts to identify, capture and dispose of vessels, as well as enabling confiscation of assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers. On 7 October 2015, the operation moved on to Phase II - now renamed Sophia, in international waters. It entailed boarding, search, seizure and diversion, on the high seas, of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking human beings. During its course, the mission has subsequently been extended three times, until 31 March 2019. Moreover, most of the rescued migrants have been disembarked in Italy, which prompted Italian's Prime Minister Matteo Salvini to close the ports to NGO vessels engaged in civil search and rescue operations, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eunavfor-med-operation-sophia.

[35] ***UK opposes future migrant rescues in Mediterranean in "BBC News", 28 October 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-29799473

[36] ***UN warning over Mediterranean crossing patrol force from EU in "The Guardian", https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/29/un-eu-mediterranean-frontex-mare-nostrum-italy

Frontex's annual budget was approximately 89,187,000 euros, including 55,254,000 euros that were allocated to the operational activities. A 20 million euros increase of the reserve allocated to Frontex was voted under the 2015 budget to enable the Agency to react properly to the Mediterranean crisis. That means that even if the totality of the operational budget of Frontex was allocated to the Triton operation, it would only have 4.6 million euros per month, which is almost two times less than the cost of the Mare Nostrum Italian operation. The Frontex Deputy Executive Director, Gil Arias-Fernández said that the resources allocated to Triton should be approximately 3 million euros per month.[37]

In 2016, being also an answer to the migratory crisis, the Frontex mandate has been strengthened and widened, transforming Frontex into the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. The establishment of the new Agency was a ground-breaking achievement, shifting the integrated management of the EU external borders from solely national competence towards a shared responsibility of the Member States and the Agency. For the first time, in line with what was asked for in the **European Agenda on Migration,[38]** the new mandate of the Agency included coast guard functions carried out in close cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency and the European Fisheries Control Agency, such as joint surveillance flights for fisheries and border control in the Central Mediterranean.[39]

---

[37] *** AEDH, *The new European operation Frontex Plus/Triton: an operation with differing objectives and more limited means than the Mare Nostrum operation*, 13 October 2014, http://www.aedh.eu/en/the-new-european-operation-frontex-plustriton-an-operation-with-differing-objectives-and-more-limited-means-than-the-mare-nostrum-operation/.

[38] The European Agenda for Migration from 2015 called for the better support of 'frontline' states in receiving irregular migrants and asylum seekers, the systematic identification of new arrivals by registration of their biometric data in the EURODAC system, and a more evenly distribution of asylum seekers among EU Member States. A redistribution key have to base on criteria such as GDP, size of the population, unemployment rate and past numbers of asylum seekers and of resettled refugees in European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration*, Brussels, 13.05.2015, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0240&from=EN

[39] ***European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf

A substantial boost in resources and equipment has given the Agency increased capacity to intervene, restoring at least in part, the level of intervention provided under the former Italian Mare Nostrum operation.

Compared to the Mare Nostrum Operation, the Triton operation was much more limited, in many and substantial aspects: first, its funding was only 2.9 million euros compared to the more than 9 million per month made available by Italy from October 2013 to October 2014 for Mare Nostrum operation.[40] Secondly, the equipment available to Frontex by the Member States participating in the mission was also much more limited than those used by Italy. Third, Triton had a much more limited scope than Mare Nostrum: its intervention was too restricted, reaching just 30 nautical miles from the Southern coast of Italy, whereas Mare Nostrum extended its activities to the international waters, arriving close to the Libyan coast. Fourth, the mandate of the Frontex Triton operation focused on border control, not to rescue operations at sea. As reported in the document of 28 August 2014, JO EPN-Triton, the objectives of the new operation concerned the strengthening of national efforts related to border surveillance and the mere "support" for search and rescue activities conducted by the Member States under their international obligations.[41] Finally, Mare Nostrum had a simple and wide mandate, given to it by the Italian government, while Triton's mandate was, at least, an ambiguous and complex one, and in the end, it was changed to increase its involvement in search and rescue in the Maltese zone, although its primary mandate has remained EU border security at sea.[42]

Human rights activists like Amnesty International and refugee organizations have immediately criticized the new SAR operation. Michael

---

[40] http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/assemblea/html/sed0224/tmp0000.htm

[41] *** Frontex, *Concept of reinforced joint operation tackling the migratory flows towards Italy: JO EPNFTriton to better control irregular migration and contribute to SAR in the Mediterranean Sea*, 28.08.2014,https://deathbyrescue.org/assets/annexes/2.Frontex_Concept_JO_EPN-Triton_28.08.2014.pdf

[42] Emily Koller, *Mare Nostrum versus Triton*, Toronto, The University of Toronto, 2017, p. 11, https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/ceres/files/2017/10/Paper-Emily-Koller.pdf

Diedring, the Secretary-General of the European Council on Refugees, told the BBC that the EU should fundamentally change its approach to the migration problem by offering more safe and legal channels for migrants: "there are almost no safe and legal means to access European soil to file an asylum claim".[43]

The Italian Minister of the Interior noted that "the principle of non-refoulment had to be always applied and the migrants could not be returned to third countries where their life was at risk and therefore rescued migrants would continue to be transferred exclusively to Italy, which hosted the entire operation."[44]

Very soon, it turned out that the Triton mission was ineffective in managing the mixed migration flows, both refugee and economic migrants using the same routes while the drowning cases and fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea continued to be countless. While the EU operations at sea have increasingly focused on combating migrant smuggling and border surveillance, and existing so limited opportunities for safe and regular migration, the NGOs intervened to fill in the gap left after the end of the Mare Nostrum operation by sending rescue vessels to the unpatrolled areas for saving lives in the sea. In fact, since the launching of operation Mare Nostrum in October 2013, the Italian government accepted the disembarkation of all migrants rescued offshore Libya in its territory.[45]

Since late 2014, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have started actively pursuing search and rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean. Their operations focused on activity close to the Libyan coast with larger vessels conducting fully-fledged search and rescue operations, picking up migrants, and bringing them to Italian ports. Smaller NGOs focused exclusively

---

[43] Naina Bajekal, *Italy to End Naval Operation That Rescued Thousands of Migrants* in "Time", 28 October 2014, in *https://time.com/3543082/italy-navy-mare-nostrum-migrants/*

[44] \*\*\* *Immigrazione, Alfano: "Mare Nostrum e Triton sono due operazioni diverse"* in "Rai news", 22 October 2014 ,https://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Immigrazione-Alfano-Mare-Nostrum-e-Triton-sono-due-operazioni-diverse-695e3ae3-bd26-4cd0-b4e8-4ffe1a648d48.html?refresh_ce

[45] Eugenio Cusumano, *Humanitarians at sea: Selective emulation across migrant rescue NGOs in the Mediterranean sea* in "Contemporary Security Policy", vol. 40, 2019, p. 241, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13523260.2018.1558879?needAccess=true.

on rescuing, distributing life jackets and emergency medical care, and relying on the larger vessels to transport migrants into Italian ports.

Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), a Maltese foundation created by an Italian–American couple in 2014, was the first who launched a rescue operation (the Phoenix vessel). The mission had to be stopped after two months because of financial constraints, but in 2015 the Amsterdam operational center of the medical-humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) allowed MOAS to resume activities by providing the necessary funding and the medical staff. In the same year, the MSF operational centers of Barcelona and Brussels (the latter also including Rome), as well as Sea-Watch, a German association created by private citizens in 2014, set up their vessel: the Dignity I, the Bourbon Argos, and the Sea-Watch, respectively.[46]

In 2015, the three organizations rescued 20,063 of the 152,3432 migrants who were brought to Italy after being found in the Central Mediterranean. After the winter break, they all resumed SAR activities in 2016, with some changes regarding both the partnerships and the vessels: Sea-Watch replaced the old boat with a larger one (the Sea-Watch 2); MOAS ended its cooperation with MSF and launched its third SAR season with two ships (the Phoenix and the Responder), in partnership with the Italian Red Cross; MSF, besides running the Bourbon Argos and the Dignity I, also provided the medical staff for the ship set up by another association, SOS Méditerranée. Also, other NGOs decided to engage in SAR operations in the Central Mediterranean that year. Thus, the number of nongovernmental SAR vessels rose from 4 in 2015 to 13 in 2016, while the number of people rescued reached 46,796 (out of a total of 178,415).[47]

Although they have provided a crucial contribution to rescuing migrants at sea, the NGOs became the targets for accusations of being another pull factor for

---

[46] Paolo Cuttita, *Repoliticization Through Search and Rescue? Humanitarian NGOs and Migration Management in the Central Mediterranean* in "Geopolitics," no. 23 (3), pp. 632-633, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14650045.2017.1344834?needAccess=true
[47] Ibidem.

migrants. SAR NGOs were attacked by European authorities as well. Allegations made by Frontex were followed by a series of public statements made by the public prosecutor of Catania, Carmelo Zuccaro, in early 2017. Zuccaro declared that NGOs operating next to Libyan waters act as a **pull factor** and were responsible for the use of increasingly unseaworthy vessels by smugglers. He also denounced the lack of cooperation of NGOs with police authorities and said some of them might not only have collaborated with smugglers (and even directly financed by them) but also have hidden political aims such as destabilizing the Italian economy through the mass influx of migrants.[48]

In 2017, the Democratic Party Interior Minister Marco Minniti urged NGOs to sign a code of conduct that imposed several limitations on rescuing operations and threatened the closure of the Italian ports to non-signatory organizations. The NGO vessels were required to i) stay out of Libyan waters, except in situations of serious and imminent danger; ii) not interfere with the activity of the Libyan Coast Guard; iii) not send any communications to facilitate the departure of boats carrying migrants, and riskier Italian police officers to be onboard of their vessels. Seven out nine NGOs refused to sign the code of conduct, putting their vessels at risk of confiscation by the Italian authorities.[49]

Moreover, the EU started training the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy in October 2016, and in 2017, EU leaders agreed on new measures to reduce irregular migration along the Central Mediterranean Sea. In line with the Malta declaration, the EU offered priority to the provision of training, equipment, and other support, with priority given to the Libyan Coastguard and Navy and other relevant legitimate Libyan agencies, under the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement.[50]

---

[48] Paolo Cuttita, *op.cit.* pp. 648-649;  The first precedent of criminalizing humanitarianism in the recent crisis was set by the Greek authorities. In January 2017 they arrested five rescuers who had been saving lives in the Aegean.
http://www.mangiatoridicervello.com/2018/05/18/immigrazione-il-caso-zuccaro-e-la-propaganda-xenofoba/
[49] https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/codice_condotta_ong.pdf;
[50] *** Council of the European Union, M*alta Declaration by the members of the European Council on the external aspects of migration: addressing the Central Mediterranean route* in ttps://sem.gov.mt//wp-content/uploads/2018/05/malta-declaration.pdf.

To leave more room for the intervention of Libyan patrol boats, Frontex and EUnavfor Med vessels gradually retracted from the southern part of their operational areas in the summer of 2016. As a result, the share of people rescued by governmental vessels dropped from 80.1% in the period January–May to 60.9% in the period June–December.[51]

At the same time, a Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya signed on 2 February 2017 agreed that Italy would work with Libya's military and border control forces "to stem the influx of illegal migrants", thereby preventing migrants – as well as refugees – from reaching Europe. The Italian strategy was part of a broader European approach, and indeed was endorsed the very next day by European leaders, as we have seen, in the "Malta Declaration."[52]

These new approaches enhanced the Libyan authorities to intercept the boats easily not only in Libyan national waters but also in international waters, and drive the passengers back to a Libyan port, turning a SAR operation into a forced return (a series of incidents from the Libyan authorities against SAR NGOs occurred in international waters, for example in April 2016, while the Sea-Watch was carrying out a SAR operation, it was boarded by Libyan officials, who shot in the air and claimed the NGO vessel was not allowed to be there). The non-governmental organizations operating in the Mediterranean Sea have documented aggressive behavior by the Libyan coast guard towards SAR NGOs[53]

In summer 2017, Italy started to ask for the opening of the ports of the other European states in the face of the migrant emergency, and to revise the operational concept of Triton. The initial Triton Operational Plan agreed and signed with the Italian authorities, provided for Italy to be the host country "of the mission" As such, the rescued migrants during the search and rescue activities as part of the

---

[51] Paolo Cuttita, *op.cit,* p. 648.
[52] https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2017/02/02/news/migranti_accordo_italia-libia_ecco_cosa_contiene_in_memorandum-157464439/
[53]  Paolo Cuttita, *op.cit,* p. 646; https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/11/29/italia-libia-migranti-accordo

Triton operation had to be brought only to the Italian ports. The same rule was applied also for the Poseidon operation conducted by Greece, or the Indalo operation led by Spain.[54]

From Frontex headquarters, the spokeswoman for the EU agency, Ewa Moncure, repeated that all the activities of Triton were coordinated by the Italian Coast Guard, which decided how to distribute the assets; Italian officers were always present on all ships and helicopters participating in the operation, and Triton operated on behalf of the Italian borders:

> "The Triton operational plan says that Italy is the host country of the mission. If any other state wanted to join, from a theoretical point of view the possibility would exist. But it seems to be a very complicated scenario, also because the activities are all led by the Italian Coast Guard.[55]

In February 2018, the European Union's border agency Frontex launched a new Mediterranean operation called Themis, removing the obligation of the previous mission to bring rescued migrants only to Italy.[56]

Themis was different from its predecessor Triton, in its mandate, in the setting of the operational area, in its security component, and in the possible ports in which to disembark migrants.

More than 600,000 refugees have landed in Italy between 20114-2018. The Triton operation saw the material support of 26 European nations and contributed to saving about 85,000 men and women in search and rescue operations.[57]

---

[54] https://www.csem.org.br/noticias/migranti-frontex-apre-alla-revisione-dell-operazione-triton/
[55] https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2017/07/11/news/triton-e-una-missione-dell-italia-non-tocca-a-noi-cambiare-regole-1.34449831
[56] https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-idUSKBN1FL62M
[57] Alessandra Giada Dibenedetto, *L'operazione Themis e il suo significato per l'Italia* in "Centro Studi Internazionali", Marzo 2018, p. 3,
https://www.cesi-italia.org/contents/Loperazione%20Themis%20impaginato%20Ita.pdf

**Conclusions**

This article underlined the sensitive nature of Frontex, getting involved in extensive SAR activities. JO Triton was launched in response to large-scale migration from Libya, intending to support the Italian efforts in combating the illegal migration. Triton was primarily a border control mission and it had no official SAR mandate. Also, did not replace or substitute Italian obligations in monitoring and surveying the Schengen external borders and in guaranteeing full respect of EU and international obligations. The mission, however, remained primarily focused on management border control rather than SAR operations. Finally, the confrontation between Italy and the European partners over the disembarking of migrants only in Italian ports alone has led to the replacement of the mission after four years of activity.

# Migration flows in the European Union.

# Perspectives on the integration of the migrants

**Victor Nicolăescu[*]**

**Key-words**: migrants, social inclusion, poverty, labor, education.

**Abstract**

*The consequences of the EU flows of migration recorded before the pandemic COVID - 19 indicated different expectations for the destination countries based on the need to harmonize two opposite European pressure vectors: one vector is to reduce the negative demographic trends and the other is to create better conditions for all persons to participate to social security and welfare mechanism. Adoption of the rates of migrants reflected a mechanism that requires deepening and reconsidering the dimensions of the social and economic inclusion integrative process of the migrants. Thus, given the diversity of the various approaches at the European level to achieve a balance in demographic policies perspective the article highlights the costs and benefits of an endurance process that aims inclusion of migrants at the local level. Complementary, the social and economic inclusion*

[*] PhD in Sociology, Professor, "Petre Andrei" University, and University of Bucharest.

*of migrants is a significant challenge for the Member States of the European Union, meaning that the article analyzes the importance of different indicators favorable to positively integrate the migrants. In this respect, the article outlines the progress, the recent measures implemented and the results recorded by the destination countries which are targeted by the migration flows and the best practices recorded so far. It also summarizes the main directions of valorization and dissemination of policies, strategies, and measures taken for the integration of the migrants in the European Union Member States. Social and economic inclusion at the local level of this category of vulnerable people indicates multiple challenges but also creates significant opportunities aimed to test and validate the fundamental European system articulated by the principles of justice, freedom, and security.*

**The context of migratory flows in the European Union - recent trends and strategic approaches**

Recent refugees and migrants registered in Europe reached an unprecedented post-war level in the decade 2010-2020: in 2015, more than one million people migrated to Europe, outlining the most complex refugee crisis Europe has ever experienced from World War II. Of course, migratory flows at the European level should be explained based on at least three effects of this phenomenon: effects of migration on the country of origin, on the population of the target country, and on the migrants.[1]

---

[1] Victor Nicolăescu, *Formation Of The New Romanian Communities* in "Journal of Community Positive Practices", 4(XII), 2011, p. 114.

In 2008, the Clandestino project estimated that the number of illegal migrants in the EU was between 1.9 and 3.8 million, and according to data provided by Eurostat, between 2008 and 2014, 3.6 million people were detained as illegal residents in the EU. Immigrant integration policies and measures do not include non-EU citizens living in the EU illegally, even if they are particularly exposed to the risk of exploitation and discrimination.[2]

The number of non-EU citizens living in EU Member States on 1 January 2015 was 19.8 million, representing 3.9% of the EU-28 population, according to Eurostat. This figure increased to 20.8 million people, representing 4.1% of the total EU-28 population, as of January 1, 2016. Also, the number of those living in an EU Member State, but were born outside the EU, was 34.3 million people on 1 January 2015 and increased to 35.1 million by 1 January 2016.[3]

At the beginning of 2019, there were 35 million migrants in the EU, of which 13 million were mobile EU citizens living outside their country of citizenship, and 22 million were third-country nationals living outside the EU. In 2019, 2.9 million people received residence permits for the EU-27, an increase from 2.8 million in 2018. Of those who came from third countries outside the EU in 2019, 41% did this with a work permit, 27% for family purposes, and 14% for education.[4]

The number of people seeking asylum in the EU Member States each year has fluctuated over the last decade. In 2019 there were 632,000 applications, which

---

[2] ***European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Together in the EU Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants.* Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2017, p. 15.

[3] ***I*ntegrating refugees and migrants through education building bridges in divided societie*s, LLLPlatform Position Paper September 2016, available at http://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/LLL-Platform-Policy-Paper-Refugees-and-migrants-and-inclusive-education-Sept-2016.pdf

[4] ***European Commission, Joint Research Centre, *Atlas of Migration 2020,* Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2020, p. 11.

was considerably higher than the 185,000 applications registered in 2010, but significantly lower than the more than one million applications submitted in both 2015 and 2016. The OECD examined data from several selected countries for which it is available and showed how the number of residence permits granted by OECD countries in the first half of 2020 decreased by 46% compared to the same period in 2019.[5]

From the perspective of compliance with international regulations, it is important to note that each Member State of the European Union has ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and has thus adopted the humanitarian values enshrined in this act.

The mandate of the European Union (EU) to promote the integration of third-country nationals was strengthened after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (2009). Thus, in accordance with Article 79 (4) of the Treaty, a legal basis has been provided for the first time to promote EU integration: "The European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may lay down measures to provide incentives and support for action by the Member States to promote the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in their territories, to the exclusion of any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States." In addition, a number of provisions in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights are identified that apply to all people living in the EU, including third-country nationals. Such a common policy framework can further strengthen the coordination of EU-wide integration policies - which has been identified as a concern since the 2004 Council Conclusions on Common Core Principles for Immigrant Integration.

---

[5] ***OECD, *International Migration Outlook*, Paris, OECD Publishing, 2020.

While a mandate to promote integration as well as to support and coordinate Member States' efforts to integrate third-country nationals is clearly highlighted in European regulations, the responsibility for the effective implementation of relevant strategies, measures, and actions lies with the Member States. In this regard, in order to provide an implementation of this perspective, the European Commission published on 6 June 2016 an action plan on the integration of third-country nationals, which provides a common policy framework describing policy, operational and financial support on which the Commission will provide to support Member States' efforts.[6]

Moreover, this approach to cooperation at the Member State level is recognized by pointing out the negative consequences: "The failure of an individual Member State to develop and implement a successful integration policy may in different ways have negative implications for the other Member States and the European Union. ...] This can have an impact on the economy and labor market participation, undermine respect for human rights and the commitment of Europeans to fulfill their international obligations towards refugees and others in need of international protection, and can lead to alienation and tensions within society. (European Commission, 2016)".[7]

Beyond the legal obligation of Member States to protect refugees, various approaches have been implemented to intensify efforts to integrate and empower

[6] ***European Commission, *Communication on the Action Plan on the Integration of third-country nationals, COM (2016) 377 final*, Brussels, 7 June 2016.

[7] ***Council of the European Union (2004). 2618th Council Meeting, Justice and Home Affairs, *Council conclusions on immigrant integration policy in the European Union, including Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union*, Brussels, 2004, cited in Press release, 19 November.

these people in the host communities that will become their homes.[8] Moreover, the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council in December 2016, in its conclusions on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU, called on the Member States, inter alia, to provide "opportunities for third-country nationals to actively participate in the civic and cultural life of the Member States, to combat discrimination and segregation, to provide equal opportunities and to promote intercultural dialogue and mutual acceptance between third-country nationals and host societies". By identifying recent migratory trends and the impact of migrants' integration into the EU, the Council also called on the Member States to focus their efforts on "investing in policies that promote the social inclusion of third-country nationals in order to make European societies more prosperous, cohesive and long-term inclusive".[9]

### European perspectives on the integration of migrants

The concept of migrant integration highlights a multitude of definitions and interpretations, which differ significantly from the national context, leading to variations in integration policies and practices. Understood in the broadest sense, the integration of migrants is a complex and multiple process of integration into society that refers to four main landmarks of migrant integration: spatial concentration, language assimilation, socio-economic status, and interethnic marriages. In the sociological analysis, the process of integration of migrants

---

[8] ***I*ntegrating refugees and migrants through education building bridges in divided societies,* LLLPlatform Position Paper September 2016, available at http://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/LLL-Platform-Policy-Paper-Refugees-and-migrants-and-inclusive-education-Sept-2016.pdf.

[9] ***Council of the European Union, Justice and Home Affairs Council, *Council conclusions on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU*, 9 December 2016, n. 15312/16.

describes the mechanism by which individuals become members of society, trying to highlight their multiple and multifaceted participation in the neighborhood, at work, at school, in the family. In the field of economic interpretations, the prospects for the integration of migrants focus on the market outcomes of migratory flows, such as labor market and labor market performance, tax transfers, income gaps, supply of public goods, attitudes towards work, skills, knowledge or productive assets.[10]

Over the last two decades, debates on migration flows at the European level have led to the recognition of the importance of developing, collecting, and monitoring specific indicators on the participation and socio-economic integration of migrants. In this regard, a first step in raising awareness of the relevance of such indicators is signaled in the Common Basic Principles (adopted on 13.11.2004 by the Justice and Home Affairs Council) which highlights the need to develop clear objectives, indicators, and mechanisms to harmonize policies, assess progress on integration, and achieve a more efficient exchange of information. Subsequently, in 2009 a list of key areas and indicators was defined, based on the Common Basic Principles and EU Indicators of the EU 2020 Strategy, a list that was structured to cover four areas (employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship). Within the four areas, there are indicators considered to be simple to understand, easy to communicate, and comparable for a certain period. Thus, given that their selection was related to the quality and availability of data, 14 key indicators were finally proposed and other indicators were taken into account to be developed and developed in case comparable data were recorded. In the light of developments in

---

[10] Zuzanna Hübschmann, *Migrant Integration Programs: The Case of Germany* in "Global Migration Research Paper", No. 11, Geneva, 2015, pp. 4-6.

migration flows, the European Commission also supports the two-way approach to integration. In its Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy, the European Commission states that integration is "a dynamic and two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of the Member States" (European Commission, 2014).[11]

Common core principles highlight integration as respect for core European values, contributing to the host society through employment, basic knowledge of the language, history, and institutions of the host society, educational efforts, access to public institutions and goods on an equal basis, and discrimination, as well as participation in democratic processes. In addition, the European Commission emphasizes the importance of dialogue between migrants and citizens, the value of cultural and religious diversity, and the need to develop clear objectives, indicators, and evaluation mechanisms in order to make integration more effective.

The process of developing and adopting indicators on the integration of migrants was continued within the specific activities of the Stockholm Program 2010 - 2014, meaning that during the meeting in Zaragoza in 2010 of the ministers responsible for the integration of migrants in the European Union it was agreed that the European Commission to launch a pilot project on the evaluation of migrant integration policies.[12]

---

[11] ***European Commission, *EU Actions to Make Integration Work*, European Web Site on Integration, Updated on 27 December 2014.

[12] ***Council of the European Union, *European Ministerial Conference on Integration, Zaragoza, Declaration, including Annex: Swedish Presidency conference conclusions on indicators and monitoring of the outcome of integration policies*, 16 April 2010.

The purpose of the joint proposals proposed by the Zaragoza Declaration, adopted in April 2010 by EU ministers responsible for the integration of immigrants and approved by the Council for Justice and Home Affairs on 3-4 June 2010 for the integration of migrants, is to support the monitoring of the situation, immigrants and the results of integration policies.[13] As a concrete result, the 2011 Eurostat pilot study highlighted the availability and quality of statistical data supporting 15 indicators, thus publishing an integrative statistical analysis. As mentioned above, indicators have been identified in the following policy areas: employment, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship.

The Zaragoza Declaration also included additional areas and indicators on integration that all or most Member States considered important for monitoring, namely:[14] the share of employees who are overqualified for their jobs; employment; language skills; discrimination experiences; trust in public institutions; the voting presence of the voting population; the sense of belonging.

The Zaragoza indicators have been reconfirmed and it has been decided that other indicators should be analyzed or new areas should be developed (such as awareness and experience of discrimination, acceptance of diversity, trust in public institutions, and a sense of belonging.[15]

The integration of migrants into the European Union is also addressed by using more complex analyzes by the OECD to reflect detailed issues on multiple

---

[13] *Ibidem.*

[14] \*\*\*EC, EUROSTAT, *Indicators of Immigrant Integration A Pilot Study*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011, pp. 10-11.

[15] Thomas Huddleston, Jan Niessen, Jasper Dag Tjaden, *Using EU Indicators of Immigrant Integration. Report prepared for European Commission*, Brussels, 2013, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/general/docs/final_report_on_using_eu_indicators_of_immigrant_integration_june_2013_en.pdf.

levels: socio-demographic characteristics, defining the characteristics of immigrant populations, household characteristics, labor market outcomes, labor quality, adult education, and cognitive skills, household income, housing, health and care, civic engagement and social cohesion.[16]

From the perspective of European approaches, it should be noted that, based on the Zaragoza indicators, analyzes on migrant integration address the achievement of three main objectives for the use of integration indicators: 1) understanding the contexts of integration and the results of migrant integration; 2) evaluation of the results of the applied policies; 3) the inclusion of migrants' integration in general policies.[17]

The indicators presented on the integration of migrants lead us to the conclusion that countries can always learn from the exchange of experiences, and comparative analysis carried out by crossing different indicators can be particularly beneficial for improving policies and diversifying practices in countries highlighting migrants with similar characteristics and with heterogeneous integration challenges.

**Integrating migrants at the European level - focusing on local approaches**
The approach of migration in recent years in analyzes and scientific studies is an approach that requires a rethinking of European policies on the integration of migrants,[18] more specifically to correlate with the global and European reality

---

[16] \*\*\*OECD/European Union (2015). *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015*: *Settling In,* Paris, OECD Publishing, p. 20-21, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264234024-en.

[17] Thomas Huddleston, Jan Niessen, Jasper Dag Tjaden, *op.cit.*

[18] Victor Nicolăescu, *Rethinking Ways to Manage EU Migration – From Development Cooperation with Thirds Countries to Social-Economic Integration of Migrants* in Silviu Nate, Annett Arntzen (eds),

recording new phenomena related to vulnerabilities, risks, social exclusion, and terrorism. Thus, immigration and terrorism were clearly the main concerns at the EU level: at 39% (+1 percentage points since spring 2017) and 38% (-6), respectively, both articles are mentioned more than twice as much more common than any other problem. Although growth is limited (+1), immigration has gained ground for the first time since the fall of 2015, after a 20 percentage point decline between the fall of 2015 and the spring of 2017. After a strong increase between the fall of 2016 and the spring of 2017 (+12), which took terrorism to the top of the rankings for the first time, this concern has now lost a certain point, falling to second place.[19]

In Europe, where opinions have more often indicated negative attitudes, they differ significantly from country to country. Data from the European Social Survey show a fairly stable distribution of attitudes in Europe over time, with Sweden, Denmark and Finland consistently the most positive, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Portugal the most negative, and mixed opinions in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and France (Heath and Richards, 2016).[20]

Similarly, the 2016 Pew survey of ten European countries showed that in eight of the ten, more than half of respondents were concerned about the security

---

"Understanding and Tackling the Migration Challenge: Mapping Options for a Resilient Approach: Proceedings", Bucharest, RAO, 2017, pp. 66-82.

[19] \*\*\* European Union, *Standard Eurobarometer 88 – Autumn 2017* in "Public opinion in the European Union, First results",
https://www.compete2020.gov.pt/admin/images/Standard_Eurobarometer_88_UE_dez-2017.pdf.

[20] Anthony Heath, Lindsay Richards, *Attitudes towards Immigration and their Antecedents: Topline Results from Round 7 of the European Social Survey*, London, European Social Survey ERIC, 2016, https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS7_toplines_issue_7_immigration.pdf

implications of refugee acceptance.[21] Although there is little background evidence linking refugees to recent terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States, the survey findings show the extent to which the link between refugees and migrants has been linked to public concerns and terrorism concerns:

1. Public opinion is not opposed to immigration, but attitudes are becoming increasingly polarized. Public opinion is generally not more negative when it comes to immigration, even in countries with high migration rates. But Europeans are becoming increasingly divided over migration and its effects.

2. The characteristics of migrants matter - highly qualified migrants are considered much more positive than those with fewer skills.

3. Migrants are considered less deserving of social assistance. Migrants are constantly perceived by respondents as less deserving than those described identically by locals, with assessments being influenced by two factors: economic insecurity and prejudices/stereotypes against minorities.[22]

Despite concerns about various vulnerabilities and risks over the last decade, migrants have reflected a significant increase in the European workforce in the context of many European countries facing a shortage of labor in a number of sectors of the economy, including agriculture, construction, hospitality, catering, IT, and financial services, which are partially covered by migrant labor. However, it is estimated that migrants contribute more to taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits, and skilled migrants

---

[21] Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, Katie Simmons, *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs* in Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, Washington DC, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/

[22] **European Parliament, *Attitudes towards immigration in Europe: myths and realities,* 19 June 2017, https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/IE_Handout_FINAL.pdf.

contribute more to the host country than to the local population, as the host country does not bear the costs of their training and education. The solutions adopted in the destination countries offer the framework to identify the most effective mechanisms for ensuring the reduction of social exclusion of migrants and to share these evidences with other active factors in this field in the European states.[23]

Recently, a series of proposals, recommendations, and solutions for a greater coherence between migration and development policies are highlighted: the protection of migrants' rights in the field of human rights; authorization of dual citizenship; the inclusion of migrants in the policy-making process; moving from a project to an approach process; promoting education for research and development.[24]

From the perspective of the costs of integrating migrants, an attempt is made to highlight the multitude of funding instruments for programs aimed at achieving inclusion objectives, but without a quantification of the distribution of funding needs at the level of the analyzed dimensions or at the level of European agreed indicators. Of course, it is obvious that first of all there is an overlap in the interventions in the plan of migrants' integration and for this reason, the difficulty of such multidimensional estimates is configured. Also, a significant aspect refers to the fact that the realities of the financing of interventions for the inclusion of

---

[23] Victor Nicolăescu, Gabriela Petre, *The European Union measures taken to prevent and manage the recent migration flows – from survival to social and economic integration of migrants* in "CES Working Papers", Volume IX, Issue 4, 2017, p. 562.

[24] Marlene Keusch, Nadja Schuster, *European Good Practice Examples of Migration and Development Initiatives with a Particular Focus on Diaspora Engagement,* Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation, 2012, pp. 54-55,
https://www.mirovniinstitut.si/data/tinymce/Projekti/comide_lana/CoMiDe_European%20Good%20Practice%20Study-screen.pdf

migrants are registered in different levels, planned and implemented in a difficult process to follow in the transfers made in the local – national - European route.

At the European Union level, four main types of funding for activities to support asylum seekers and refugees in the European financial year 2014-2020 are identified:

1. European Social Fund (ESF) - according to Regulation N°1304/2013, the ESF's main mission is to improve the employment opportunities    of    the workers living in the Union;

2. Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) – according to Regulation N°223/2014 has the specific objective to alleviate the worst forms of poverty in the EU such as homelessness, child poverty, and food deprivation and in this way contribute to eradicating poverty in the Union in line with the Europe 2020 strategy;

3. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) – has aimed at strengthening and developing all aspects of the Common European Asylum System, by supporting actions which can relate to the different stages of the asylum procedure and to the different aspects of the asylum policies (reception conditions, asylum procedure);

4. European Regional Development Fund 2014-2020 and Territorial Cooperation – ERDF 2014-2020 included an Urban Innovative Actions programme with the topic of migration and EU Territorial Cooperation

(ETC. Interreg V in the period 2014-20) funded mainly by the ERDF would cover migration management and mostly socioeconomic integration.[25]

At the local level, explicit integration efforts by governments are highlighted in view of income inequalities, employment, and the perception of economic underperformance of migrants, insufficient language skills, and social assistance costs. Immigrants usually have higher unemployment rates and lower wages compared to citizens, a situation that persists beyond the first generation for both men and women. Therefore, social, linguistic, and cultural integration can be a catalyst for economic integration and both can strengthen each other.[26]

The integration of migrants, measured in terms of labor market participation and income outcomes, is dependent on increasing their level of education which has the potential to produce positive effects in the socio-economic integration of the second generation of migrants. In this regard, appropriate policy interventions should be applied to promote transitions in the workplace in schools and the optimal allocation of their human capital for economic and social development in the near future.[27]

Germany offers the largest migrant integration program in the EU, which is available to a wide range of newcomers, including EU citizens, a program that focuses on language acquisition as well as cultural, historical, and political training elements.[28]

---

[25] ***CPRM, *Background note. Funds that can be used to support actions targeting migration,* Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, 2016,
http://www.crpm.org/pub/agenda/3020_background_note_-_migration_funds.pdf

[26] Zuzanna Hübschmann, *op.cit*, pp. 7-8.

[27] Anna Di Bartolomeo, Rezart Hoxhaj, Alessandra Venturini. *Immigrant integration in the EU: Employment, income, and education* in "MEDAM Assessment Report on Asylum and Migration Policies in Europe", Kiel: Institute for World Economy, 2017, pp. 49-50.

[28] Zuzanna Hübschmann, *op.cit.,*p.44.

At the local level, there are a number of positive practices regarding the integration of migrants:

- In France, a solidarity network was set up to exchange good practice on receiving refugees and mobilizing citizens by launching the "European Solidarity Network" in October 2016;

- A very interesting initiative has been developed at the regional level in Scotland, called the "New Scottish Strategy", which aims to coordinate all the efforts of organizations involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers;

- In Luxembourg, the social inclusion process is built around a tool to promote the active involvement of migrants in Luxembourg society - Welcome and Integration Contract offered to all migrants residing in the country on a voluntary basis.[29]

Other approaches through multi-stakeholder cooperation appear to be successful in contributing to refugee inclusion through locally supported educational processes:

- Cities or districts that have a leading role in coordinating local and regional actors (as in Ghent, The Hague, and Antwerp, the Netherlands and Munich, Nuremberg and Berlin, Germany);

- Cooperation between the municipality, NGOs, and volunteers for the provision of informal and informal education (such as in Antwerp and Ghent, Belgium (Flanders), Gothenburg, Sweden, Helsinki, Finland and Hamburg, Germany);

---

[29] ***Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, *Migration as an opportunity for European development*, Doc. 13974, Reference 4196 of 22 April 2016.

• Trade unions working together to provide funding for refugee education and the promotion of the right to education (as in Italy);

• Cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Schools, NGOs, and UNHCR in Romania to identify and meet the needs of refugee students (as in Bulgaria);

• Communication and cooperation with communities and parents to alleviate fears (such as in Antwerp, Belgium (Flanders) and The Hague, the Netherlands, Edinburgh, the United Kingdom, Nuremberg and Berlin, Germany and Athens, Greece).[30]

In order to understand the differences at the state level, one can also consult The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX),[31]which measures the national performance of migrant integration policies in their respective societies. The index analyzes the results of integration in eight main policy areas: labor market mobility, education, and political participation, access to citizenship, family reunification, health, permanent residence, and anti-discrimination. Despite differences between countries in different policy areas, high-performing EU Member States are Sweden, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain, while national policies in Malta, Slovakia, Lithuania, Cyprus, and Latvia show more little support for the integration of migrants into society. Overall, the key conclusions of MIPEX conclude that national policies are more coherent and

---

[30] Claudia Koehler, *Continuity of learning for newly arrived refugee children in Europe NESET II ad hoc question No. 1/2017*, Vilnius, Public Policy and Management Institute, 2017, p. 27, https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Continuity-of-learning-for-newly-arrived-refugee-children-in-Europe.pdf.

[31] https://www.migpolgroup.com/_old/diversity-integration/migrant-integration-policy-index/

sustained for migrant employment, permanent residence, and protection from discrimination, as these issues are governed by common Community law. On the other hand, policies on social services for migrants (especially healthcare and education) and opportunities for political participation show less support for integration and differ significantly between the Member States.

**Conclusions**

At the European level, in the last decade, there have been a number of significant trends in migratory flows due to events in other countries (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan), but also against a background of continuous demographic decline in the Member States. The measures adopted at the level of European structures certainly aimed at limiting migratory flows, but in balance, the emphasis was on identifying mechanisms for the integration of migrants. Certainly, the results of the policies and instruments adopted and used in implementation will require new integrative assessments that will generate the improvement of migrant integration systems, with a focus on the state and local levels.

# Romania's bid to join NATO in the first wave of enlargement: A preliminary assessment based on U.S. documents

**Iulian Toader**[*]

**Keywords**: Romania, NATO enlargement, open door policy, post-Cold War, European security.

## Abstract

*Recent declassified documents from the Clinton library and the Department of State reveal how U.S. policymakers sought to preserve the confidence in NATO's promise of a gradual enlargement after the Cold War, while restricting the first round to a small group of the three strongest candidates, in order to make the process more acceptable to Moscow. Despite meeting the criteria for membership, the Baltics could not immediately join the Alliance because of Russia's opposition. A credible open door policy was therefore essential for avoiding the impression of a Russian veto over NATO decisions. The U.S. approach was to keep for later accession other promising candidates along with the Baltics, aiming to provide an assurance that the first round of enlargement would not also be the last. Short of having the credentials to qualify as a strong candidate, Romania was left in NATO's*

[*] PhD in History, University of Bucharest, former Fulbright scholar.

*waiting room, despite the massive diplomatic efforts of the new government resulted from the 1996 elections.*

"A country that was on no one's NATO radar screen only a year ago, now finds itself at the center of the NATO storm, and is loving every minute of it, à la Brătianu at Versailles".[1] With just a few days ahead of the Madrid summit of July 1997, the U.S. ambassador to Bucharest, Alfred H. Moses, was trying to capture, in his cable to Washington, Romania's final push to be accepted for NATO membership in the first tranche of enlargement.[2] One month prior to the Madrid summit, the Clinton administration had already made public its decision to limit the initial round of NATO expansion to just three new members, the most qualified applicants, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.[3] However, relying on some European support, notably from the French leader Jacques Chirac, the Romanian officials embarked on an effort to reverse the U.S. decision, creating a turmoil in the Atlantic Alliance. The U.S. position ultimately prevailed and Romania saw itself outside NATO for the next years.

The failure to join NATO at Madrid sparked a wave of disillusion in all corners of Romanian society, especially considering the massive amount of hope following the democratic change of government in November 1996. However, did

---

[1] Reference to the efforts of Prime-Minister Ionel Brătianu to secure the recognition of Romania's new borders after WWI at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.

[2] U.S. Embassy Bucharest cable 4204, "President Constantinescu's meeting with Chancellor Kohl", July 3, 1997, Clinton Digital Library (CDL), *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

[3] John F. Harris, William Drozdiak, "Clinton limits initial expansion of NATO to three", *Washington Post*, June 13, 1997.

Romania have a realistic chance to be included in the first wave of NATO enlargement? After all, as Ambassador Moses noted, Romania had less than a year to change perceptions among NATO allies and be considered as a serious contender for admission to the Alliance.

This paper will not attempt to assess Romania's readiness to join NATO in 1997, but will examine the U.S. decision in favor of a restricted first tranche of enlargement, based on newly declassified documents from the Clinton presidency on NATO expansion, especially memoranda of conversation (*memcons*). Notwithstanding the rationale behind it, the U.S. decision did have significant repercussions for Romania's immediate political evolution.

Without a clear perspective of achieving a greater goal such as Euro-Atlantic integration, coupled with the hardships of economic restructuring, the public's trust in democracy and government continued to decrease, fueling domestic political instability, slowing down reforms, and making more radical alternatives acceptable. In a period of three years after the Madrid decision, Romania underwent several episodes of acute internal unrest, culminating with another Mineriad in January 1999, and with one third of the population voting for the nationalist-populist Vadim Tudor in the presidential elections of 2000.

**NATO expansion – between academic debates and policy options**

NATO expansion represents one of the most controversial aspects of post-Cold War European history.[4] Its motives and consequences became a subject of

---

[4] James Goldgeier, Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Evaluating NATO enlargement: scholarly debates, policy implications, and roads not taken", *International Politics*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2020, pp. 291-321. For a recent comprehensive collection of studies on NATO enlargement, from policymakers and

fierce academic debate and examination especially after Russian officials started denouncing Western decisions to expand the Atlantic Alliance as a root cause of tensions in mutual relations. Has the West failed to deliver the promise of building an inclusive new pan-European security system? Was the decision to enlarge NATO a symptom of America's post-Cold War hegemony? Is it correct to assess that the West took advantage of Russia's weakness after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

The questions of NATO expansion and redefinition of post-Cold War European security were widely debated in the 1990s.[5] One of the most prominent critics was the architect of Cold War containment, George F. Kennan, who argued that NATO expansion would have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy, would inflame militaristic and anti-Western tendencies in Russian opinion and would bring up a new era of Cold War atmosphere to East-West relations.[6] Other former high-ranking U.S. officials, such as Zbigniew

---

scholars alike, see Daniel S. Hamilton, Kristina Spohr (eds.), *Open door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic security after the Cold War*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2019.

[5] See Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, F. Stephen Larrabee, "Building a new NATO", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 4, 1993, pp. 28-40; Charles L. Glaser, "Why NATO is still best: future security arrangements for Europe", *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1993, pp. 5-50; Gunther Hellmann, Reinhard Wolf, "Neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and the future of NATO", *Security Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1993, pp. 3-43; John J. Mearsheimer, "The false promise of international institutions", *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1994-1995, pp. 5-49; Michael E. Brown, "The flawed logic of NATO expansion", *Survival*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1995, pp. 34-52; Michael MccGwire, "NATO expansion: `a policy error of historic importance`", *Review of International Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1998, pp. 23-42; John Lewis Gaddis, "History, grand strategy, and NATO enlargement", *Survival*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1998, pp. 145-151.

[6] George F. Kennan, "A fateful error", *New York Times*, February 5, 1997.

Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger, saw enlargement as a tool of avoiding disintegration of the Atlantic Alliance.[7]

Based on solid declassified historical evidence, a new scholarship has emerged in the last decade. One of the most disputed topics is an alleged Western assurance made to Soviet leaders not to expand NATO eastward in the context of negotiations for the reunification of Germany. The controversy first arose in the mid-1990s and is nowadays constantly raised by Vladimir Putin and leading Russian officials in order to validate Kremlin's actions and its military posture as reactions to NATO's deception.[8]

However, critics of this narrative, including many former U.S. policymakers, deny the existence of any such Western commitment and argue that the topic of NATO expansion beyond Germany never came up during the discussions on reunification, as Gorbachev himself recently acknowledged.[9] The "no-eastward" pledge should therefore be viewed only in the context of the German reunification, which meant refraining from moving NATO infrastructure

---

[7] Henry Kissinger, "Expand NATO now", *Washington Post*, December 19, 1994; Zbigniew Brzezinski, "NATO – expand or die", *New York Times*, December 28, 1994.

[8] The controversy also resurfaced before the Madrid summit of 1997. See Michael R. Gordon, "The anatomy of a misunderstanding", *New York Times*, May 25, 1997. For Putin's allegations, see "Speech and the following discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy", February 10, 2007, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034; "Direct line with Vladimir Putin", April 17, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796; "Interview to German newspaper *Bild*", part 1, January 11, 2016, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51154.

[9] See Philip Zelikow, "NATO expansion wasn't ruled out", *International Herald Tribune*, August 10, 1995; George Bush, Brent Scowcroft, *A world transformed*, New York, Vintage Books, 1999, pp. 236-242. For Gorbachev's views, see *New Russia*, Cambridge, UK, Polity Press, 2017, pp. 284-288.

into the former GDR territory, an aspect that was actually codified in the "Two plus Four Agreement" of September 1990.[10]

While extending NATO membership to Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries might not have been an issue of serious thought during the first half of 1990, other authors argue that the Soviet leadership was led to believe that such an evolution would not happen.[11] Moreover, in order to allay concerns about German reunification within NATO, Gorbachev received numerous assurances from Western leaders that Soviet interests would be protected by including the USSR in a comprehensive new European security system.

Gorbachev himself argued that NATO's enlargement had violated the spirit of the statements and assurances made in 1990", despite the absence of a

---

[10] See Mark Kramer, "The myth of a no-NATO-enlargement pledge to Russia", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2009, pp. 39-61; Kristina Spohr, "Precluded or precedent-setting? The `NATO enlargement question` in the triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow diplomacy of 1990–1991", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2012, pp. 4-54. On German reunification, see Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, the end of the Cold War, and German unification*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2009; Alexander von Plato, *The end of the Cold War? Bush, Kohl, Gorbachev, and the reunification of Germany*, translated by Edith Burley, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Also see Part II in Daniel S. Hamilton, Kristina Spohr (eds.), *Exiting the Cold War, entering a new world*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2019.

[11] See the collection of documents by Svetlana Savranskaya and Tom Blanton, "NATO expansion: what Gorbachev heard", *National Security Archive (NSA) Briefing Book* #613, December 12, 2017. U.S. scholar Mary Elise Sarotte goes even further and emphasizes how new declassified evidence demonstrates that "the question of NATO expansion arose early in 1990 and entailed discussions of expansion not only to East Germany but also to Eastern Europe". See Mary E. Sarotte, "Not one inch eastward? Bush, Baker, Kohl, Genscher, Gorbachev, and the origin of Russian resentment toward NATO enlargement in February 1990", *Diplomatic History*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2010, pp. 119-140; Mary E. Sarotte, "A broken promise? What the West really told Moscow about NATO expansion", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 5, 2014, pp. 90-97. Also see the exchange between Mark Kramer and Mary E. Sarotte, "No such promise", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 6, 2014, pp. 208-209.

formal deal.[12] While the Soviets expected the crafting of a mutual acceptable new European order after the end of the Cold War, the result was a NATO-centric security framework which ensured the continued U.S. preeminence in Europe.[13] As one author argues: "the United States did not formally commit to forgo NATO expansion, but its efforts throughout 1990 to engage the Soviet Union implied the existence of a non-expansion deal", which constitutes part of the "spirit" of the 1990 debates.[14]

At the same time, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union created a new geopolitical reality and a security vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe. The first ones to start agitating for closer relations with NATO were the Eastern Europeans themselves, with the strongest voices coming especially from the countries later known as the Visegrad Group (Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia).[15] Their calls for membership began to intensify

[12] Mikhail Gorbachev, *New Russia…*, p. 287.

[13] For more comprehensive overviews, see Mary E. Sarotte, *1989: the struggle to create post–Cold War Europe*, rev. ed., Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2014; Jeffrey A. Engel, *When the world seemed new: George H. W. Bush and the end of the Cold War*, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2017; William H. Hill, *No place for Russia: European security institutions since 1989*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2018; Timothy Sayle, *Enduring alliance: a history of NATO and the postwar global order*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2019, chapter 10; Kristina Spohr, *Post wall, post square: rebuilding the world after 1989*, New Heaven, Yale University Press, 2020. Also see Marie-Pierre Rey, "Europe is our common home: a study of Gorbachev's diplomatic concept", *Cold War History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2004, pp. 33–65.

[14] Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Deal or no deal? The end of the Cold War and the U.S. offer to limit NATO expansion", *International Security*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2016, pp. 7-44. For critiques of his approach, see Correspondence with Richard W. Maass, "NATO non-expansion and German reunification", *International Security*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2016/2017, pp. 197-200 and Correspondence with Mark Kramer, "NATO enlargement – was there a promise?", *International Security*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2017, pp. 186-192.

[15] Mary E. Sarotte, "The convincing call from Central Europe: let us into NATO", *Foreign Affairs*, 12 March 2019.

soon thereafter, recognizing U.S. security guarantees as beneficial to the democratic and economic development of their countries, but also fearing the resurgence of Russian power. "Rejoining the West had been an important leitmotif of the revolutions of 1989", as one author has underscored.[16]

Speculation about the role of NATO in Central and Eastern Europe also began early in the first months of 1990 among top policymakers in Washington. Based on previous success, they saw NATO expansion as an opportunity to prevent instability and to consolidate democracy and free markets.[17] Moreover, after securing the German reunification, U.S. and German officials began to take actions to prevent other alternative European structures to emerge as competitors to NATO and to maintain the Atlantic Alliance as the central pillar of a new European security architecture, under American leadership.[18]

The Persian Gulf War shifted foreign policy priorities in Washington. However, debates around the future of NATO and the new European security system continued. The Bush administration started to slowly open up NATO and to offer CEE countries a perspective of closer association. By the Rome summit of November 1991, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was developed

[16] Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's door: how the Alliance remade itself for a new era*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 11.

[17] Paul van Hooft, "Land rush: American grand strategy, NATO enlargement, and European fragmentation", *International Politics*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2020, pp. 530-553.

[18] Mary E. Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. preeminence the 1990 deals to `bribe the Soviets out` and move NATO in", *International Security*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2010, pp. 110-137. Also see Daniel Deudney, G. John Ikenberry "The unraveling of the Cold War settlement", *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 6, 2009, pp. 39-62; Mary E. Sarotte, "In victory, magnanimity: US foreign policy, 1989–1991, and the legacy of prefabricated multilateralism", *International Politics*, vol. 48, no. 4-5, 2011, pp. 482-495; Vojtech Mastny, "Eastern Europe and the early prospects for EC/EU and NATO membership", *Cold War History*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2009, pp. 203-221.

as a framework for institutional dialogue with the CEE countries.[19] By the end of its term, there was already a large consensus inside the Bush administration around the necessity of opening the Alliance's door.[20]

Critics of NATO enlargement argue that it created a new dividing line between Russia and the West in post-Cold War Europe by increasing the security dilemma.[21] However, there is no substantive evidence to argue that if the U.S. had decided not to extend its influence into Eastern Europe, Russia would have reciprocated restraint.[22] The Russian rhetoric attempts to legitimize its actions in Georgia or Ukraine as pushbacks for Western decisions to expand its influence further towards Russia's borders.[23] Nothing, however, justifies aggression.

Moreover, Euro-Atlantic integration was the leading foreign policy goal for most CEE countries. Rejecting their calls would have meant a disregard for the Western principle of freely choosing one's alliance, enshrined in the Helsinki Final

---

[19] Stephan Kieninger, "Opening NATO and engaging Russia: NATO's two tracks and the establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council", in D. Hamilton, K. Spohr (eds.), *Open door…*, pp. 57-69.

[20] Liviu Horovitz, "The George H.W. Bush administration's policies vis-à-vis Central Europe: from cautious encouragement to cracking open NATO's door", *Ibidem*, pp. 71-92. Joshua Shifrinson goes further than Horovitz and argues that Washington policymakers were even taking active steps to enact the policy of NATO expansion. See Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Eastbound and down: The United States, NATO enlargement, and suppressing the Soviet and Western European alternatives, 1990–1992", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 43, no. 6-7, 2020, pp. 816-846.

[21] For a recent perspective, see Rajan Menon, William Ruger, "NATO enlargement and US grand strategy: a net assessment", *International Politics*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2020, pp. 371-400.

[22] Andrey A. Sushentsov, William C. Wohlforth, "The tragedy of US–Russian relations: NATO centrality and the revisionists' spiral", *International Politics*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2020, pp. 427-450.

[23] The most prominent advocate of this view is political scientist and offensive realist John J. Mearsheimer. See "Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 5, 2014, pp. 77-89. Some authors argue that Putin's regime actually understands that geographic enlargement made NATO weaker and magnifies its negative reactions only for domestic political interests. See, Kimberly Marten, "NATO enlargement: evaluating its consequences in Russia", *International Politics*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2020, pp. 401-426.

Act of 1975, and a *de facto* continuation of Europe's division along former Cold War lines.[24] "NATO enlargement was driven by demand, not supply", as one author highlights.[25]

**NATO expansion – whether, how, when, and who**

Soon after taking office, policymakers inside the Clinton administration started to build upon the work of their predecessors.[26] Facing mounting pressures from the Eastern European leaders, U.S. officials debated whether, how, and when to enlarge NATO.[27] The first strategic document defining the U.S. policy towards Central and Eastern Europe identified "economic and political challenges associated with domestic reform" as "chief threats" to security and stability in the region. Moreover, any perception of a security vulnerability could have undermined "democrats and reformers while strengthening the position of demagogues and conservative nationalists". American leadership was needed to ensure the vacuum was filled with "values, economic practices and systems of governance compatible with, not hostile to, fundamental Western interests". The stakes were high: "building a post-Cold War Europe characterized by stability and

---

[24] Michael Rühle, "NATO enlargement and Russia: myths and realities", *NATO Review*, July 1, 2014.

[25] Kirk Bennett, "What Gorbachev did not hear", *The American Interest*, March 12, 2018.

[26] Stephen J. Flanagan, "NATO from liaison to enlargement: A perspective from the State Department and the National Security Council 1990–1999", in D. Hamilton, K. Spohr (eds.), *Open door…*, pp. 93-114.

[27] Mary E. Sarotte, "How to enlarge NATO? The debate inside the Clinton Administration, 1993–95", *International Security*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2019, pp. 7-41.

prosperity" through "consolidation of a market-oriented, democratic zone, in the center of Europe and the extension of Western values and institutions eastward".[28]

The implications for Russia were a strong factor in designing the strategy. Clinton and his aides were preoccupied with the instability in Russia, especially after a constitutional crisis in the autumn of 1993 that threatened Boris Yeltsin's position. Clinton was committed to engaging Russia and supporting Yeltsin's reformist faction inside the Russian government.[29]

After declaring in Warsaw over a few drinks that an eventual Polish membership in NATO was not contrary to Russia's interest, Yeltsin immediately started to backtrack and, in a letter to Clinton, he argued for a "truly pan-European security system". He warned that NATO expansion would be perceived in Russia "as a sort of neo-isolation of our country" and raised for the first time the issue about the "spirit" of the "Two plus Four Agreement", which precluded "the option of expanding the NATO zone into the East".[30]

While Russia was asserting its position, the Clinton administration had no consensus on the pace of NATO enlargement. Anthony Lake and his team at the National Security Council favored an explicit commitment, but there were enough proponents of incremental steps, especially at the Pentagon, out of concern of

---

[28] Presidential Review Directive/NSC – 36, "U.S. policy toward Central and Eastern Europe", July 5, 1993, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning Presidential Review Directive 36 (PRD 36)*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16201.

[29] See a collection of selective documents, Svetlana Savranskaya, Mary Sarotte, "The Clinton-Yeltsin relationship in their own words", *NSA Briefing Book* #640, October 2, 2018.

[30] Department of State (State) cable 309943, "Retranslation of Yeltsin letter on NATO expansion", October 9, 1993, doc. 4 in S. Savranskaya, T. Blanton, "NATO expansion: what Yeltsin heard", *NSA Briefing Book* #621, March 16, 2018; Also see Roger Cohen, "Yeltsin opposes expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe", *New York Times*, October 2, 1993.

damaging relations with Russia and of eroding the position of democratic forces within the Russian government.[31] The resources needed to extend security guarantees to new countries with poor military capacities and infrastructure were also a factor to be considered.

The resulting compromise was the Partnership for Peace (PfP), an instrument enabling practical bilateral cooperation with non-NATO countries on a wide-range of activities, including joint exercises and military reform, tailored to every partner's ambition. PfP was not excluding future membership, and was designed more as a tool to ease pressures and delay a definitive decision. When Secretary of State Warren Christopher presented the idea of PfP to Yeltsin, the Russian leader was delighted and compared it with "the stroke of a genius". "There could be no recommendation to ignore or exclude Russia from full participation in the future security of Europe", Christopher argued to Yeltsin.[32]

It is not clear what Yeltsin understood from Christopher's message, but apparently, after the meeting, he concluded that NATO expansion was abandoned. Although Christopher claims that his message pointed out that PfP will lead to gradual expansion of NATO, and "alcohol fumes" might have impeded Yeltsin from understanding this essential aspect, other authors argue that the Secretary of State lead the Russian President and Foreign Minister Kozyrev to believe that PfP was an "alternative to NATO expansion, rather than a precursor

---

[31] Jenonne Walker, "Enlarging NATO: The initial Clinton years", in D. Hamilton, K. Spohr (eds.), *Open door…*, pp. 263-276.

[32] SECTO cable 17027 from USDEL Secretary in Ukraine, "Secretary Christopher's meeting with President Yeltsin, 10/22/93, Moscow", October 25, 1993, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

to it".[33] Nevertheless, Christopher's position was clear. In a meeting between Clinton and the Italian Prime Minister, Christopher insisted "the Alliance must thrust eastward" and that "we must manage NATO expansion in a way that does not isolate Russia".[34]

The PfP was launched at the Brussels NATO summit, in early January 1994. In the communiqué, Allied leaders welcomed NATO's eastward expansion, "as part of an evolutionary process, taking into account political and security developments in the whole of Europe".[35] The PfP was therefore a first step in a broader process that in the long-term was going to lead to NATO expansion. The phraseology was deliberately left ambiguous so that both the adherents and the opponents of a clear commitment to enlargement could interpret it according to their own views.

Most of the CEE countries were disappointed with the results of the NATO summit because they saw PfP as a "second-class waiting room" for membership. Clinton and his aides were nonetheless devoted to continue the process. After the summit, he went to Prague to meet the leaders of the Visegrad countries and assured them "the question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members

---

[33] See S. Savranskaya, T. Blanton, "NATO expansion: what Yeltsin heard", *National Security Archive Briefing Book* #621, March 16, 2018. Also, see James Goldgeier, "Promises made, promises broken? What Yeltsin was told about NATO in 1993 and why it matter", *War on the Rocks*, July 12, 2016.

[34] Memcon, "Meeting with Prime Minister Carlo Ciampi of Italy", Oval Office, September 17, 1993, 11:15 am – 12:15 pm, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/57563.

[35] "Partnership for Peace: Invitation Document", Press Release M-1(1994) 002, Brussels, January 11, 1994, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24468.htm.

but when and how".[36] Clinton conferred with the Czech President Vaclav Havel that PfP establishes "a track that will lead to NATO membership" and it would "not draw another line dividing Europe a few hundred miles east".[37]

Similarly, in his one-on-one meeting with Yeltsin at the Kremlin, Clinton presented the merits of the PfP as achieving "something that has never been done since the rise of the nation state itself – a Europe truly integrated and not divided".[38] "Talk of PfP as a possible cloak for NATO expansion causes difficulties" for Russia, cautioned Kozyrev. "Russia was a great power and wanted to be treated differently from countries like Bulgaria or Romania", added the Russian Foreign Minister.[39] "Russia has to be the first country to join NATO", "then the others from Central and Eastern Europe can come in", was Yeltsin's wishful thinking about the future of NATO and European security.[40]

On the other hand, the CEE leaders were not satisfied with holding room status. Polish President Lech Walesa was the most flamboyant. "The West should use the window of opportunity it has to expand its security bulwark eastward", he

---

[36] "The President's News Conference with Visegrad Leaders in Prague", January 12, 1994, *Public Papers of the President of the United States: William J. Clinton: 1994*, Book 1, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995, p. 40.

[37] Memcon, "The President's meeting with Czech leaders", Prague Castle, January 11, 1994, doc. 11 in S. Savranskaya, T, Blanton, "NATO expansion: what Yeltsin heard", *NSA Briefing Book* #621, March 16, 2018.

[38] Memcon, "One-on-One Meeting with President Boris Yeltsin of Russia", The Kremlin, January 13, 1994, , CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning President Clinton's Trip to Europe in January 1994*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/58577.

[39] SECTO cable 10019 from USDEL Secretary, "Secretary Christopher's January 13 meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev", January 16, 1994, Department of State, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), doc. no. C06548784, case no. M-2017-11651.

[40] U.S. Embassy Moscow cable 1457, "President's dinner with President Yeltsin – January 14, 1994", January 20, 1994, FOIA, doc. no. C06694488, case no. F-2017-13804.

thought. "It is only a matter of time before Russia recovers from its current chaos and reverts to historical type, dominating and occupying neighboring countries", added Walesa.[41]

It soon became apparent that the U.S. policy of preserving an inclusive partnership with Yeltsin's Russia while also securing the Western aspirations of the Central and East Europeans was not sustainable. Russia wanted to be America's equal and to establish a condominium to ensure world peace, a status that instead would have eroded the security of the CEE countries, who feared a resurgence of Russian imperialism and a return of great power politics based on spheres of influence. It was an implicit but sober realization that a new NATO-centric European security system was emerging, with no place for Russia in it. Soon, Yeltsin and the Kremlin elite started an active pushback on the idea of NATO expansion, particularly in the context of Yeltsin's quest for domestic legitimacy, the Russian leader seeking to be perceived as a defender of the national interest against the Western "neo-containment".[42]

Clinton was still determined to accommodate Russia as much as possible without giving it a veto over NATO expansion. During their Washington summit of September 1994, Clinton told Yeltsin "there was no timetable for NATO expansion". Therefore, "the Russians came away with the impression that expansion was at least a few years away, probably not before 2000".[43]

---

[41] U.S. Embassy Warsaw cable 5044, "A glass half full in Warsaw", April 11, 1994, FOIA, doc. no. C06697081, case no. F-2017-13804.

[42] Sergey Radchenko, "Nothing but humiliation for Russia: Moscow and NATO's eastern enlargement, 1993-1995", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 43, no. 6-7, 2020, pp. 769-815.

[43] State cable 266647, "Official-Informal no. 62", October 1, 1994, FOIA, doc. no. C06546022, case no. M-2017-11537.

The year 1994 also witnessed a major shift in the American political landscape. Running on a platform that also endorsed NATO enlargement, the Republicans managed to get control of both Houses of Congress. This new political development increased the pressure on Clinton to discard the "phased approach" and to move decisively towards "full expansion", meaning Article 5 guarantees for new members.[44]

The NSC thinking was to keep as a long-term objective the development of "an integrated and inclusive security system for Europe, including but going beyond NATO expansion", while in the medium term to proceed with NATO expansion "including the more advanced CEEs, with the prospect of further expansion to those not admitted in the first tranche". In parallel, an institutionalized relationship between NATO and Russia had to be established.[45] On December 1, 1994, NATO ministers finally moved on to the "how" question of enlargement and decided to commission a study detailing the principles to guide the process and the implications of membership.[46]

The Russian reaction was furious. Foreign Minister Kozyrev unexpectedly refused to sign the Individual Partnership Programme within the PfP although he went to Brussels for this purpose.[47] Furthermore, a few days after the NAC meeting, at the CSCE summit in Budapest, Yeltsin warned about Europe plunging

---

[44] Mary E. Sarotte, "How to enlarge NATO?...", *passim*.

[45] Memorandum for Anthony Lake from Alexander Vershbow, October 4, 1994, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/57563.

[46] See "Final Communiqué of North Atlantic Council Ministerial meeting", Brussels, December 1, 1994, para. 6, https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c941201a.htm.

[47] Andrei Zagorski, "Russia and NATO in the 1990s" in D. Hamilton, K. Spohr (eds.), *Open door…*, p. 475.

into a "cold peace" because of NATO expansion.[48] Yeltsin was particularly worried about the potential domestic political fallout especially because he was expecting a tough presidential election in 1996.[49] Trying to explain Yeltsin's outburst, his foreign policy advisor admitted that "we had the feeling the matter of NATO expansion had been stopped" and that "a revival of the old Red Army spirit" was possible in the military if NATO proceeded forward with expansion plans.[50]

Shortly after the Budapest fiasco, Vice President Gore was sent to Moscow to clear up any misunderstanding. His message to Yeltsin was that "1995 will be a year of studies and consultations".[51] The Americans were however already moving to the "when" aspect of the NATO expansion decision.

By the summer of 1995, Yeltsin was probably fully realizing that he would not be able to impede NATO expansion: "I see nothing but humiliation for Russia", was one of Yeltsin's candid remarks.[52] While the Russian President was still pleading for a "new model of security in Europe", without NATO as a central factor, Clinton promised a "gradual, careful, transparent, non-discriminatory" process, "not directed against any state". Yeltsin had to settle with just a promise

---

[48] Dean E. Murphy, "Broader NATO may bring 'Cold Peace' Yeltsin warns", *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1994.

[49] Just before the NAC meeting, Yeltsin sent a letter to Clinton in which he conveyed that starting the negotiations on NATO expansion "in the middle of next year" will be interpreted as "the beginning of a new split of Europe". The letter was dated November 29, 1994. See State cable 324883, "Official-Informal no. 248", December 6, 1994, doc. 3 in S. Savranskaya, M. Sarotte, "The Clinton-Yeltsin relationship in their own words", *NSA Briefing Book* #640, October 2, 2018.

[50] U.S. Embassy Moscow cable 36374, "December 15 Talbott-Ryurikov meeting on NATO, Chechnya", December 16, 1994, FOIA, doc. no. C06694734, case no. F-2017-13804.

[51] State cable 37089, "December 21 NAC: Guidance for discussion of the Vice President's visit to Russia", December 21, 1994, FOIA, doc. no. C05314191, case no. F-2012-25789.

[52] Memcon, "Summary report on One-on-One meeting between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin", The Kremlin, May 10, 1995, FOIA, doc. no. C18148079, case no. M-2017-11528.

from Clinton not to admit new members before the Russian presidential elections of June 1996.[53]

The "Study on NATO enlargement" was finally published in early September 1995. Aspirant countries now had a guiding book with criteria to fill if they wanted to join the Alliance. Yeltsin continued to complain, criticizing the study and asserting that NATO expansion is "pushing Russia towards the periphery of Europe".[54] "Russia will rise again", predicted Yeltsin, expressing his discontent about what he perceived as an unfair treatment by the U.S.[55]

After the Russian elections, the U.S. officials accelerated again the discussions on the future of NATO and relations with Russia. The intention was to parallel the expansion process with the establishment of an institutional framework for NATO-Russia consultations and with confidence and security building measures, including the adaptation of the CFE Treaty.[56]

Furthermore, with just a few weeks ahead of his own electoral test, Clinton decided to put an end to the "when" issue and declared "America's goal" for NATO to have by 1999, on its 50th anniversary, the first "group of countries" as "full-fledge" members.[57] There was only one question remaining: who will be part

---

[53] Memcon, "The Presidential One-on-One", The Kremlin, May 9, 1995, 6 p.m., FOIA, doc. no. C06697100, case no. F-2017-13804.

[54] See Yeltsin's letter to Clinton, January 26, 1996, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning Russian President Boris Yeltsin*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101238.

[55] U.S. Embassy Moscow cable 10123, April 12, 1996, "Yeltsin-Talbott meeting", FOIA, doc. no. C06697702, case no. F-2017-13804.

[56] For more elements, see Alexander Vershbow, "Present at the transformation: an insider's reflection on NATO enlargement, NATO-Russia relations, and where we go from here", in D. Hamilton, K. Spohr (eds.), *Open door…*, pp. 432-437.

[57] "Remarks to the community in Detroit", October 22, 1996, *Public Papers: William J. Clinton: 1996*, Book 2, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997, p. 1985.

of the first wave of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement? The answer was going to be revealed at the next NATO summit, scheduled for Madrid, in early July 1997.

**Romania and the competition for NATO membership**

Ever since the idea of NATO expansion was first outlined, the general understanding was that the process should unfold in several rounds or tranches. The 1995 Study stipulated that "enlargement will occur through a gradual, deliberate, and transparent process" and it "will be decided on a case-by-case basis", with some nations attaining membership before others.[58] This provision immediately started an unofficial competition among former communist countries to receive an invitation for joining the Alliance in the first tranche of enlargement. There was a strong sentiment that missing the first round would bring only uncertainties. Nobody knew how the political situation in Europe and Russia would develop and if a second wave would ever happen.

The Visegrad group of countries from Central Europe stood out as natural favorites for admission in the first tranche. In mid-1993, while arguing that NATO should eventually admit all the former Warsaw Pact states of Central and Eastern Europe, Secretary General Manfred Wörner recognized "the timing would vary – e.g. Visegrad states first, Bulgaria and Romania much later".[59] President Clinton's decision to arrange for a summit only with the Visegrad countries leaders after launching the PfP in early January 1994 also illustrated clearly their leading

---

[58] See paragraph 7 of the "Study on NATO enlargement", September 3, 1995, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm.

[59] State cable 271405, "Woerner on expanding NATO membership", September 3, 1993, FOIA, doc. no. C06555192, case no. M-2017-12017.

position on the list of potential future NATO members. "Hungary and other Visegrad countries will likely be among the first", was the assurance to the Hungarian Foreign Minister coming from Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, the man in charge of Clinton's NATO policy.[60]

The leading position of the Visegrad countries was based on the much better situation they have inherited from the communist regimes which allowed them to lead the way in terms of economic reform and democratization. Furthermore, they also articulated the most resolute messages in favor of joining NATO and of a strong U.S presence in Europe. Recovering from the harshest dictatorship of the Soviet bloc, post-communist Romania was unable to keep up the pace and lagged behind its former allies. Furthermore, Romania's relation with the West was marked by hesitations and a negative perception of its domestic politics, especially in the context of two violent Mineriads, in June 1990 and September 1991.[61]

While the West was expecting more decisive steps towards democratic and economic reforms, the progress in Romania was very slow.[62] Instead of acknowledging their shortcomings, the officials in Bucharest were accusing the West of a "discriminatory treatment" of Romania, based on a "tacit agreement" to pull out from the zone of Soviet interest only Poland, Hungary and

---

[60] State cable 276618, "UNGA bilateral: Deputy Secretary Talbott's meeting with Hungarian Foreign Minister Kovacs", October 12, 1994, FOIA, doc. no. C06694730, case no. F-2017-13804.

[61] Iulian Toader, "The United States, Romania, and the new transatlantic security framework at the end of the Cold War (1990-1991)", *RJHIS*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2015, pp. 89-101.

[62] See Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 245-253.

Czechoslovakia.[63] However, while the Visegrad countries were sending clear and strong messages in favor of Euro-Atlantic integration, the Romanians were flirting with ideas of larger European security arrangements at a time when the Americans were already acting to prevent the emergence of competitors for NATO.[64]

The Romanian government started looking seriously at NATO as an instrument towards Western integration only by 1992, and especially after the presidential and parliamentary elections, which brought an increased stability in domestic politics. Facing severe crises and instability around its borders, in Moldova or Yugoslavia, and with most of its former Warsaw Pact allies lobbying aggressively for NATO membership, Romania was at risk of remaining in a grey area of Europe, with low perspectives of economic development. The Romanian officials were therefore determined to regain lost ground, since the answer to the "who" question of NATO expansion had not yet been formulated. Therefore, Romania was the first among its peers to join the PfP in January 1994.[65] Even if the Visegrad countries, better positioned for membership, were disappointed by the U.S. decision to delay NATO expansion, Romania saw the PfP as an opportunity to meet membership criteria.

Romania's negative image abroad was however a strong impediment for developing the same level of relations with the United States as the other Central and Eastern European countries. Five years after the Revolution of December 1989,

---

[63] See Ion Iliescu, *Fragmente de viață și istorie trăită*, Bucharest, Litera, 2011, p. 170; Adrian Năstase, *Romanian-American partnership: my contribution*, Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial, 2013, pp. 24-27 and 32.
[64] Mihail Dobre, *România la sfârșitul Războiului Rece*, Bucharest, Ed. Enciclopedică, 2011, pp. 239-255.
[65] "Romania joins in NATO plan, first in East Europe to do so", *New York Times*, January 27, 1994, p. A8.

President Ion Iliescu was still awaiting to be received at the White House by a sitting U.S. President. The Romanian ambassador to Washington did not hesitate to communicate Iliescu's frustration of being "snubbed" by the U.S., while his political opponents and the leaders of "lesser" neighboring countries, such as President Snegur of Moldova, "were welcomed with open arms".[66] Especially problematic for Romania's image abroad was Iliescu's decision to form a governing coalition with three extremist parties. Even if his followers would point to political pragmatism and the necessity of having a stable government in face of the opposition's intransigence in refusing to govern with Iliescu's party, the arguments were not persuasive for the U.S. officials.[67]

In Washington, relations with neighbors and improving the situation of the ethnic Hungarian minority were considered essential aspects for maintaining chances of joining NATO. As other countries of the region, "Romania would need to choose whether to come to terms with its history and move ahead, or else be dominated by it", was the main  U.S. message.[68] Even if the U.S. officials were praising Romania as the best participant in the PfP, the Romanian leaders were concerned about efforts in the U.S. Congress to "create artificial divisions in Central Europe between Romania and other countries on the matter of NATO expansion". If the Visegrad states alone were admitted to NATO, the Romanian

---

[66] U.S. Embassy Bucharest cable 788, "Ambassador's meeting with Ambassador Botez – six markers for better relations", February 1, 1995, FOIA, doc. no. C05485698, case no. F-2013-02859.

[67] U.S. Embassy Bucharest cable 2062, "Assistant Secretary Holbrooke's February 23 meeting with Chamber of Deputies President Nastase", February 27, 1995, FOIA, doc. no. C05635500, case no. F-2014-11907.

[68] U.S. Embassy Bucharest cable 2218, "EUR Assistant Secretary A/S Holbrooke's meeting with President Iliescu", March 27, 1995, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion,* https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

Defense Minister argued, "events in Central Europe would get out of control".[69] The Romanian leaders were concerned about potential spillovers in domestic politics of a situation in which Hungary would become a NATO member but Romania would be turned down, especially considering the fragile balance of the inter-ethnic relations in Transylvania.

Iliescu finally managed to get a working visit to Washington in September 1995, after he attended the annual UN General Assembly session in New York. This time, Romania was coming to the White House with a firm and clear message in favor of Euro-Atlantic integration. Iliescu reported to Clinton the existence of a national consensus in support of Romania's NATO membership. At the same time, Iliescu did not miss the chance to dramatize again the prospect of decoupling Romania from Poland and Hungary. "We all must go together", insisted Iliescu.[70] For the American side, progress on inter-ethnic relations continued to be an issue of top priority.[71]

Romania was now determined to put all its energy on getting America's recognition.[72] However, despite some progress and positive steps such as concluding the bilateral treaty with Hungary, the image abroad of Iliescu's government was still negative. Romania's "political-economic situation argued

---

[69] State cable 156114, "A/S Holbrooke's June 20 meeting with Romanian Defense Minister Tinca", June 28, 1995, FOIA, doc. no. C05485684, case no. F-2013-02859.

[70] State cable 234298, "Memcon: President Clinton's meeting with President Iliescu on September 26", October 3, 1995, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

[71] Draft State cable, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's September 29 meeting with Romanian President Iliescu", September 30, 1995, FOIA, doc. no. C06699227, case no. F-2017-13804.

[72] State cable 30782, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's February 1 meeting with new Romanian ambassador", February 15, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06697787, case no. F-2017-13804.

against" its early accession to NATO, was the Western predominant opinion.[73] "We cannot say we are committed to Romania being in the first tranche", was the U.S. message conveyed by Talbott to Foreign Minister Melescanu.[74]

Romania found itself in a better situation after the elections of November 1996 which brought to power the opposition led by Emil Constantinescu. The new government formed around the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) set out attaining NATO membership at the Madrid summit as its top priority, and moved quickly to change Romania's image abroad. The government was determined to take decisive actions to show its commitment to reforms after years of stagnation and was putting forward messages that were illustrating the Romanian society's overwhelming support for NATO membership and Romania's advancement towards democracy after the first post-communist peaceful transition of power.[75]

Even if the time was short until the Madrid summit, Constantinescu and the CDR government started immediately an extensive international lobby campaign in the attempt to attain Romania's admittance in the first tranche of NATO enlargement. Romania was not alone in the process. Even before the CDR's electoral victory, Romania was relying on a strong support from Paris.[76] "It would be unjust and dangerous not to include Romania in the first round", was the

---

[73] State cable 225191, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's October 2 meeting with Italian Defense Minister Andreatta", October 29, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06698723, case no. F-2017-13804.

[74] State cable 225167, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's meeting with Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu", October 29, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06698698, case no. F-2017-13804.

[75] State cable 255193, "NACC Ministerial December 11, 1996, Brussels: Meeting with Baltic/CEE ministers", December 14, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06549805, case no. M-2017-11708.

[76] U.S. Embassy Paris cable 20001, "Official-informal", September 6, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06549749, case no. M-2017-11705.

message of the French President Jacques Chirac for the Americans.[77] British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind was also acknowledging that "keeping Romania out of the first accession group on political grounds" was "now more difficult than before elections". While Rifkind was leaning against Romania's accession in the first wave of enlargement, it was "hard to work out a reason why to keep Romania out".[78]

The queue for NATO membership was quite long, which complicated the decision on who should be admitted in the first tranche. As the other Visegrad countries, Slovakia was also for a long time at the forefront of the queue. Slovakia was however gradually marginalized after the nationalist-populist government of Vladimir Mečiar slipped into corruption and authoritarianism.[79]

Bulgaria was another former Warsaw Pact member that became distanced from the objective of NATO integration when a new Socialist government decided to be more attentive to Russian concerns.[80] With less than a year until the Madrid summit, Bulgaria was still examining if NATO membership was in its national interest.[81]

---

[77] Memcon, "Talbott-Chirac meeting in Paris", January 14, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06702762, case no. F-2017-13804.

[78] U.S. Embassy London cable 00657, "Deputy Secretary's 1/13 meetings with Foreign Secretary Rifkind and Foreign Office officials", January 17 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06551532, case no. M-2017-11846.

[79] State cable 194901, "Acting Secretary Talbott's meeting with Slovak Parliament Chairman Ivan Gasparovic", September 19, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06698252, case no. F-2017-13804.

[80] State cable 047507, "Bulgarian FonMin Pirinski affirms commitment to reforms", February 25, 1995, FOIA, doc. no. C17798556, case no. F-2007-03885.

[81] State cable 210916, "FM Pirinski's meeting with Acting Secretary Talbott", October 9, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06698810, case no. F-2017-13804.

If the chances of Slovakia and Bulgaria to be admitted in the first tranche were absent because of domestic reasons, the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) were candidates with a strong background of political and economic reforms, but still with no prospects of being invited to join the Alliance at Madrid, this time because of geopolitical reasons. Following the example of the Visegrad format, the Baltics maintained a close coordination among themselves in order to be more persuasive when presenting their case for NATO membership. However, their status as former subjects of the USSR and their geographical proximity to Russia made it difficult for them to be admitted in the first tranche. The Clinton administration had no appetite for increasing Russian antagonism towards NATO enlargement. The Baltics were in fact aware of this challenge, as the Lithuanian President put it: "there is less concern about when we join NATO. But we wish to know that we will get there eventually".[82]

In addition to Romania, just one other candidate had genuine chances of being admitted to NATO in the first tranche. Slovenia was the first republic to split from Yugoslavia and was making the greatest progress among the Balkan countries.[83] While the "Visegrad three" (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic) countries stood out as clear favorites, the NATO decision at Madrid was going to revolve around the question of whether to extend invitations for membership to five states rather than three, by including both Slovenia and Romania.

---

[82] State cable 136326, "Meetings with Presidents Meri of Estonia, Ulmanis of Latvia, and Brazauskas of Lithuania", July 1, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06698302, case no. F-2017-13804.

[83] State cable 205015, "Conversation between the Deputy Secretary and Slovenian Foreign Minister Kracun", October 1, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06698772, case no. F-2017-13804.

During the first six months of 1997, both Slovenia and Romania undertook a massive diplomatic campaign for receiving invitations to join NATO at the Madrid summit. Romania's efforts were focused especially on convincing the U.S. on the merits of joining the Alliance in the first tranche, the Americans being the main proponents of a limited first round of enlargement. At the beginning of 1997, while the question of adding Slovenia in the first tranche was still open for Washington, the prospects of including Romania were rather skeptical.[84]

Romania put forward arguments such as the nation's overwhelming support for NATO membership, the new government's commitment to reforms, the size of the military or the geopolitical significance of its location in Europe. Romania was also relying on the strong French support. Jacques Chirac did not miss any opportunity to tout his support for Romania's NATO accession. Despite French pressures, the Americans still "questioned whether Romania was up to the level of other candidates" for NATO membership.[85]

The U.S. officials were suspecting that the price of Chirac's endorsement was America's substitution for France as Romania's preferred Western partner.[86] The Romanian government was however already starting to shift its foreign policy on securing a special partnership with the U.S. During his visit to Washington in April 1997, Foreign Minister Adrian Severin expressed to Secretary of State Albright Romania's desire to build a special relationship with America. Romania

---

[84] State cable 21367, "UK Political Director Greenstock's consultations with Deputy Secretary Talbott on NATO-Russia", February 5, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06702980, case no. F-2017-13804.

[85] U.S. Embassy Paris cable 3878, "Secretary's meeting with French President Jacques Chirac, February 17, 1997", February 19, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06549850, case no. M-2017-11714.

[86] U.S. Embassy Bucharest cable 1247, "Chirac visit", February 27, 1997, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion,* https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

was ready to bring its share in providing a pillar of stability in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.[87]

## A credible open door policy

When evaluating the readiness to join the Alliance, the U.S. was putting the highest price on the level of political and economic reforms as a guarantee of the ability to meet the demands of membership and of ensuring the success of the enlargement process. Unambiguous success was critical to maintaining the Alliance's integrity and ensuring the continuation of the enlargement process.[88] Success meant that NATO would be economically prepared to absorb an expanded membership, that the new members would be able to fulfill their military obligations from an economic point of view, and that no political objections would be met, since the NATO enlargement had to be approved by a 2/3 majority in the U.S. Senate.

However, there were candidates who had to wait for the next rounds of enlargement, despite meeting the accession criteria. The Baltics were leaders in reforms and the Americans were therefore sensible not to let them feel excluded from the process of NATO integration. Clinton and his aides were strongly committed to keep the NATO door open for the Baltics.[89] However, if the Baltics met the criteria and were not admitted in the first round, the peril was to

---

[87] State cable 97074, "The Secretary's meeting with Romanian Foreign Minister Severin", May 23, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06703158, case no. F-2017-13804.

[88] Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's door…*, p. 216.

[89] State cable 77946, "The Deputy Secretary's meeting with Estonian Foreign Minister Kallas, March 25", April 16, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06697970, case no. F-2017-13804.

undermine the credibility of the enlargement process by giving the impression of a Russian veto over NATO decisions.

Because it could not invite in the first round all candidates who met the criteria, the most important aspect for the U.S. was to preserve the credibility of the open door policy. The candidate countries had to trust the U.S. verbal commitments that the first new members to join the Alliance would not be the last. In the process of deciding which aspirant countries would be admitted at Madrid, the U.S. officials paid special consideration on how NATO could make good on its assurances that the door will be left open for new membership.[90]

During consultations on the course of several months, the emerging predominant view among officials from the Clinton administration was that keeping the first wave limited to the truly strongest candidates would be in fact the best approach to ensure success and thus guarantee the credibility of the enlargement process. Ronald Asmus has best described the U.S. dilemma:

> "A country like Estonia was much further along in terms of reform than Romania and, arguably, at about the same level as Slovenia. Bringing in Romania but excluding Estonia ran the risk of making a mockery of the principle of performance or our insistence that Russia did not have a veto over Alliance decisions".[91]

If NATO gave the impression that it was naming at Madrid every conceivable candidate, the anxiety among those states not included in the first group would have increased, inducing the perception that the door had just closed

---

[90] U.S. Mission NATO cable 615, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's meeting with NATO SYG Solana", January 24, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06697945, case no. F-2017-13804.

[91] Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's door…*, p. 216.

"in their faces".[92] However, if aspirants with real prospects of joining NATO and with high stakes for other European allies, such as Slovenia and Romania, were kept in the waiting room, it would have maximized allied support for a strong open door package.[93] As a result, all the other candidates, especially the Baltics, would have been reassured that NATO's door remained open and the first tranche of enlargement would be followed by a second one at some point in time.

"Our first concern is that the first [wave] shall not be last", Clinton emphasized in a conversation with British Prime Minister Tony Blair. "If there are five, no one will believe in a second round", was the predominant feeling among U.S. officials.[94] From the American point of view, Romania did not yet have "enough of a track record" to be sure that it "could fulfill the essential obligations of Alliance membership". If Romania was admitted but it was seen as marginal in terms of its qualifications, "other candidates will not believe there will be a second wave", Clinton pointed out to Chirac. The dilemma was "whether the other candidates would be more convinced if Romania was accepted that there would not be a second round, even though they are as qualified as Romania".[95]

The French President was not buying the American arguments. "Everyone knows there will be a continuing process of enlargement, whether or not Romania is in the first group", he argued. Chirac considered important to signal the Western

---

[92] State cable 225173, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's October 1 meeting with Hungarian Foreign Minister Kovacs", October 29, 1996, FOIA, doc. no. C06698715, case no. F-2017-13804.

[93] Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's door…*, p. 218.

[94] State cable 113437, "Memorandum of Conversation – Luncheon meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, May 29, 1997", June 17, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06547583, case no. M-2017-11597.

[95] Memcon, "President's Meeting with French President Jacques Chirac", Elysee Palace, May 27, 1997, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning Memcons and Telcons with French President Jacques Chirac*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100539.

support for the new government's commitment to democratic and economic reforms, and to reward Romania's efforts to settle its historic differences with neighbors.[96] Romania's geographic position to enforce NATO's southern flank was also important.

Because of the passion which the whole society invested in the quest for NATO membership, the French were very concerned that leaving Romania out of the Alliance would weaken the government's position and would induce a "psychological trauma" in the country, with real political consequences. The French were particularly concerned about a potential reinforcement of the nationalist movement if Romania would be left behind, while Hungary would join.[97] In other words, if Romania would fail to receive an invitation for NATO membership in the first wave, there was a risk of derailing from the path towards democracy, an argument that was also advanced by Slovenia.[98]

The British diplomacy was also attentive to such implications. Shortly after Constantinescu's presidential victory in November 1996, the UK Embassy to Bucharest was stressing that Romania's ability to "preserve with the reforms needed to lock itself into the European democratic family" was going to be influenced by the Western policy on EU and NATO enlargement: "Romania may

---

[96] *Ibidem.*

[97] Memcon Samuel Berger, Assistant to President for National Security Affairs – Jean-David Levitte, Diplomatic Adviser to French President Chirac, The White House, January 24, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06704394, case no. F-2017-13804.

[98] State cable 87601, "Conversation between Acting Secretary Talbott and Slovenian Prime Minister Drnovsek", May 9, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06702944, case no. F-2017-13804.

not be a front-runner for early membership, but a policy which simply consigns it to also-ran status risks reversing the democratic strides it has just taken".[99]

However, the Americans were unwilling to consider precisely this kind of negative argument when evaluating a candidate's readiness to join the Alliance. The Americans did not want to "jettison the performance principle to meet the short-term political needs of a specific government". Furthermore, "if a country's argument for getting into NATO was that it would self-destruct if it did not, that was a reason not to invite it", with the Slovak negative example still on everyone's mind.[100] NATO was not a "charity organization", and Romania needed a longer track record of reforms, not threats "to commit national suicide if not immediately admitted". It was not clear yet whether Romania was "permanently established as a democracy with an open economy".[101] As Madeleine Albright explained to Foreign Minister Severin, NATO membership was not a "gift" for good behavior, but an illustration of a strong commitment to fulfill military obligations.[102]

**The Madrid compromise**

The U.S. presented its decision in favor of a small group approach at the end of May 1997, during the Sintra NATO ministerial, in Portugal. The best way to serve the Alliance's interests was to start the enlargement process with the strongest candidates, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright emphasized during

---

[99] UK Embassy Bucharest telegram 312, "Romanian presidential elections", November 18, 1996, The National Archives, Kew, *UK/Romanian relations: internal situation; part 3*, Reference: PREM 19/6228.

[100] Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's door…*, p. 216.

[101] U.S. Embassy Ankara cable 5245, "DepSec Talbott's breakfast meeting with MFAU/S Oymen", June 3, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06703165, case no. F-2017-13804.

[102] State cable 97074, "The Secretary's meeting with Romanian Foreign Minister Severin", May 23, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06703158, case no. F-2017-13804.

the meeting. Allies had to be convinced that new members were irreversibly committed to the values NATO was pledging to defend.[103]

Even if the U.S. did not name any favorite, it was evident that the small group approach favored only the accession of the "Visegrad three". The U.S. was however the only proponent of this approach, with public support only from Iceland and background sympathy from the UK. At the same time, the U.S. was the backbone of the Atlantic Alliance and its decision carried the heaviest weight. Most of the other European allies were adopting a wait-and-see approach.

While the French continued to lobby for Romania, Slovenia was also relying on a strong support from Italy. Because Slovenia had more chances and a better image than Romania, the Italians were trying to convince the Americans not to link the two candidates.[104] However, such an approach was not sustainable from the U.S. point of view. Supporting four countries was likely to be an untenable compromise position and would have increased the pressure to admit five.[105] German Chancellor Kohl's position was perceived as essential for developing the final allied decision at Madrid on the number of new NATO members. Germany was however publicly evasive and cautious not to induce a strain in relations with France.[106]

---

[103] *Ronald Asmus, Opening NATO's door…*, p. 219.

[104] Draft State cable, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's meeting with Italian Ambassador Salleo, 5/22", May 23, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06703291, case no. F-2017-13804.

[105] Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's door…*, p. 222.

[106] U.S. Embassy Bonn cable 7047, "Chancellor Kohl and Romania's NATO candidacy", June 12, 1997, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

Wishing to undermine eventual French and Italian pressures on the other Europeans, on June 12 the Clinton administration publicly announced its decision to support only Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic for NATO membership in the first wave of enlargement. The U.S. was straightforward about the central factor for limiting the number of new members to three: "a smaller group of strongest among several promising candidates increased the credibility of NATO's promise that there would be subsequent accessions".[107] Slovenia and Romania were not as far along as the other three.

Accepting that it could not be admitted to NATO in the first tranche, Romania wanted instead "a special strategic partnership with the U.S." Furthermore, Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea raised the possibility to mention Romania "specifically as a prime candidate for the second round of enlargement" and to announce a date for the event during the Madrid summit. Neither proposal was feasible, but the Americans agreed to look into the idea of a bilateral strategic partnership.[108]

French President Chirac supplemented the Romanian efforts by advocating for an allied specific commitment to admit Slovenia and Romania in 1999. When talking with the Americans, Chirac was still trying to emphasize the potential negative implications and destabilizing effects for Romanian democracy if the perception created was one of abandonment of Romania by the West in a grey area

---

[107] State cable 111475, "NATO enlargement – US decision on new members", June 13, 1997, *Ibidem*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

[108] State cable 133663, "Romanian Prime Minister's meeting with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary", July 17, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06702902, case no. F-2017-13804.

of Europe.[109] These were however irritating arguments for the Americans. Romania's qualification had to be demonstrated through a solid track record of reforms. Poland had a track record of seven years, whereas Romania's was merely seven months.

Clinton emphasized again the need to preserve a credible open door policy, an issue that was also connected with the future of NATO-Russia relations. From the U.S. perspective, a decision to take in five new members at once would have immediately created pressure to admit the Baltics, "since there would be no one else ready for the second", creating problems in relations with Russia. "We need to have at least two good candidates for the next time", Clinton insisted.[110] Starting the process with just three new members ensured the credibility of the open door for further tranches, but also gave the Russians "some time to digest NATO enlargement and to implement the NATO-Russia Founding Act".[111]

If the Americans were rejecting any specific commitment at Madrid for Romania's membership in the next round, relying also on the French support, the Romanians looked to Germany to flip the balance in their favor. At the beginning of July 1997, Constantinescu went to meet Chancellor Kohl to argue for a specific reference to Romania in the Madrid communiqué. Without such a face saver, "Romania will be in the same position as Bulgaria, and I will have failed as a

---

[109] Memcon, "The President's Meeting with French President Jacques Chirac", Brown Palace Hotel, Denver, Colorado, June 20, 1997, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning Memcons and Telcons with French President Jacques Chirac*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100539.
[110] *Ibidem*.
[111] Draft State cable, "Deputy Secretary Talbott's meeting with Spanish Ambassador on Madrid summit, NATO issues", June 26, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06703380, case no. F-2017-13804.

leader", Constantinescu complained. A strong open door declaration without specific reference to Romania was "meaningless".[112]

Kohl telephoned Clinton and argued for a "message of opening up a perspective for Romania and Slovenia", to "address the concerns of their people", but the Chancellor's position was rather non-committal. Instead of creating two tiers of NATO aspirants by mentioning specifically Slovenia and Romania in the Madrid communiqué, the Americans wanted to signal to all candidates that staying on the path of reforms and keeping democracies going were the only manner to secure future membership. The only commitment was to review again the enlargement process in 1999, connected with the expression of interest in building NATO's southern flank.[113]

Chirac went to Madrid determined to confront the Americans and to act as the spokesperson for the European pillar of the Alliance. The French continued to insist on enlarging the number of new members to five, with the compromise position being to put Romania in front of the queue for the next tranche. Clinton emphasized instead that Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic had a track record of reform "long enough to give us the confidence that they are irreversible".[114] Citing the Slovak example, Clinton asked rhetorically what would happen, if in Romania, anti-democratic extremists and nationalists returned to

---

[112] U.S. Embassy Bucharest cable 4204, "President Constantinescu's meeting with Chancellor Kohl", July 3, 1997, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

[113] Telephone conversation (Telcon) Clinton – Kohl, July 3, 1997, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning German Chancellor Helmut Kohl*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/57651.

[114] Ronald Asmus, *Opening NATO's door…*, p. 242.

power in the future.[115] Furthermore, a smaller group approach was easier to integrate, was keeping down the costs of enlargement and was creating momentum for future rounds.

Kohl and Blair supported the U.S. arguments. There was consensus in the Alliance for taking in three new members, but no consensus on five. However, Chirac did not buy the argument on costs and insisted on a NATO commitment to admit Romania and Slovenia at the next summit in 1999. Clinton raised again the negative impact of such compromise on the Baltics, an issue of concern also for the Northern allies. After some heated exchanges, the final compromise was to specifically name Romania and Slovenia in the communiqué, but also the Baltic states, recognizing their progress as "aspiring members" in the context of a commitment to review the enlargement process in 1999.[116] It was a compromise closer to the U.S. position, one that Chirac finally accepted even if he grudged about it.

Immediately after the Madrid summit, Clinton flew to Warsaw, Bucharest, and Copenhagen. Despite the intense disappointment about the Madrid decision, Clinton was received by the Romanian public with overwhelming enthusiasm, illustrating the magnitude of support for the West and the U.S. in particular. "Stay on the course, stay on the course, the future is yours", was Clinton's catchphrase which electrified the tens of thousands of people gathered in the University square where 7 years before many had died so that Romania would become again a free

---

[115] *Ibidem*, p. 244.

[116] *Ibidem*, pp. 245-248. Also see "Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation", July 8, 1997, para. 8, https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1997/p97-081e.htm.

nation. That was precisely what Constantinescu emphasized to Clinton. In the end, NATO membership was a "matter of dignity", of recognition that the people of Romania have succeeded in their "great efforts", after a "bloody revolution".[117]

The Madrid disappointment was however hard to digest for the Romanian society in the medium-term. The costs of reform had tremendous social burdens. A succession of internal political and social crises discredited Constantinescu and his government. After the elections of 2000, Iliescu returned to power, but the 1/3 of the votes received by the nationalist-populist Vadim Tudor raised eyebrows in all corners of Europe.

Chirac was not far from the truth when he expressed serious concerns about Romania's return to a nationalistic past if NATO rejected her membership aspirations. It remains a matter of further research if the decision not to admit Romania in the first tranche had any significant impact on its short-term political evolution shrouded in crises. However, the Romanian people repudiated after all their own Mečiar, which illustrated that Romania was becoming more politically mature. It has passed a test that America considered crucial and, in a different context marked by 9/11, Romania was finally invited to join NATO in 2002, during a second tranche of enlargement.

**Conclusions**

Even if the U.S. officials had put forward several arguments for limiting the first tranche of NATO enlargement to just three countries, a closer examination of

---

[117] Memcon, "Meeting with Emil Constantinescu, President of Romania", Cotroceni Palace, Bucharest, July 11, 1997, FOIA, doc. no. C06704369, case no. F-2017-13804.

all the nuances from the high-level conversations among the Western leaders shows that maintaining the credibility of the open door policy was the most important factor. Keeping Slovenia and Romania in the waiting room, two candidates with strong advocates and real perspectives for NATO membership, was important in order to ensure confidence in enlargement as a continuous and steady process, especially for the Baltics, who met the criteria but were unable to immediately join the Alliance because of Russia's opposition. The Americans were seeking to avoid as much as possible an increase of Russian antagonism, without giving Moscow a formal veto.

Ever since the beginning, the success of NATO enlargement was in great extent dependent on Russia's acquiescence to it. The U.S. officials sought therefore to avoid an increased Russian antagonism to the enlargement process by following a dual track approach. One track was to redefine the relations between NATO and Russia in a more cooperative manner. U.S. officials sought to create an institutionalized framework for NATO-Russia consultations, which eventually was established through the so-called "Founding Act", a document to which Yeltsin subscribed, but in a reluctant manner because it actually represented a replacement for leaving Russia at the periphery of the new NATO-centric European security system.

The other track was to make enlargement more acceptable to Moscow by unfolding the process in a gradual and transparent manner. However, gradualism entailed that some nations would attain NATO membership before others. While some aspirants would get in first, others would have to wait for the next rounds. Because of Russian animosity, the Baltics had the lowest perspectives of joining the

Alliance in the first tranche, even if they were as qualified as the other candidates. However, while adjourning NATO membership for the Baltics had the advantage of mitigating Russian antagonism, it was at the same time creating the perception of a Russian veto over NATO decisions. The Baltics were putting strong pressure on the American NATO policy by publicly expressing concerns that their security might be sacrificed for the sake of NATO-Russia accommodation.[118] Such a perception had the potential of undermining the basis of the post-Cold War security system that America was struggling to build, one in which Russia could not impair the right of European countries to freely choose their own alliances.

The solution to alleviate Baltic concerns, while also avoiding the perception of a Russian veto over NATO decision, was a credible open door policy. NATO had to inspire confidence in the continuation of the enlargement process. The U.S. approach was to start with a smaller group of the strongest candidates, while maximizing support for a succession of enlargement waves.

In order to defend its approach of starting with the smallest number of candidates possible, the U.S. chose to put an emphasis on favorable criteria such as the easier capacity to integrate a small group of new members, the lower costs, the viability of obtaining domestic political support for NATO enlargement and, above all, the individual qualifications. NATO was a military alliance, not a charity or a political club, the Americans often argued. To be admitted in the first wave, candidates had to offer the most credible guarantees of their ability to fully and

---

[118] State cable 110550, "Memcon of DepSec Talbott's meeting with Estonian President Lennart Meri and Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis, May 28, The Hague", June 12, 1997, CDL, *Declassified Documents concerning NATO Expansion*, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/100538.

irreversibly meet the demands of membership. Other arguments more favorable to a larger expansion of NATO were instead discarded.

From the U.S. perspective, starting with a smaller group was beneficial because was creating momentum for future rounds of enlargement by having the promising candidates in the waiting room and, as a result, increasing the credibility of NATO's assurance that there would be subsequent accessions and the first round would not also be the last. Both Slovenia and Romania were short of having enough credentials for qualifying as prime candidates leaving them no other option than to contribute to preserving a credible open door policy with their status of "promising" candidates.

# Book Review

**Wilson D. Miscamble,** *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan,* **Cambridge University Press, 2011, 192 pp.**

The decision to use the nuclear bombs has remained a topic of debate among historians, the antagonistic views being surprised by the brief, but the suggestive remark of the historian Michael Kort:

> "No aspect of the orthodox/revisionist debate has generated more controversy than Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan at the end of World War II."[1]

The priest and professor Wilson Miscamble chaired the History Department within the University of Notre Dame between 1993 and 1998. His main research topics focus on the foreign policy of the United States of America after World War II, but also on the influence of Catholicism in the 20th century in US life. He has published a series of works in which he carries out an articulated analysis of the decision-making mechanisms that predominated in the Truman administration's decisions: *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950*; *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima and the Cold War*; *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs and the Defeat of Japan.*

---

[1] Michael Kort, *The Historiography of Hiroshima: The Rise and Fall of Revisionism*, in "The New England Journal of History", Vol.64, 2007, p.31.

The dropping of atomic bombs was one of the most controversial decisions, both from a moral and military perspective. Miscamble sketches in his work, *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs and the Defeat of Japan*, an exhaustive timeline of the first months of the Truman administration, and captures the way in which were drawn the decisive coordinates of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This book analyzes the circumstances in which the nuclear attacks against Japan were launched and also provides an adequate explanation of the impact that atomic bombings had on Japan's surrender. Moreover, the explanation gains moral dimension, something perfectly captured in Chapter VII: *Necessary, But Was It Right?* Miscamble states that the main motivation that fundamentally influenced Truman's decision was the numerical limitation of the American war casualties: "Those who rush to judge Truman's decision to use the atomic bombs must hesitate a little to appreciate that had he not authorized the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki thousands of American and Allied soldiers (...) would have been added to the lists of those killed in World War II."[2]

The reduced size and the analysis of events from general-to-specific order suggest the selection of a certain target group. The highly readable structure and the references of the book represent a perfect starting point, for both students and those who want to have a deeper understanding of the decision-making process of using nuclear bombs. *The Most Controversial Decision* can be interpreted as an introductory study in nuclear strategies history, managing to highlight the transition between the presidential administrations, but also the transition between World War II and the Cold War. Therefore, the readers can more easily identify other reference works that allow them to further research, depending on

---

[2] Wilson D. Miscamble, C.S.C., *The Most Controversial Decision. Truman, The Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 113.

the area of interest. The scientific character of the paper is also suggested by the slightly objective way of writing.

This scholarly paper is a key reading in the realm of nuclear history. *The Most Controversial Decision* offered a number of key answers to clarify why the nuclear bomb was a better option compared to other possible decisions that could end the war. Also, it offered a thoroughgoing view about the influence exerted by a limited number of people on the leading figure in the decision-making process, as well as the dominant thinking in the decision-making group.

Although I was initially reluctant about analyzing Truman's considerations through a moral filter, reading this book revealed a clear and coherent vision, which largely rejects the revisionist thesis. The result is a balanced work, a first essential point in researching one of the most contested decisions, which manages to capture the moral implications of the bomb's authorization, but also its effects on the president's cognitive system.

**Alexandra Cojocaru**

**Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit,** *A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World***, Cambridge University Press, 2017, 326 pp.**

*A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World* by Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit was recently published in the United Kingdom, circulated in Asia by Cambridge University Press, and launched in Bangkok during a special session of the Siam Society.

Dr. Chris Baker is a historian, long-time resident, and honorary editor of *The Journal of the Siam S*ociety. Dr. Pasuk Phongpaichit is a Professor of Economics at the Chulalongkorn University.

It should be noted that the book under review is published by Cambridge University Press,  a publishing house whose mission is to disseminate knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

> "History is a narration of the events which have happened among mankind, including an account of the rise and fall of nations, as well as of other great changes which have affected the political and social condition of the human race."

This quotation is taken from the book by John J. Anderson entitled *A Manual of General History*, published in 1876. This definition of history is creatively illustrated by the volume written by Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit.

From a civilizational perspective, Ayutthaya was considered by Europeans as one of the great powers of Asia to be positioned between China and India. However, after the fatal year 1767, when the city was destroyed, its history has not been any more on the list of research priorities of Thai and foreign historians.

Under such circumstances, the book under review has the obvious merit of recommending itself as the very first comprehensive study of Ayutthaya from its emergence in the thirteenth century until its fall.

The book contains a rich panoramic presentation of the social, political, and cultural history of Ayutthaya with a special focus on commerce, kingship, Buddhism, and war.

The book is composed of seven chapters followed by an appendix containing the list of Thai kings, a glossary, notes on some key sources, a rich bibliography, and a useful index.

Why is this book so important? The short answer is provided by its authors in the first sentences of the preface.

Indeed, "European travels in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries placed Ayutthaya or Siam among the three great powers of Asia alongside China and India. They reckoned the city as large as London or Paris and they marveled at the gold in the temples and treasuries."

The book offers a history of Ayutthaya from its very first appearance in the late 13th century to its fall in 1767.

It should be noted that for the political, social, legal, and literary history the authors use mostly original sources in several languages.

There are very interesting discoveries mentioned in each chapter of the book under review.

For example, by the first century, some European objects, especially Roman intaglios, coins, and medallions had reached several sites in Siam on the middle and upper peninsula.

Indian concepts, words, and symbols have been used to strengthen rulers, while Buddhism has imposed some constraints on them. They were requested to have integrity, wisdom, and be benevolent.

The law was increasingly used to manage a society which was becoming more complex. It focused on topics such as marriage, kidnapping, treason, public disorder, crimes against the government, as well as rules on legal procedures. (p. 72 )

On the question of spoken languages, we learn from the book that the population used mostly the Thai language which gradually came to dominate, but even this language was a product of merging traditions. The strong influence of the Khmer language has to be fully recognized in this respect.

Another interesting fact is the one that Ayutthaya's merger with the Northern Cities happened not as a result of armed action, but by intertwining of families from various regions.

In practice what happened was a gradual absorption of people, culture, language, aesthetics, and administrative practices. (p.83)

Interesting ideas and facts can be found in the third chapter of the book entitled *An Age of Warfare.* For instance, in a letter explaining the causes of aggression against Ayutthaya the following can be read:

"Naturally, in any Kingdom having beautiful women, white elephants, short -tusked elephants, jewel mines, and gold mines, it is a rule that these will give rise to warfare".(p.89)

The result of the war between Ayutthaya and Burma led from a diplomatic perspective to a division of spheres of influence in the area. Burma succeeded in taking control of Lanna in the Northern area, while Ayutthaya

extended its influence in the Eastern part along the coast to the Khmer capital of Lovek.

What is really remarkable is the very fact that for the next 150 years this division of the spheres of influence remained stable. (p.118)

Chapter four dealing with peace and commerce is quite instructive by the number of relevant facts brought to the attention of readers. The authors illustrate well how Japanese, Persians, Chinese, and Indians became really prominent in the trade and politics of Ayutthaya. At the same time, Europeans, including Dutch, French, and English, visited Ayutthaya as part of the "country trade" around the Asian seas. (p.170)

From a diplomatic perspective, it should be mentioned that the monarchy was able to hire people from Asia and Europe as soldiers, guards, shippers, commercial agents, craftsmen, suppliers, and administrators. The authors call it "deft diplomacy" and assert that by doing that the Kings became able to draw on the military and naval power of the Europeans to assist their political expansion on the peninsula. However, the events of 1688 generated a crisis over Siam's relations with the outside world.

The role of the Europeans was to some extent similar to that played by Japanese and Persians during the earlier times. It is useful to remind in this context the conclusion of the two authors according to which the political involvement of the French in Siam lasted less than a decade and had no strong impact on the culture, language, dress, architecture, or cuisine. (p.172)

From chapter 5, dealing with urban and commercial society, readers learn that from a legal perspective, Kings acted as grade patrons, but at the same time, they imposed only minimal administrative control.

In such a context, Buddhism became a powerful social force and continued to play an important role in Aytthaya's late history.

In an extraordinarily diverse polyglot and, cosmopolitan society, translation, interpretation, and multilingual conversation became an integral part of everyday life. New thinking emerged about identity based on religion with a line dividing Buddhism from Islam and Christianity. (p.210)

In the reviewers' opinion, the most interesting chapter of the book is chapter six entitled *Ayutthaya Falling*. It is reminded that Siam had a tradition of royal law-making starting in the 15th century. The laws were included in codes and dealt with a multitude of issues related to slaves, inheritance, marital relations, contracts, debt, and robbery. (p.245)

The fall of Ayutthaya is explained in the light of many contradictory facts and special circumstances. The defeat of 1767 is first of all a failure of defense.

It appears that the systems of forced labor on which the strategy of defense in Ayutthaya was based had partially decayed.

In addition, there had been no development of diplomacy to manage relations with potentially threatening neighbors and no advances in a military organization.

To sum up, in the opinion of the authors the fall of Ayutthaya was in fact the result not so much of internal conflict or dynastic decline, but was mostly determined by the failure to manage the social and political consequences of prosperity. This is one of the original findings and conclusions of the book by Baker and Phongpaichit after a strong demonstration based on a detailed analysis of an immense literature and sources in several languages.

The seventh and last chapter of the book is symbolically entitled *"To Bangkok"*. The main idea of this chapter is that the creation of the new Siam with its capital in Bangkok was the result of activities undertaken by three groups of people. The first group was represented by the nobles who created a state in which power was divided among semi-independent cities and ministries. The second group was represented by immigrant Chinese who dominated Bangkok

and created segments of a new aristocracy. The third group was composed of former *phrai* and slaves - people who created a new society of agricultural villages.

Under such circumstances, the old city of Ayutthaya was forgotten, but its destruction continued beyond 1767. In 1907 King Chulalongkorn gave a speech about the importance of history, with special reference to the necessity to compile a history of Siam.

The last sentence of the speech as reproduced in the book under review says :

"If someone comes up with the better interpretation and more accurate reasoning, we should happily appreciate the major benefit of having a clearer and more reliable history of Siam." (p.276)

The present book can be considered as the most recent and promising contribution to giving tangibility to the wish of King Chulalongkorn about the necessity of writing a more reliable history of Siam, starting with the real story of Ayutthaya.

This outstanding book is exceptionally documented and can be recommended as essential reading to all people who are genuinely interested in a scientific and detailed presentation of the history of Siam in the early modern world. The two authors have succeeded in demonstrating that Siam was, indeed, a pivotal country in universal history.

This literary achievement is commendable at a time when ASEAN countries are vigorously engaged in establishing a social-cultural community. This community is expected to be dynamic and harmonious, as well as fully aware and proud of its identity, culture, and historical heritage and having the strengthened ability to innovate and proactively contribute to the global community.

**Glen Chatelier,  Ioan Voicu**

**Francesco Filippi,** *Mussolini ha fatto anche cose buone, Le idiozie che continuano a circolare sul fascismo,* **Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2019, 131 pp.**

In the last two decades, scholars, journalists, and political analysts have highlighted the risk of the "return of fascism" across Europe. Moreover, the consolidation of several European illiberal regimes which have taken the path of authoritarianism, shows that the crisis of the European project is definitely related to the crisis of the liberal democracies. A strong link between radical right activism and the rising of the eurosceptic movement, which has grown steadily since the 1990s, has become an element of undoubted impact on the process of European integration.

Illiberal democracies, as the new governance paradigm, reject the EU's founding values and are typically centered on a leader who concentrates power by overriding – and in some cases even eliminating – institutional and constitutional "checks and balances". Several elements that fascism used are still available in our society: a strong and charismatic leader, the exploitation of the population's anxieties and fears, authority, and nationalism.

Accompanied by a prefix, like neo-, post-, or crypto-, the fascism of our lives became so easy to be assimilated and to dominate the minds of the European citizens. In Italy, fascism recalls not only the critique towards the distortions of the capitalist system, but it also builds upon the crisis of the Italian party system, the corruption of the Italian establishment, the lack of representation, and the manipulation of the population's anxieties and fears, for example, those generated by the 2008 financial crisis and the large inflows of immigrants. It exploits the human desire to be part of an important cause, disappointed by the present.

In this short and provocative book, Francesco Filippi, a Trentino historian, aims to "dismantle" the fake news which more than seventy years after the fall of fascism, still surrounds the mythical figure of the Duce and remains within a part of the Italian society.

The question still concerns us: why so many decades after the falling of Mussolini's regime this false idea of fascism continues to exist in Italian society? Too many continue to say - *he also did some good things* - like the President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani's remark:

> "Mussolini? Until he declared war on the whole world following Hitler, until he promoted the racial laws, apart from the dramatic story of Matteotti, he did positive things to create infrastructures in our country."[1]

An answer could be that the Italian revisionist school of the myth of "Italiani brava gente" persisted, and after 1945, especially the myth of the "partisan movement" was brought to the fore, unlike West Germany where the denazification process, although with modest results, made German society responsible of its past.

On the other hand, eminent intellectuals, such as Renzo de Felice and Karl Dietrich Bracher have denied that German Nazism and Italian fascism belong to the same category. Ernst Nolte, the remarkable historian and philosopher of the XX century treated Italian fascism and German National Socialism as a compatible phenomenon. Nolte argued that the *Action Française* was the thesis, Italian Fascism was the antithesis, and German National Socialism the synthesis of the two earlier fascist movements.

---

[1] https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/03/13/news/centrodestra_antonio_tajani_mussolini_ha_fatto_anche_cose_buone_-221479884/

Filippi's book has the objective to deconstruct the false ideas, this fake news on Mussolini and his regime, as a "good fascism", with the weapons of History, based on the historical sources and documents: the myths of fascism as the guarantor of welfare society, the humanitarian fascism in the colonies, the fascism as a provider of the national pension system, fascism as a guarantor of gender equality, universal granting of the thirteenth monthly salary introduced by the regime, and so on.

For example, the thirteenth monthly so-called Christmas bonus was officially inserted in 1937 by the Fascist Chamber of Corporations, but it was not given to all workers, only to the industrial employees; it was an exclusive measure, offered to the most loyal social category of the regime, the so-called white-collar workers. Moreover, the author shows that the first organic law on the drainage and the reclamation of the swamps was already in place in 1878, and in 1922, before the March on Rome, the liberal Italian State established several companies in order to enlarge the areas of state intervention.

Treating history as a useful guide to future generations, Filippi deconstructed also the idea that the difference between the Nazi and Italian regimes was the racial aspect, showing that the anti-Semitic attitude was spread through Italian society before the regime was installed. Mussolini went further and built the myth of the Italian race - a diverse and superior race from the others.

Nowadays, in Italy, there seems to be a favorable cultural ground "to forget" one of the most ferocious and bloody periods in the history of Italy and the twentieth century because reiterating the affirmation "when He was there ", beyond the satirical implication, can mean a "reassurance of the past and a veiled threat on the present ";  The time to combat the threat of fascism is now, because the preconditions for fascism may have already begun to unfold. The Italian fascism represents an internal civil war, a failed economic policy, a colonial

campaign that only led to the death of many Italians, a racial and antisemitic regime, a real threat that should push us to stop replicating that model.

**Mihaela Mustățea**

**Madeleine Albright,** *Fascismul. Un avertisment,* **București, Editura Rao, 282 pp.**

Madeleine Albright is one of the most influential politicians and diplomats of the past decades. She was the first woman Secretary of the State of the USA during Bill Clinton's mandate. Madeleine Albright highlights the birth of fascism in the world and the concept of growing populism in her bestseller, *Fascism, A Warning.*

The author has an impressive series of books, such as: "Madame Secretary", "Memo to the President-Elect", "Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War 1937-1948".

The bestseller, *Fascism, A Warning* is a masterpiece in itself that explains and embraces the biggest warning of fascism, its aggression, and nevertheless the erosion of what it represents as a free democracy. This book also highlights the events that happened in Europe lately and a century ago.

I can state that Madeleine Albright through her book tries to project the idea of fascism and the impact on each state and also considers and compares the similarities between them. Mussolini, in 1932 was described fascism as being a closed universe in which "the state has everything and no human or spiritual value exists". This strong statement brings in a note of warning, it describes step-by-step this magic wrapping up of fascism.

In a different light, the book describes in a gloomy shade how the Nazis were dividing people based on their nationality and ethnicity grounds whereas for the Communists the division was based on social class. In the Hitler ideology, in Germany, the people that were prosecuted were the Jewish (the impure race) and the gypsies and in the Soviet Union, the prosecution was around the middle

class. In other words, I can say that the author tries to describe all the faces of fascism, all the radical changes that come with it during that century, and how all these changes are still vivid nowadays.

The teacher from the University of Georgetown, Madeleine Albright talks about another very interesting subject or term, free democracy, which she describes as partial democracy, lower in intensity and impact on the individual but enhanced on the community level needs. It is a democracy in itself because it represents and follows the idea of the majority and ignores the issues or the problems of the minority.

I can affirm that this book is being recognized as a true masterpiece through the style and nevertheless the sincerity of the events and it is meant to bring homage to all of the fascism victims, all their pains, and all the horrors that they had to endure during fascism.

The credentials and the story bring a lot of color and sense to this book even more with the fact that the author has lived and witnessed fascism making it a true reality written story. Her life had a strong impact on fascism which made her question and search the biggest fears of this right-wing.

The author describes in more detail the Turkish State of which the president is Erdogan and his tendencies. As Madeleine Albright states in less than a decade under Erdogan's leadership Turkey, was known as the European workshop. All of this happened because its economy was growing, the people were earning good wages and the middle class was also expanding. Turkey abolished the death penalty, made important steps to enhance civil controls, and nevertheless the protection of the freedom of speech and the rights of women and minorities were taken into account.

The president's biggest desire was to become stronger and have more power due to his election results, but all this slowly destroyed all that Erdogan created and built in the past. He made Islam courses mandatory this being

another of his desires stating that Islam is the main source of Turkish unity. Another order was to cancel the homosexual parades and he contempt the LGBT activism saying that this was against the Turkish values. The contraceptive methods which in the past were open and accepted, now they've become unaccepted asking women to have three or more children and even calling working women 'half people' whereas at the beginning of his governance he was fighting for women's rights.

In 2016 a fraction of the Army tried to kill Erdogan and take control of the country but this coup didn't stand a chance.

Locally Turkey is a very divided state and its president should know how to correctly proceed to amend the democracy of his nation. I can state that all this could happen if Erdogan will listen and take into consideration the criticism that comes even from his own party members.

None of the Turkish leaders has ever managed to build a democratic society that could last, in which its citizens with different points of view agree and happily live together in peace and full freedom. So the main question remains if Erdogan is willing to take this route.

The author's vision and mine are that Erdogan should change the Turkish state, he should listen to his inner voice and do the right thing for Turkey as he well knows what's missing and how it should be done.

In conclusion, I can state that this book is a unique box of memories that the author desires to be forever forgotten but still lives within every person that lived the violence and aggression of fascism.

**Mara Rotaru**

**Christopher Coker,** *The Rise of the Civilizational State***, Polity Press, Oxford, 2019, 224 pp.**

Professor Christopher Coker's book sheds new light on a number of fundamental concepts that we operate on every day and that we encounter in the speeches of political analysts, international relations experts, or great leaders, and in the materials produced by journalists from worldwide.

Concepts such as "civilization" and "globalization" are debated for a long time and each time new elements are attributed to them, either from the perspective of the conditions that support them or by exposing the threats that will sooner or later lead to restriction or blockade of all of the impact they have on the collective mind.

Combining knowledge from various scientific fields, from zoology to neuroscience to diplomacy is the method by which the 'The Rise of the Civilizational State' presents the way the great powers of the world construct their identity discourse by appealing to the notion of civilization, although, as we shall see, throughout the book, the 'civilizational state' is for many a painless endeavor, while for others it is a serious deviation from liberalism and respect for human rights. The author himself explains the motivation of the academic effort in the introduction to the book: «My interest in writing this book indeed first took shape in 2013, when for the first time Putin declared Russia to be a 'civilizational

state'. Today Russia is busily refabricating its own past to reflect ancient truths and ancestral verities in a bid to inoculate itself against the contagion of liberal ideas and Western norms.»[1]

The analysis of the concept of 'civilization' involves a broad effort of clarification, starting from the idea that man is the 'supreme storytelling species', which is why the language we use and the stories we choose to believe will define us as individuals and later as a community. As a result, throughout the book, we will come across a quote from Michael Oakeshott, who says that 'a civilization is basically a collective dream'[2]. From a historical perspective, we know that civilization has two fundamental characteristics, the lingua franca - the language imposed on those who are civilized by the civilizing entity - and the ability to share knowledge and advanced technological means compared to what the 'uncivilized' already have.

Certainly, we would not really understand the concept of civilization without Professor Coker's analysis of Greek and Roman civilizations, but also of the subsequent mix of the two, to which is added Christianity, which is the basis of modern European civilization. Civilization myths are subjected to a rather harsh critical exercise in trying to illustrate the phenomena that lead to civilizational isolationism and to forms of centrism caused by the cognitive dissonance we face when we believe that European-Western civilization should

---

[1] Christopher Coker, *The Rise of the Civilizational State*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2019, pag. xi.
[2] Oakeshott's Conversation of Mankind,
https://mikelove.wordpress.com/2007/01/14/oakeshotts-conversation-of-mankind/.

become the universal model. imposed on the whole world. Cultural borrowings such as astrology, the alphabet, and the calendar, which the ancient Greeks made from the Babylonians, Arabs, and Phoenicians, have long been ignored and regarded as an exclusive creation of European civilization.

The factor by which this book enriches thinking, especially for a WEIRD reader - Westernized, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic - is the lesson of humbleness, complemented by a lucid analysis of the current status of the civilizational discourses of the great centers of world power. From Russian traditionalism to newly-restored Chinese Confucianism, to American isolationism, to Indian multiculturalism and diversity to Islamic extremism determined by the ideal of the outlawed caliphate. The return to nationalist and fundamentalist discourses is determined by the way in which heads of state and governments try to define their own culture in relation to the values of a civilization. For example, in May 2016, the Polish president said: "In today's Europe there is, without doubt, a crisis of values on which European civilization has been built, and I am thinking about a civilization with Latin roots supported by Christianity ... All those ideals have been lost in today's Europe. They are being forgotten and trampled by other ideologies that debase the essence of humanity and the human being"[3].

---

[3] Adam Balcer, Piotr Buras, Grzegorz Gromadzki and Eugeniusz Smolar, *Change in Poland, but What Change? Assumptions of Law and Justice Party Foreign Policy,* Warsaw, Stefan Batory Foundation, 2016, p. 7.

What we see happening around us today is the fact that the notion of "global citizen" is collapsing and that the ideals of internationalists are about to be destroyed. It is almost impossible for billions of people with different histories to be able to build a common 'collective civilizational dream', especially at a time when fundamentalists are asserting themselves more and more. Figures like Trump and Putin tend to coordinate their actions because their struggle is a common civilizational struggle with China, and then the rapprochement between the two powers is justifiable. The formation of the Islamic State is justified and supported by its fervent promoters by idealizing the image of power that fights against Western imperialism and globalization.

We have already seen throughout the book the stories that the great powers tell in order to define a solid myth that would bring them the status of a civilized state, but the era in which we find ourselves still comes with a series of challenges. Manipulation through fake news and mass fictionalization brought the period after the events of 2016 the name of the 'post-truth era'. Moreover, organizations such as Facebook, which address nearly 3 billion people on the planet, can provide sensitive information about users, and political interests can be achieved through the psychographic method, a science as petty as it is effective, as evidenced by the influence US elections in the 2016 presidential campaign, but also the results of Brexit.

The conclusion that the 'The Rise of the Civilizational State' has is significant and morally charged: in a world where the most powerful people in

key positions speak of "improving reality" and "inferiority of truth to myth", it is essential that each of us to understand their cognitive limitations, to develop their ability to objectively operate information and the ability to lucidly analyze international political reality, to promote the use of ethical language rather than "political correctness" only from a perspective narrowed by its own cultural affiliation.

**Andrei Stupu**